

Child  
Salvation

S. Miller from CT

# Child Salvation

by  
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## COVER PICTURE:

*This little girl's attention is wholly absorbed in the study of the beautiful butterflies drawing sustenance from the flowers while, at the same time, pollinating them by carrying pollen from bloom to bloom. These marvels of God's created handiwork are as yet beyond the child's knowledge and comprehension. She stands where there is so little behind and so much before. Life's full potential invites and awaits her. During those formative years, how utterly dependent the little one is on her parents to ensure that she is truly equipped to meet and conquer every challenge, overcome all obstacles, and live a life which will be a satisfying service to God and humanity! Parents who truly realize the enormity of their responsibilities and opportunities will certainly be aware that to provide the children with all that they need, they themselves will have to be thoroughly conversant with what is required of them, and truly competent in the execution of their role. Fathers and mothers will understand that they will have to be in themselves just what they wish their little ones to be.*

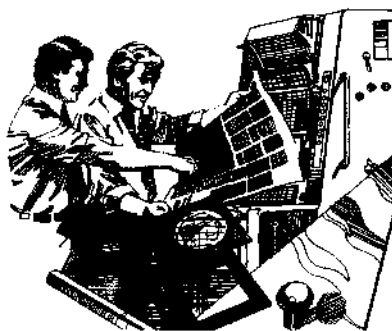
*Artist: Sharyn Wilbraham*

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Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture references in this book are taken from the *New King James Version* of the Bible.



# Intro- duction

This book is not, as some may suppose, a volume for children.

It is not written for them in the sense of being a book which they are to read and by which they are to be instructed. It is instead, a presentation for prospective and existing parents to study, a guide whereby they can be assured of complete success in the work of bringing salvation to their precious offspring.

Despite the positive and powerful assurances in the Scriptures that a child trained in the way he should go, will never depart from that righteous path, Christian parents by the tens of thousands have been heartbroken as they see their beautiful children selling themselves cheaply to the world when they come to the age at which they assert their independence. Confident that they have truly trained their children in the way they should go, parents have looked elsewhere to lay the blame for the sorrowful outcome of their efforts. In consequence, many have concluded that the promise is faulty and therefore unreliable, little realizing that they thereby are leveling some fearful charges against a faithful, righteous, and innocent God.

But, no charge can be justly laid to God's account. When He made the promise, He spoke the truth. Therefore, every child who is trained in the way he should go, will certainly never depart from it. To say this is to admit that the children of Christian parents who do depart from the pathway of righteousness, were never in fact trained in the way they should go, even though the parents were convinced that they had faithfully raised them according to the Lord's requirements.

When the principles of child salvation are rightly understood, it will be seen that the parents, instead of training the children in the way they should go, have actually trained them in the way they should not go. It will also be seen that the outworking in ruined, godless lives, is exactly and only what can be expected. In fact, it proves the Scriptures true, and leaves us to wonder how anyone can be found who will respond to the pleadings of divine mercy. In many ways, the most unfortunate children,

the ones least likely to ever follow the truth, are those raised by parents standing in the light of present truth, but who were never alerted to the principles of child salvation.

There have been some vital elements which have been totally missing in the work of raising children. They may appear to some to be simple, but they certainly are not inconsequential. Their inclusion or omission means the difference between life and death.

It is the purpose of this book to present these factors in their proper setting so that parents will know just what they have to do to ensure that their children are trained in the way that they should go so that, when they are old, they will not depart from it.

The last words on the subject have not been written in this volume, nor do they need to be at this stage. More than enough has been detailed herein to guarantee success in child salvation. The fact is of course, that eternity itself will never exhaust this theme. Parents who have the love and faith of Jesus in their hearts will find that, as time passes and they rest in the care of the competent Educator, He will solve their problems, give the needed guidance, and will truly save the children.

It is a sure and certain thing that those parents who rest not until they truly comprehend the principles of child salvation, and diligently apply them in the work of bringing up their families in the fear of the Lord, will be more than satisfied with the results. A new era has begun, the full fruit of which we shall not see until the work is ended.

"It is the privilege of parents to take their children with them to the gates of the city of God, saying, 'I have tried to instruct my children to love the Lord, to do His will, and to glorify Him.' To such the gate will be thrown open, and parents and children will enter in. But all cannot enter. Some are left outside with their children, whose characters have not been transformed by submission to the will of God. A hand is raised, and the words are spoken, 'You have neglected home duties. You have failed to do the work that would have fitted the soul for a home in heaven. You cannot enter.' The gates are closed to the children because they have not learned to do the will of God, and to parents because they have neglected the responsibilities resting upon them.

"Light has been shining from the Word of God and the testimonies of His Spirit so that none need err in regard to their duty. God requires parents to bring up their children to know Him and to respect His claims; they are to train their little ones, as the younger members of the Lord's family, to have beautiful characters and lovely tempers, that they may be fitted to shine in the heavenly courts. By neglecting their duty and indulging their children in wrong, parents close to them the gates of the city of God. These facts must be pressed home upon parents; they must arouse and take up their long-neglected work." *Child Guidance*, 13.



# Broken- hearted Parents

## Chapter 1

Thousands upon uncounted thousands of religious parents have gone through the same bitter disappointment. They have given their children what they thought was the best possible Christian training by faithfully involving them in family worship morning and night, teaching them to memorize Scripture, taking them regularly to Sabbath school, sacrificing to keep them in church school, and, by stern discipline, teaching them the all-important lesson of obedience to their parents and to God. In their determination to ensure success in raising their children as living Christians, some fathers and mothers, at the cost of the father's career and at the expense of the comforts of life, have left the cities to dwell in rural settings in order to separate their little ones from worldly influences.

All this they have done to ensure their children's salvation, and, in those cases where an acceptable pattern of behavior appeared to be developing in childhood and early youth, the parents felt reasonably confident that their offspring would grow up to walk in God's ways, and be a credit to them and their society.

Then the unthinkable happens. The young ones reach the age when they begin to feel the urge to assert their own independence, but, instead of deciding to continue with the life-style in which the parents have sought to establish them, they elect to throw in their lot with the world. They show no interest in any further Bible study, forget the sacred obligations of Sabbath-keeping, tithe-paying, and healthful living, and abandon themselves to the world's pleasures and sins. Many of them cheerfully take to liquor, nicotine, and hard drugs. The most horrifying thought to the parents is that the youth seem to thoroughly enjoy their new life and show no signs of being tortured by an accusing conscience.

With broken hearts the parents wonder what could possibly have gone wrong? They knew and really believed the wonderful promise: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not



depart from it." *Proverbs 22:6*. They feel sure that they have been both diligent and correct in raising their children in the "way they should go", and that no real fault could be laid on them for this terrible outcome. They had believed, prayed, and worked with true dedication! "Why then has the promise failed?" they tearfully ask. The inference here is that God is the One at fault, for He made the promise, and, as surely as they believe that they have satisfactorily fulfilled the conditions, they are



The world today has in it too many brokenhearted parents who cannot understand why their children have forsaken them and their God in favor of the evil world and its destructive ways. They are left wondering if the promise of God is really true that if a child is rightly trained, he will grow up faithful to that way. The promise is true. It is the training that is suspect.

confident that the failure cannot be blamed on them. They feel that they really believed and acted upon the promise, and were very devoted to the correct training of their children. Therefore, they had a right to expect God to bless them with loving, obedient, and righteous children.

But it did not work out that way. Instead, the children turned away to follow after Satan. Finding this to be the outcome has been an experience so disappointing, devastating, and shattering, that some parents have abandoned their faith altogether.

Others seek a solution by rewriting the Scriptures to read as follows: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will return to it." They find hope and refuge in the thought that most young people have to pass over "Fool's Hill", "have their fling", and "learn the hard way", before settling down to live good, solid, Christian lives.

But the fallacy in this thinking is exposed by the hard facts of the case. How many of those children who depart from the ways of their parents' God, ever return in their later years? There are very few at best; just enough perhaps to provide sufficient exceptions to make people feel justified in re-wording the verse.

However, there is no unsoundness in the promise and it is a fatal mistake to tamper in any way with the message it contains. It declares

that if *a* child is trained in the way he should go, when he is old, he will not depart from that way. There is nothing in the text which assures us that the child may depart, but will return later.

What God has really promised is that if the parents train up the child in the way he should go, then for *the rest of his life*, he will not depart from it. God did not speak in terms of well-trained children serving Him only in the eventide years after they have spent the best part of their existence drinking at the fountains of sin. God looks for a lifetime of service and nothing less than this will satisfy Him.

When God's children fail to realize His promises, they display a natural tendency to blame God, when they should be prepared to acknowledge that they, not He, are the ones at fault even though the incorrect course was followed because of ignorance. When they fail to recognize where the fault lies, they are showing that they have more faith in themselves than they have in God. They will admit of course, that their efforts have not been perfect, but, because they did the best they knew, and because they believe their motives were above reproach, they expected the Lord to make up for their shortcomings by adding His divine merit to their best efforts. They are not prepared to accept the fact that men perish for lack of knowledge. (See *Hosea* 4:6.)

But, as is always the case, there is nothing wrong with the promise. It is the absolute truth that if a child is trained in *the way he should go*, when he is old he will not depart from it. Parents can rest in the assurance of this.

The fact that no fault lies in either the promise or the God who made it, means that all those who failed to see the fulfillment of God's word despite their best efforts, must recognize that they did not actually bring up their children in the way that they should go. It is for this reason and none other, that they have lost them. It is exceedingly difficult for many parents to come to grips with the truth that the fault lies with them, but they must be prepared to believe that, even though they had the best of intentions and labored with all diligence, there was still a tragic ignorance of correct procedures in child training. Consequently, their offspring were deprived of the vital foundation which would have insured that they would grow up to walk in the ways of the Lord.

Because the true light on child salvation was not available to them when they raised their families, they cannot be blamed for this ignorance, but, let them not accumulate a burden of condemnation by an unwillingness to acknowledge that their unwitting ignorance robbed them of the conditions necessary to bring the fulfillment of the promise. They need to recognize that this is the reason why their children did not grow up to serve the Lord. A frank acknowledgment of this fact is the beginning to a series of open doors leading the way to knowledge and answers hitherto hidden from sight.

Parents are training children to be obedient subjects of either the divine or the satanic kingdom, and thereby they are determining in which kingdom their children will choose to retain membership when the time comes to make their own decisions. It would be a tragedy if parents were to wittingly and deliberately choose to raise their children for membership in Satan's realm, but consider the even worse situation which results when parents actually train their children to number themselves with the devil, while blissfully believing that they are preparing them for a place in the divine government.

It therefore follows that it is of the utmost importance that parents be able to identify the essential differences between Jehovah's and Satan's systems of government, so they will know with positive certainty in which direction their efforts are being expended. This knowledge must be established from the very beginning of the training program. There is no room for error or confusion about this matter. Let every parent study the operating principles and procedures by which both kingdoms function so that they will be able to instantly recognize which they are serving. Then they can intelligently and successfully shun the wrong and follow the right. If this knowledge is not gained at the outset, then, when the children reach the age at which they begin to assert their independence, the parents will certainly find themselves faced with serious problems which they will no longer be able to solve by asserting their authority. When, at this crucial time, the parents see their children abandoning the ways of the Lord in favor of Satan's realm, they can then know that they have been preparing their children for the devil and not for the Lord. What a terrible awakening! How we pray that young *people* entering into parenthood today, will regard their responsibilities with such seriousness, and value their opportunities so highly, that they will not rest until they know the ways of the Lord in contrast to the ways of Satan.

The divine order is so opposite from the satanic, that, despite the fact that very few people successfully identify each for what it is, to do so is really a simple matter. Although there are a number of distinguishing differences, parents need to consider only one to begin with in order to discover whether they are practicing the ways of God or the devil. Just ask the question: "Is obedience being extracted by the exercise of force, or is it the loving response of a sanctified and willing heart." If it is the former, it is satanic, but, if the latter, then it is of God.

The only kind of service God can accept is that which springs from a willing heart. He has no interest in a forced obedience. Service to Him must be the natural expression of an inward heart condition and an educated and intelligent appreciation of the fact that His ways are the only ways leading to life, health, and happiness. He wants His children to obey Him because they have no disposition within themselves to do

otherwise. The following statements are quoted to confirm the truth that Jehovah governs without the use of arbitrary force.

"Since the service of love can alone be acceptable to God, the allegiance of His creatures must rest upon a conviction of His justice and benevolence." *The Great Controversy*, 498.

"The germ in the seed grows by the unfolding of the life-principle which God has implanted. Its development depends upon no human power. So it is with the kingdom of Christ. It is a new creation. Its principles of development are the opposite of those that rule the kingdoms of this world. Earthly governments prevail by physical force; they maintain their dominion by war; but the founder of the new kingdom is the Prince of *Peace*. The Holy Spirit represents worldly kingdoms under the symbol of fierce beasts of prey; but Christ is 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' *John* 1:29. *In His plan of government there is no employment of brute force to compel the conscience.* The Jews looked for the kingdom of God to be established in the same way as the kingdoms of the world. To promote righteousness they resorted to external measures. They devised methods and plans. But Christ implants a principle. By implanting truth and righteousness, He counterworks error and sin." *Christ's Object Lessons*, 77.

"God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power." *The Desire of Ages*, 759.

"The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority." *The Desire of Ages*, 22.

The love from which true service to God and one's fellow men springs is not merely a mental attitude or a deep emotion. It is the presence within the believer of God's nature. Nothing but His love, which in turn is His character and therefore His righteousness, can supply the indwelling spring of perfect behavior. This unchangeable love is not dependent on how the person possessing it is treated, for those within whom it is established love both friend and foe alike, even though fellowship with the latter is not possible.

It must be distinguished from human love, which is expressed only toward selected individuals who are expected to respond with appropriate love reactions. This love is manifested by those with evil hearts and is not adequate to safeguard a person's behavior under temptation.



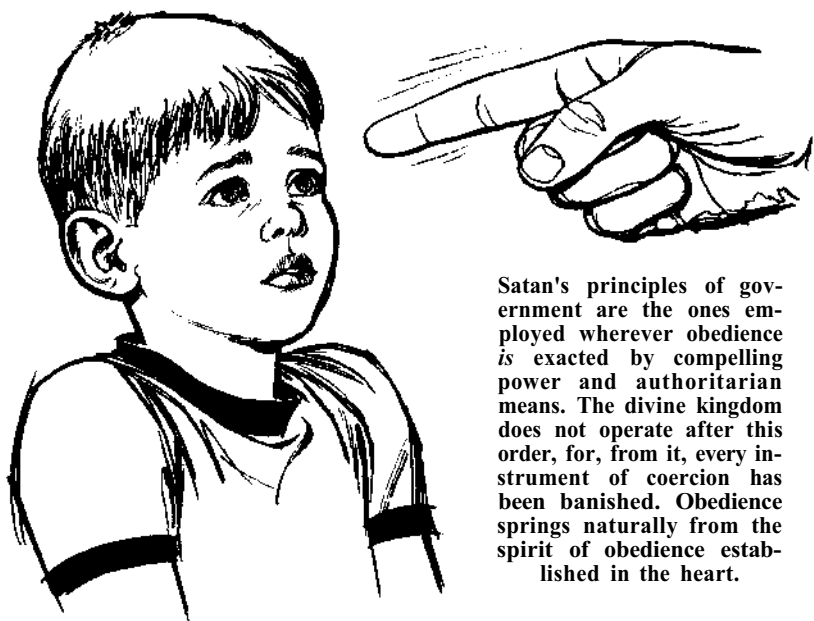
A person cannot manifest God's love unless it is established within him, nor does he need any other compulsion to obey the divine statutes. This love is never found in the heart which has not been cleansed from hatred. The two cannot dwell together.

As stated above, God cannot accept a forced obedience. The difference between this and willing obedience is well illustrated by the following simple facts.

In aircraft washrooms there is a sign which reads: "No Smoking". For a person who has no desire to smoke, and in whose mind a thorough education has built a very strong hatred for the polluting weed, that sign is quite unnecessary. This person will refrain from smoking not because the sign forbids it, but because he loathes the habit. It is not in him to smoke.

Another man enters who is a heavy smoker. He is reaching for his cigarettes when he sees the sign and is thus induced to refrain from smoking. It is the fear of punishment which makes him obey.

The result is that both he and the first person have refrained from smoking in the aircraft washroom, but for very different reasons. The first person did not smoke because it was not in him to do so, his mind was educated against it, and he understood that God's ways are those of health and happiness. The other man refrained only because the law compelled him to obey. While the first man can be relied upon never to smoke anywhere at any time, the other man can never be trusted to do likewise.



Satan's principles of government are the ones employed wherever obedience is exacted by compelling power and authoritarian means. The divine kingdom does not operate after this order, for, from it, every instrument of coercion has been banished. Obedience springs naturally from the spirit of obedience established in the heart.

So God's way is not the way of force. "Compelling power is found *only* under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power." *The Desire of Ages*, 759.

So, if compelling power is found only under Satan's government, then it is *never* found under God's. This should really impress every parent with the startling truth that if, in their home government, compelling power is used to enforce obedience, then, no matter how converted the parents might be or how sincere in their determination to bring up their children in the fear of the Lord or how satisfied they might feel that they are training their children correctly, they have established a satanic government in their homes. This has to be so, for Satan's kingdom is the only one where this means is employed.

Thus parents can know with positive certainty which principle rules in their household. There is no guesswork involved—no doubt, no uncertainty, no confusion. Each parent has only to ask the question: "Are my children obeying me because they fear the punishment which I am able to inflict through my possession of greater physical force than they have, or is their obedience but the expression of an indwelling disposition to practice righteousness? In other words, do they manifest the spirit of obedience or of disobedience?"

The answers to these questions will be easily found and will tell with unerring accuracy the nature of the home government under scrutiny. In asking and answering the questions though, care must be taken to ensure that the real issues are not obscured by what some would regard as balancing factors. Many are the homes in which rule by force is maintained, but where also the Bible is read, morning and evening worship are faithfully attended by every member of the family, the Sabbath is strictly kept, evil habits have been put away, worldly amusements have been shunned, and every *appearance* proclaims that this is a place where the angels love to abide. "Surely," most would exclaim, "such a home could not be the site of a satanic government!"

Do not be deceived! Never forget that Satan is a master at donning sheep's clothing by which he makes it appear that his is the realm of light instead of being what it really is—the citadel of darkness. He also takes the greatest possible advantage of every situation, ever turning good into evil. He is very pleased when an extensive program of religious exercises gives the home the appearance of being ruled by divine principles, but in which, because force is employed to establish parental authority, a satanic rulership has in fact been instituted. He is delighted to observe the parents at rest in the supposition that they are preparing souls for heaven

through all their devoted exercises when they are really training their children to be loyal subjects of his.

There is no suggestion in this study that religious exercises in the home are of no value, for they are strongly called for in the Scriptures. Feeding on the living word, which is the bread and water of spiritual life, is an essential factor in developing a robust Christian faith and spiritual experience. What is being stressed is that these exercises are not what determine whether a home is a divine or a satanic kingdom. Which system is in operation is determined by the structure of the government that is established in the home. The presence of government by force labels the home a kingdom of darkness, while the successful management of the home without the need to resort to the use of force, betokens a divine sovereignty.

It must be clearly understood that the establishment by Christian parents of rule by force does not mean that they themselves are Satan's children. They can both be deeply religious and truly born again and yet be heads in a satanic kingdom. This may sound like a contradiction, an impossibility, but it is not. On the contrary, it is a situation which is existent in all too many cases. It is not a sin of the heart, but the product of ignorance of right principles.

It is because they have never been taught to identify the procedures which distinguish the divine form of government from the satanic, that the evil one so readily receives the cooperation of Christian parents. If only they understood the real nature of their dedicated efforts, they would make haste to renounce them in favor of God's ways. The only bright spot in the sad situation is that, because it is a sin of ignorance, they are not held responsible by the Judge of the universe. Unfortunately however, very few of these children raised in what parents and church leaders suppose are Christian homes but which are ruled by the devil's ways, will be saved in the kingdom.

Religious exercises in those all too numerous homes where satanic principles of rulership are practiced, no matter how sincerely and devotedly they are performed, really do more harm than good. In the child's receptive mind, this develops an association between the holy and the profane, and thus identifies the beautiful things of God with the evils of the devil.

All this leads to an inescapable conclusion—to the youth who has spent the first sixteen years growing up in a kingdom where he was compelled to obey whether he cared to or not, the kingdom of God is a foreign land to which he has never been introduced. None of his training has prepared him for it. Instead, his schooling has readied him for the land of darkness and death. With that government and its procedures he is familiar and, in it, he will feel at home. But, as parents see their lovely

children go out into the world, they feel that their offspring have abandoned the kingdom of God for the realm of the devil.

But they are mistaken!

How can a person leave from where he has never been? May no parent charge their children with leaving God's kingdom unless it can be honestly proven that they were under the divine sovereignty to start with. Of course, the promise is that, if they were raised up in God's kingdom and faithfully trained in its principles and procedures, then they would not be leaving anyway.

Therefore, no longer need parents be surprised when, after sixteen years or so of living under a satanic government, their youth choose the world. This is a totally predictable result. It is all that can be expected. It is the simple outworking of cause and effect.

No more need anyone question the truth of the promise: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." *Proverbs 22:6*.

The simple fact is that the kingdom with which they have become familiar through the training methods practiced upon them, is the one they will seek out and with which they will identify when parental restraint is removed from them. The sooner this fact is recognized and acted upon, the sooner we shall see children being truly raised in the way they should go and thereafter, forever remaining in that way.

The satanic system of raising children by using compelling power, has had more than a fair chance to demonstrate itself. Admittedly, when used with great skill, these methods do produce better results of outward behavior than when applied inconsistently and capriciously, but even then they are still the devil's methods and do not produce children who walk in God's ways for time and eternity.

For thousands of years, in millions of homes, government by force has been the unquestioned, unchallenged method of raising children. It has been practiced by both Christian and non-Christian parents. In both cases the results have been the same—young people with little if any desire or disposition to serve the Most High. Should not the undesirable fruit of this system compellingly testify that another way must be found! Untiring search must be made until the procedures and principles which the Lord has provided and which will result in the children's growing up to walk in the way they should go, are discovered and instituted! Must the present and future generations stumble blindly on, failing as their parents have, so that unnumbered millions of beautiful children are deprived of the physical, mental, and spiritual powers which are their lawful heritage! Must almost all of these precious souls be damned to eternal destruction when all of them could be saved unto eternal life! Let us arise and shake off a system which has proved itself a miserable failure! Let the Lord's perfect ways be adopted! Let the appropriate steps



be taken that will forever banish from our homes, "... every carnal weapon, every instrument of coercion . . . ." *Acts of the Apostles*, 12.

Unfortunately today, it would be very difficult to find a family in which the children have been raised according to the divine principles. This is because a shroud of ignorance has so obscured the light on this subject that no one seems to have known of it. We have unwittingly perpetuated the system with which we have been familiar, not seeing any need to challenge or change it because we were ignorantly confident that there was nothing wrong with the system. The problem, it was felt, lay in the failure to apply the procedures with consistent skill and thoroughness. Until those misconceptions are corrected, and proper procedures instituted, it is certain that beautiful children will continue to be sacrificed to the enemy.

The days of ignorance are now passed and we know better. The time has come when we see that the entire system on which we have been depending is false and must be discarded in favor of God's way of doing things.

While it is very sad to see the fate of those for whom the light came too late, we can rejoice now in the prospects of seeing a wonderful army of children growing up to be pillars in the Lord's house. No longer will parents who faithfully apply the divine principles watch their youth turn their backs on all that is righteous, good, and true. A new day has begun, bringing with it every cause for rejoicing.

At this point, some might take the position that the principles of bringing up children without the use of force are totally discredited because of the unfortunate results experienced by those in the world who advocate these procedures. For instance, a noted supporter of child training without the use of force, found that all his children developed wild and lawless behavior patterns. Eventually, he became so distressed over the outcome of his teachings that he publicly renounced his earlier positions and strongly advocated the use of corporal punishment to ensure obedience.

To reject the message being presented here on the basis of the manifest failure experienced by those who, out in the world, advocate the non-use of force, is to presuppose that the two messages are in fact the same. If they were, then there would be no choice but to reject the system of child training which calls for the banishment of every instrument of coercion. But, while there is an apparent similarity, there is a vital factor not mentioned so far that is completely absent from the world's way, but which makes God's way to be entirely successful.

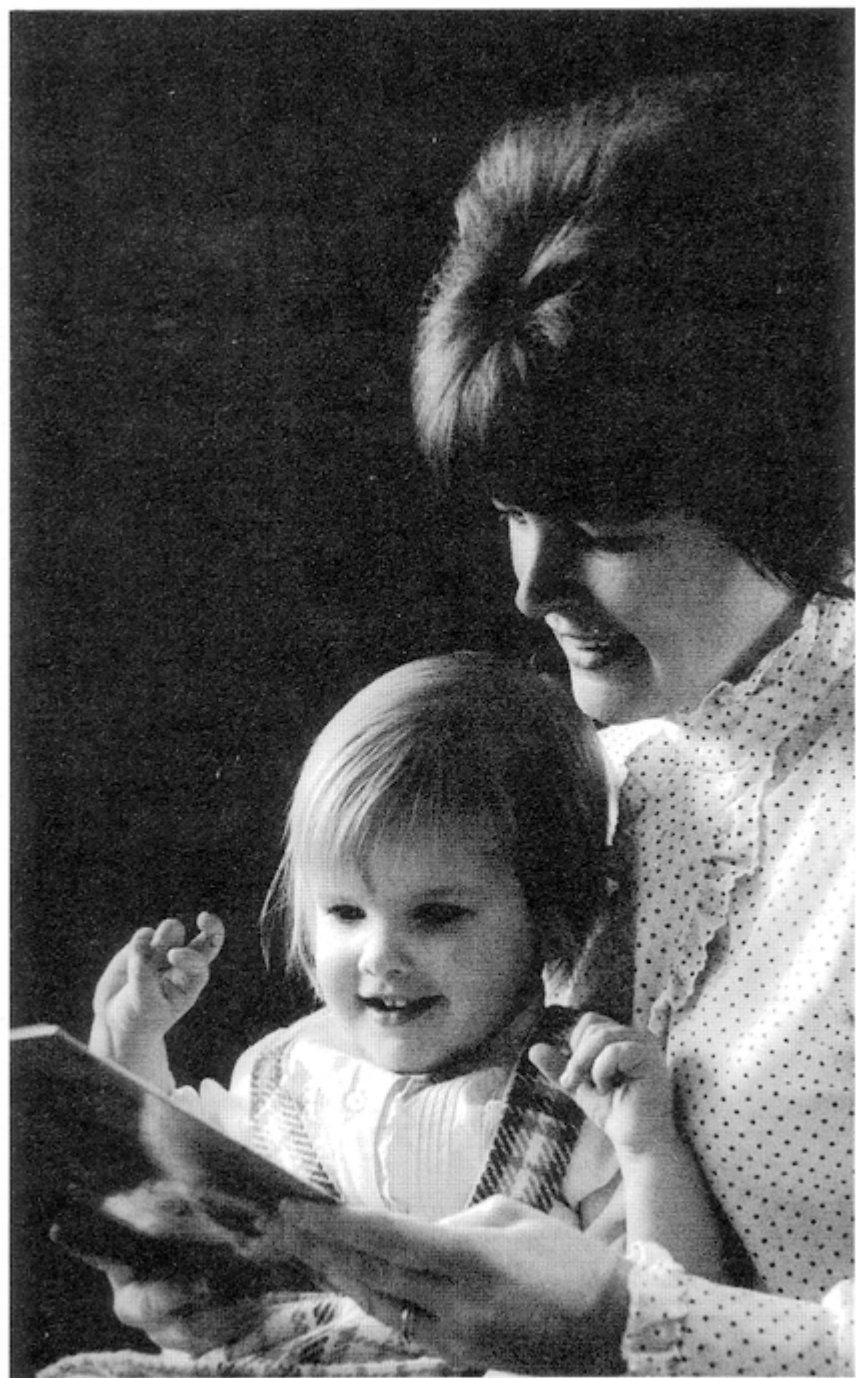
If the counsels being set forth here are no different from the teachings advocated by those in the world who believe that a child should be given free expression and should never be forced to obey, then this study is

valueless. The two messages share common ground only in respect to the need to remove all compelling power from the system, but there the similarity ends. The world overlooks the fact that, by virtue of Adam's sin in Eden and the sinful inheritance which is passed on to every one of his offspring, the spirit of disobedience, selfishness, and rebellion is embedded in the very nature of every child that is born into this sin-cursed world. That is the basic problem which has to be dealt with. God, recognizing the impossibility of righteousness coming from an evil nature, has made provision for the removal of this spirit of disobedience, selfishness, and rebellion, and its replacement with the actual spirit of obedience, selflessness, and loyalty. This is otherwise known as deliverance from the bondage of sin, the new birth, the initiation of Christ in you the hope of glory, and spiritual conversion. All parents who would be successful in training their children for the divine kingdom, must not rest until they are sure that this transformation has taken place. Then and only then, does the child qualify to live in a kingdom from which every weapon of coercion has been banished, and to be trained in the principles of that realm.

With equal earnestness, let it be stressed that no child within whom the evil spirit remains, can be brought up in the kingdom of light. That would require the removal of external disciplinary forces which would be but the unreigning of his spirit of rebellion, selfishness, and disobedience. Those are evil enough when they are controlled and restrained, but they are so much worse when they are allowed to run free. That is nothing less than anarchy and ruin.

So, until the evil spirit is removed and replaced, it is necessary to control and subjugate the unruly child, but, even though his spirit of disobedience is controlled and subjugated, it is still there, and, if he remains undelivered from it, when he comes to the age when he can choose for himself, he will naturally seek out his own kind—the children of disobedience. A wolf may be kept in a cage separated from his species for years, but if another wolf appears, the caged animal will be filled with delight as he recognizes his own kind. Release the wolf and he will seek the company of other wolves. For the same reason, when children, in whom is the spirit of disobedience, are eventually released, they seek other children of disobedience, and it should not be surprising that they do.

The training of a child in the way he should go, involves firstly the eradication of the spirit of disobedience and the implantation of the spirit of obedience, after which, skilled training is necessary to develop the character in the right direction. When children are trained in this way,



they are directed in the path that they should follow and when they are old, they do not depart from it. Parents who experience the guaranteed success that correct procedures bring, will know that God and His word are true.

Nobody has to be a brokenhearted parent. Let such be a thing of the past.

**OPPOSITE PAGE: No one needs to be a brokenhearted parent when their beautiful little ones grow into adolescence. Children can be trained in the way of the Lord so that when they are old they will not depart from it.**





# Remark- ably Different

## Chapter 2

To *be* successful in the work of bringing salvation to children, it is critically essential that both deliverance from the spirit of disobedience *and* proper training be given them. One aspect must not be stressed at the expense of the other. Today, we recognize that the message on bringing the new birth experience to the unborn child was completely lacking in the past. This guaranteed that the children would grow up to join the world no matter how skillful and thorough their training had been.

Care must now be taken not to swing to the other extreme by making the achievement of the new birth everything and the training nothing. When study is being given to one phase or the other, it must be understood that only a part of the whole is being considered. If consideration is being given to the necessity for the child to be reborn, this is not to lessen the force of the truth that diligent and skillful training must follow. Likewise, if the material being presented is devoted to the subject of training, this is not to suggest that this is the all-sufficient element needed for success.

Having established the need for this balance, the rest of this chapter will be devoted to the study of the importance of thorough and skilled child training. The lesson will be taken from the lives of Moses and Aaron.

There was a remarkable difference between the characters of these brothers. This difference is best illustrated in the golden calf incident.

At God's command, Moses had departed from the camp to meet with Jehovah on the mountain top, while Aaron was appointed by God to manage the camp and its inhabitants. Moses' older brother was required to maintain law and order till Israel's leader returned from his meeting with the Almighty. It is important that no one overlooks the fact that it was God who appointed Aaron to take charge while Moses was

away. This fact is confirmed in the following words: "In the absence of Moses, the judicial authority had been delegated to Aaron, . . . He to whom God had committed the government of the people in the absence of Moses, was found sanctioning their rebellion." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 316, 323.

When one becomes aware of the weakness of character displayed by Aaron, one is led to meditate upon the wisdom of God in appointing him to this tremendous responsibility. God, who certainly understood the character and weaknesses of this man, did not act as men would act if they, knowing the same things, were called upon to decide who would fill this position. These things do stimulate thought and study as we seek to better understand God's principles and procedures, and to work within their framework.

What was it that generated the crisis?

During their lengthy sojourn in Egypt, the Israelites had become accustomed to seeing physical representations of the Egyptian deities every day. When these idols were left behind, the people naturally tended to look for something or someone to take their place. They were so spiritually impoverished that they could not commune with an invisible God in heaven. The mightiest miracle-working man among them was Moses, and they developed the disposition to look upon him as God on this earth.

"While Moses was absent it was a time of waiting and suspense to Israel. The people knew that he had ascended the mount with Joshua, and had entered the cloud of thick darkness which could be seen from the plain below, resting on the mountain peak, illuminated from time to time with the lightnings of the divine Presence. They waited eagerly for his return. Accustomed as they had been in Egypt to material representations of deity, it had been hard for them to trust in an invisible being, and they had come to rely upon Moses to sustain their faith. Now he was taken from them. Day after day, week after week passed, and still he did not return. Notwithstanding the cloud was still in view, it seemed to many in the camp that their leader had deserted them, or that he had been consumed by the devouring fire." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 315.

God's separation of Moses from the people for this lengthy period afforded them a special opportunity to *realize* their excessive dependence on a man and their need to establish a personal relationship with their heavenly Father. Instead, they became more and more restless as they felt their deprivation of a visible god or leader, and this led them to yearn for the familiar land of Egypt where there was no shortage of physical representations of the Egyptian deities that could literally be seen. Their superstitious frame of mind was such that they could not return to those gods without a visible god to take them back. Thus came the appeal to Aaron to make the golden calf.



When Israel had sojourned in Egypt, the land of palms, pyramids, and camels, they had become accustomed with the Egyptians to worshipping a visible God. Upon their departure, they wrongfully looked to Moses to fill that role, so that, when he disappeared up the mountain, they felt that they had lost their god, and built the golden calf to take his place.

Many think that the day is gone when men seek a visible god or leader upon whom to lean and in whom to trust. But the tendency is still there. It leads many to fix their eyes on the man whom the Lord sends. In their eyes, he can do no wrong, and they *elevate* him onto a pedestal. They fail to *realize* that he is but a man, with the same passions and human weaknesses that they have. Furthermore, his position subjects Him to greater and more numerous temptations than the people, and he is thereby more apt to fall than they are. When he does stumble as did Aaron, Moses, David, Paul, and many others, they discover too late that they built their house upon the sand and the storm washed it away. Then, how quickly these poor souls seek another god, another messenger, another church, to fill the place of their former idol.

Thus the crisis came to Israel, and Aaron suddenly found himself confronted by a determined mob bent on inducing him to make a golden, visible god for them.

"Such a crisis demanded a man of firmness, decision, and unflinching courage; one who held the honor of God above popular favor, personal safety, or life itself." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 316.

That is the kind of man that God needed at this critical hour, "But the present leader of Israel was not of this character." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 316.

What kind of person was he then?

He was timid and wavering. He lacked courage and decisiveness. "Aaron feebly remonstrated with the people, but his *wavering and timidity* at the critical moment only rendered them the more determined." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 316.

"Aaron feared for his own safety; and instead of nobly standing up for the honor of God, he yielded to the demands of the multitude." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 317.

He then directed the people to bring their golden earrings to him. A furnace was built, a mold produced, the gold melted, and the calf formed. It was the image of a beast held sacred by the Egyptians. Then followed a wild, licentious, pagan, religious festival which was a dishonor to the God of heaven and man whom He had created.

In the mountain, the Lord informed Moses of the developments going on in the camp below. God's faithful servant hastened into the camp and confronted his weak and vacillating brother who had betrayed sacred trusts. Aaron then displayed further weakness of character which made his situation worse and would have cost him his life but for the intercession of Moses. He sought to dismiss all blame from himself by charging the people with his guilt even going so far as to claim that the forming of the calf was a miracle performed by divine power. This was a lie. The real fact was that he had deliberately molded the calf exactly as the people demanded he should.

"The great leader summoned his guilty brother and sternly demanded, 'What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?' Aaron endeavored to shield himself by relating the clamors of the people; that if he had not complied with their wishes, he would have been put to death. 'Let not the anger of my lord wax hot,' he said; 'thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.' He would lead Moses to believe that a miracle had been wrought—that the gold had been cast into the fire, and by supernatural power changed to a calf. But his excuses and prevarications were of no avail. He was justly dealt with as the chief offender." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 320.

Aaron did what he did because of what he was. Most would tend to conclude that he was still unregenerate but this is not the case. He was timid and weak. He was not endowed with the kind of character which would have enabled him to withstand the pressures of the people. It was that, and not the presence of unforsaken sin in his life, which caused him to do what he did. He deserves our sympathy and understanding, not our condemnation. It is not the purpose of this study to dwell upon the seriousness of his failure. However, we must understand enough about him and his situation in order to discover why he failed so that we, as parents, can give our children the kind of preparation that will make them strong rather than weak.

"The fact that Aaron had been blessed and honored so far above the people was what made his sin so heinous. It was Aaron 'the saint of the Lord' (*Psalms* 106:16), that had made the idol and announced the feast.

It was he who had been appointed as spokesman for Moses, and concerning whom God Himself had testified, 'I know that he can speak well' (Exodus 4:14), that had failed to check the idolaters in their heaven-daring purpose. He by whom God had wrought in bringing judgments both upon the Egyptians and upon their gods, had heard unmoved the proclamation before the molten image, 'These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.' It was he who had been with Moses on the mount, and had there beheld the glory of the Lord, who had seen that in the manifestation of that glory there was nothing of which an image could be made—it was he who had changed that glory into the similitude of an ox. He to whom God had committed the government of the people in the absence of Moses, was found sanctioning their rebellion. The Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him.' *Deuteronomy* 9:20. But in answer to the earnest intercession of Moses, his life was spared; and in penitence and humiliation for his great sin, he was restored to the favor of God.

"If Aaron had had courage to stand for the right, irrespective of consequences, he could have prevented that apostasy. If he had unswervingly maintained his own allegiance to God, if he had cited the people to the perils of Sinai, and had reminded them of their solemn covenant with God to obey His law, the evil would have been checked. But his compliance with the desires of the people and the calm assurance with which he proceeded to carry out their plans, emboldened them to go to greater lengths in sin than had before entered their minds." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 320, 323.

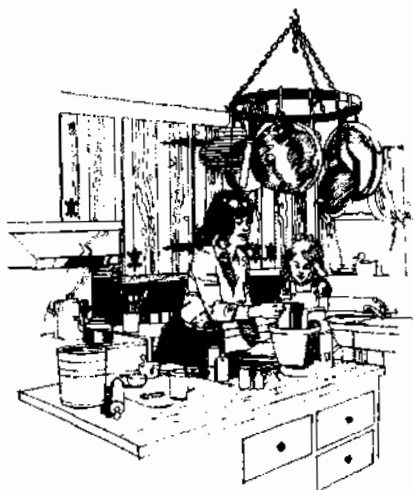
That must have been the blackest chapter in Aaron's life. He certainly endured hours of mental and spiritual anguish as he realized how miserably he had failed. How he must have grieved over his weakness of character and loathed himself for failing God when so much trust had been placed in him!

By contrast, what a strong, resolute, uncompromising, decisive character was possessed by Moses! Had he been in the encampment, the incident would never have happened. Moses, by firm, decided refusal of the people's demands, would have checked the problem at the outset. During his forty years of ministry for Israel, Moses faced crisis after crisis. In the face of each, he displayed a strength of character which made no room for any compromise with evil. It was this strength which enabled the Lord to channel His mighty power through him to gain the victory.

Every Christian father and mother would prefer that their children be blessed with the character of Moses in preference to Aaron's. But this is not a matter of chance, for it is plainly written that: "Children are what their parents make them by their instruction, discipline, and example." *Testimonies* 5:37.

It does not say that children are necessarily what their parents *aim* to

make them, but they are what their parents have made them to be. There are parents who reject the above statement even though the words were penned by inspiration and are absolutely true. These parents set out to develop in their children the strength and purity of character displayed by Moses. They were consecrated and diligent in their endeavors, but were disappointed when the young people abandoned the faith of their fathers and went out into the world. They view the apostasy of their children as something done in spite of their diligent efforts and cannot see that, what their children are, is exactly what they have made them.



Children definitely grow up to be what their parents make them to be. This is a difficult truth for many failed parents to accept, but nothing can alter the truth of it. The great differences between the strength of Moses and the weakness of Aaron are a demonstration of the outworking of this principle. Aaron would have been as resolute as Moses, if he had been as carefully trained as Moses was, or Moses would have been as weak as his brother if his training had been the same.

Many of these parents neither understood nor experienced the new birth, so were unable to bring this first and vital gift to their children. Those parents who were born again did not realize the need for their children to be reborn from the earliest possible moment. Then, because their unsanctified offspring had in them the spirit of disobedience, the parents were left with no other choice than to rule by force if they were to get any respect or obedience at all. Such a kingdom is satanic in form and inevitably, training in that kind of kingdom can only prepare a person for the world. How tragic it is that parents expend so many years of time, effort, and money thinking they are building righteousness into their children when in fact they are unwittingly preparing them to be subjects of Satan's kingdom.

Moses, then, was what his parents made him, and so was Aaron. But if they both had the same parents, how was it that the results were so different? To fully understand the answer to this question would require access to a wide range of information so that every element bearing on their respective trainings could be analyzed. God, in His infinite wisdom, has not made all this information available to us. But He has revealed

certain factors which can only be a blessing to the earnest parents who are seeking the development in their children of a character like Moses' rather than one like Aaron's. Let it be repeated here that we are not disparaging Aaron. He was what his parents made him, and therefore cannot be blamed for what they did. Nor are we condemning the parents, for, like most fathers and mothers, they did the best they knew. However, while the children are handicapped by their parents' lack of knowledge, the Lord expects every individual, no matter how poor a start in life he has had, to overcome his hereditary defects and those unfortunate concepts and habits endowed on him by well-meaning but misguided parents.

Inasmuch as Moses and Aaron were so different in character, and yet were both what their parents made them, it follows that the parents gave each of them a different training, and so it is shown to be.

Moses was the youngest of three children, Miriam was the eldest, and Aaron, who was three years older than Moses, was the middle child. "The Lord had informed Moses that Aaron, his brother, three years older than himself, would come forth to meet him . . . ." *Spiritual Gifts* 3:196.

Despite the fact that the eldest was the one upon whom the birthright rested and therefore the one usually chosen for leadership, the call of God rested on the youngest. Such was again the case when David was chosen by God for the kingship ahead of all of his elder brothers. This was so because God's view of qualification is different from man's. Even the mighty prophet, Samuel, would have chosen differently from God. This is another confirmation of the fact that there must be no human election in God's church. Moses' faithfulness and strength of character above that possessed by his elder brother Aaron vindicated God's choice in the end.

It has already been concluded that Moses must have been given a home training superior to that received by Aaron, and the sacred records confirm this fact:

"God had heard the mother's prayers; her faith had been rewarded. It was with deep gratitude that she entered upon her now safe and happy task. She faithfully improved her opportunity to educate her child for God. She felt confident that he had been preserved for some great work, and she knew that he must soon be given up to his royal mother, to be surrounded with influences that would tend to lead him away from God. *All this rendered her more diligent and careful in his instruction than in that of her other children.* She endeavored to imbue his mind with the fear of God and the love of truth and justice, and earnestly prayed that he might be preserved from every corrupting influence. She showed him the folly and sin of idolatry, and early taught him to bow down and pray to the living God, who alone could hear him and help him in every emergency." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 243, 244.

The key sentence in this paragraph is: *"All this rendered her more diligent and careful in his instruction than in that of her other children."*

So Moses was given a training superior to that received either by Miriam or Aaron. This was not due to any favoritism on the mother's part. Instead, there was the factor of her keen awareness that he had been called to do a special work for God, and that he would be environed by the subtle evils of Egypt for many long years. For the first, he needed special training; for the second, special protection. It was her knowledge of these things which motivated her to extra care and diligence in his education and training. Since these were better, the results were too. So it will always be.

One cannot ignore the fact that there were other factors which magnified the difference between the characters of Moses and Aaron. The heredity of each would be somewhat different even though they came from the same parents. It is a well known fact that each child in a family is given a different set of inherited characteristics. In some areas there is a strong likeness, in others, there are marked differences. However, heredity is not the main factor, for, no matter what the heredity might be, through early new birth and proper training, every child may develop strength of character.

Another decided advantage enjoyed by Moses over Aaron was his forty years in the desert while Aaron spent the same period still in Egypt ground down by cruel bond-masters in a life of miserable servitude specifically designed to break a man's spirit and destroy his faith and courage. This made it much more difficult though not impossible for Aaron to build a strong, decisive character. For him to achieve this under those circumstances would have required a remarkable understanding of the principles of character development in relation to submissive service. This is something which is not usually found in individuals unless they have very wise and experienced parents to train it into them. It seems obvious that he did not enjoy the tremendous advantage of this knowledge or the ability to apply it if he did. Rather, he exhibited something of the degradation afflicting those who are forced for interminable years to slavishly and habitually obey the will of a despotic slave master.

While Aaron was passing through those seemingly endless and apparently hopeless years of slavery, Moses was free. Daily he beheld the products of God's creative power in the massive mountains, the heavens above, and the creatures who inhabited the earth beneath. He saw and received the righteousness of God as never before. Continually, his concepts were enlarged and his character strengthened, until, after forty years of learning and unlearning, he was ready to go forth as God's instrument to lead His people.



It is easy for us to understand why God chose Moses to lead the Israelites to Canaan. Here was a man with both the talents and the character necessary to do the work. We feel that, if we had been called to vote for the needed leader, then Moses would have been our choice too. We are confident that this would be one election in which the will of God would be done. Of course, this is easy to say now that we have inspired hindsight to guide us, but what would have been the case if we had lived back there? Things would have borne a different appearance and we certainly would have voted for someone else.

The question must arise as to why the Lord, knowing Aaron's weakness and its result, appointed him as the caretaker during Moses' absence. Surely the Lord would have sought a more qualified leader and not imposed on poor Aaron a task beyond his capacities!

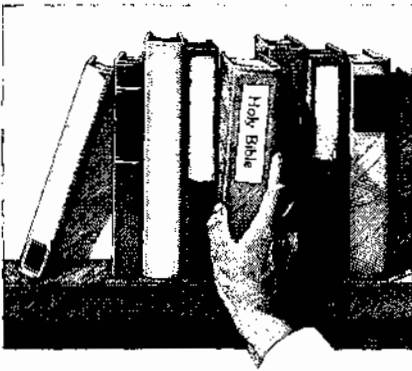
One fact is clear. The Lord does not see as men see, nor does He appoint those whom men would choose. After Aaron revealed his weakness of character at the golden calf, what believer would appoint him to be Israel's first high priest, a position second only to that of Moses in sacredness and importance. Yet this is the very man the Lord chose.

At the same time, it is evident that Aaron would never have been appointed to stand at Moses' side if Moses had not exhibited such stubborn unbelief as he displayed at the burning bush. Once, because of Moses' lack of faith, Aaron had been installed in that position, the Lord would honor the appointment so long as Aaron filled it. This principle of divine order is developed further in Chapter 17, "The Extent of God's Commitment".

Under these conditions, the Lord was prepared to accept an imperfect Aaron because He knows that He cannot find faultless and perfect men to do His work in the world. He knows that some will fail under heavy pressure, although there is no excuse for doing so, but He also knows that this will serve to purify them from their defects and make them even better fitted for His service. Aaron had some wonderful qualities. Though his training had been less thorough than that of Moses, nonetheless, he had been trained well enough to serve God satisfactorily. For these and other reasons, the Lord appointed him to his various positions of trust and honor.

When Jochebed realized the awesome responsibilities to be borne by Moses, and saw the fearful dangers with which he would be faced, she was motivated to make special efforts for this son. Today, parents have the same mighty motivations to inspire them to the utmost diligence in the training and preparation of their children. The final battles of the ages are soon to be fought. In that hour, God will need men and women with the strongest of characters; souls who will stand for principle though the heavens fall; messengers who can be depended upon to obey the voice of God no matter what the cost might be to themselves.

Parents are to understand that the most important role they can play is to successfully train their children for the coming storm even as Jochebed educated Moses for his divinely-appointed mission. Make this your great lifework. It is the work to which the Lord has appointed every God-fearing parent. He guarantees success to all who make Him their Counselor and Guide.



# The Promise is Fully Reliable

## Chapter 3

The promise, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it", is so positively written that it admits of no other possibility but success. It gives us the definite assurance that, if the child is rightly trained, he will never turn away from God. Mistakes he may make, sins might mar his record, but he will never reject the salvation of the Lord.

But, if this is so, how is it that Lucifer, the multitudes of angels, and Adam and Eve, all fell away from God? Surely no one had a better preparation than Lucifer. If he and his followers could fall as they did, then surely our children, no matter how well trained, can also fall away forever! In the light of these facts, how can we believe the promise to be totally reliable?

It is quite true that Lucifer was educated by God and that, when he was old, he did depart from the way in which he should faithfully have walked, and was able to persuade millions of angels to join with him in his revolution. These facts seem to cast a doubt over the certainty of the promise made in *Proverbs* 22:6, for the promise, if applicable then, obviously never held good in those numerous cases.

However, on the other hand, once the plan of salvation was introduced to fallen mankind, we do find that the promise held good in every instance where we know for certain that the conditions were met. That is, every child who was positively born again from his mother's womb and was rightly trained thereafter, never departed from the way in which the Lord would have him walk. They all were faithful to the principles of righteousness and the service of God to the end of their days.

Unfortunately, there have been very few in history who were blessed with these advantages and in whom consequently, the desired results were achieved. The Scriptures positively name only three in this category, though enough information is given of several others to indicate that they too shared the same blessing.

First and foremost there was Jesus Christ of whom it is written:

"And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." *Luke* 1:35.

Born six months before Him was John the Baptist of whom it is testified that:

"For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." *Luke* 1:15.

Still further back was Jeremiah of whom the Lord said:

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; and I ordained you a prophet to the nations." *Jeremiah* 1:5.

There is strong evidence to the effect that Jeremiah taught the parents of Daniel and his three companions the principles of child salvation. The lives of unblemished righteousness which they lived testify to an early new birth and subsequent proper training. Of this training it is written:

"The instruction these Hebrew children had received in the homes of their parents, made them strong in faith and constant in their service of the living God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth." *Prophets and Kings*, 428.

It is here firmly stated that the constancy of their service to God was the direct result of the instructive training that they had received as children. This can only mean that their education must have been of the right order and included their having been born again from a very early moment. This is known because only one in whom has been implanted the spirit of obedience through the process of being born again can possibly obey the law at all. Just as the tree must be an apple tree before it can produce apples, so a person must be righteous within before he can live righteously without. These facts assure us that Daniel and his three companions were trained up in the way they should go, and it was for this reason that, when they were old, they did not depart from it.

Another who was born again from an early age was Joseph though we cannot say with certainty that it was from his conception. However, there is no doubt that he was born again as a child. The following words confirm this.

"There was one, however, of a widely different character—the elder son of Rachel, Joseph, whose rare personal beauty seemed but to reflect an inward beauty of mind and heart. Pure, active, and joyous, the lad gave evidence also of moral earnestness and firmness. He listened to his father's instructions, and loved to obey God. The qualities that afterward

distinguished him in Egypt—gentleness, fidelity, and truthfulness—were already manifest in his daily life." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 209.

There might have been others down through history who were blessed with deliverance from the sin nature while still unborn, and who were thereafter correctly trained by their parents. But, if there were, we have no record of them and therefore cannot refer to them as examples.

So, we have before us every person of whom there is a positive record of their having been trained in the way they should go, and, with unvarying consistency, they prove the truth of the promise, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." So fully did each of them walk in the way he should go, that, in the Scriptures, there is no record of sin against any of them.

This is not saying that these men, apart from Christ of course, never committed a single sin though they very well might not have. All that has been said is that the Scriptures contain no record of their having sinned, which means that, if they did sin at all, it was very inconsequential in its repercussions.

Some have suggested that the promise did not hold good in Samson's case, because he did not faithfully adhere to the ways of righteousness. But, to be an example of God's assurance in *Proverbs* 22:6, we would need clear Scriptural evidence to the effect that he was born again from his mother's womb, and properly trained thereafter. This I fail to find. What would tend to make one think that he was, is the special instruction given to his parents before he was conceived, but this seemed to be limited to the matter of temperance. So far, I have found no text or statement assuring us that the Angel told them how to bring the new birth to the child. It is possible, because of the dense spiritual darkness then prevailing in consequence of Israel's persistent apostasy, that they were incapable of understanding the truth on child salvation.

So then, consideration must be given to two situations between which significant differences exist. If these distinctions are not recognized and understood, it will be quite impossible to understand how Lucifer, the angels who followed him, and Adam and Eve, departed from the way God had trained them to go.

The first of these situations involved Lucifer and those in heaven and on earth who followed him from Edenic perfection into the strange, new world of sin. The second concerns those who were born again and rightly trained after the plan of salvation had been implemented subsequent to the fall. It should be noted that the promise was made to the second group, not the first.

The training received by Lucifer and his angels did not save them from rebellion. The very fact that they rose up against their Creator proves this.

On the other hand, the advantages and education received by Christ, John the Baptist, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, Jeremiah, and Joseph, very effectively caused them to walk in the way they should go when they came to maturity.

So, it is the truth that there is a difference between the results achieved by the best training available before the fall, and the effects gained by the education administered thereafter. Therefore, if the results do not match, then the training which produces those results must also be different. The indication is that the training given to all the sinless beings before the fall lacked certain qualities and advantages which are present in the education provided by Jehovah after the rebellion commenced. This lack was not due to any deficiency in divine foresight, nor to God's withholding essential light from His subjects. No charge whatsoever can be justly laid against God in this or any other area, for God is immaculately righteous and perfect.

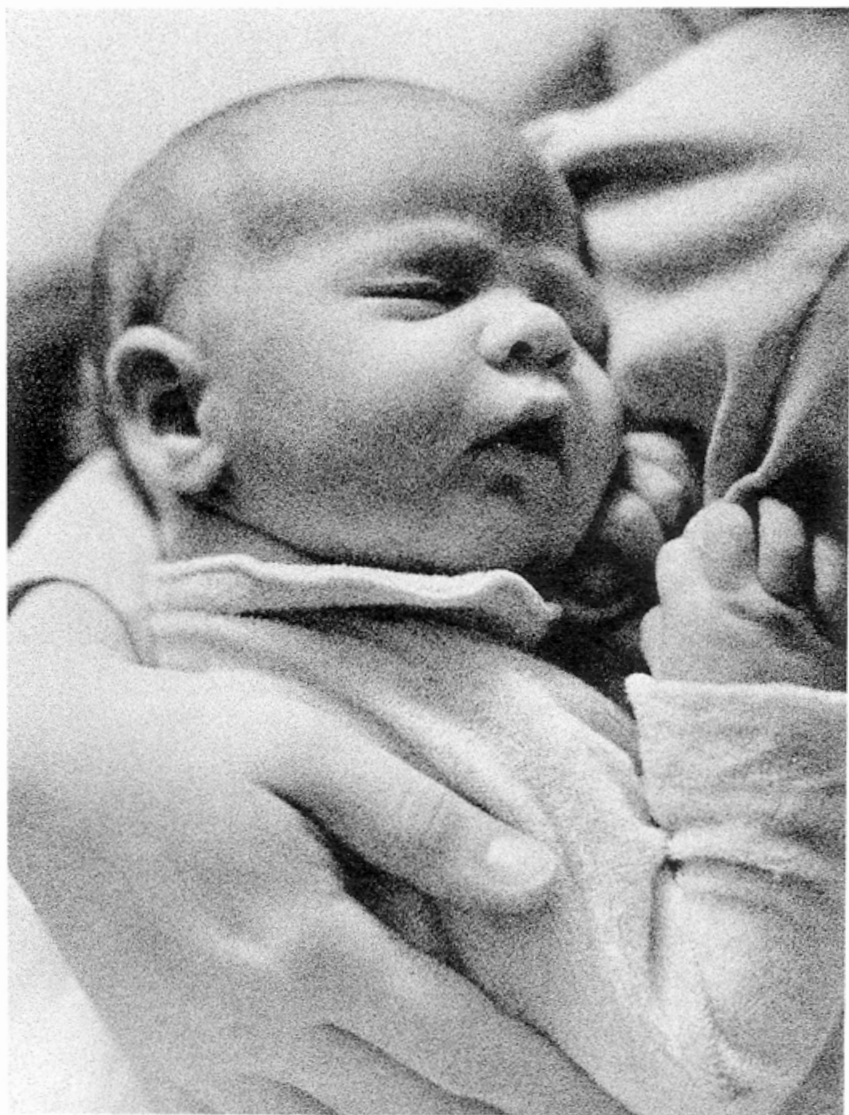
Despite the clarity of the facts involved, there are those who might have difficulty in accepting these differences. They are aware that there are no shortcomings in God's perfect and adequate provisions for all His created children, and that there was no excuse for sin, especially in the one who, of all created beings, stood nearest to God. They are not able to reconcile the fact that these differences do exist, in view of the infinite adequacy of God and His perfect righteousness.

However, there are no contradictions involved here. These differences do not deny the unlimited capacities of God, nor do they indicate any unrighteous withholding by God of information vital to heaven's security. This will become apparent as we proceed.

Let us now return to the fact that Lucifer's fall proves that under the conditions then prevailing, there was no absolute certainty that a created being, rightly trained as he certainly was, would always walk in God's ways. On the other hand, the lives of those mortals who lived under the conditions prevailing since the fall, and who were truly sanctified from conception and rightly trained, prove that such a person will not depart from God's ways.

It is now time to understand what makes the difference between these two situations.

Before sin appeared, there was no knowledge of evil and its horrifying effects on sinners. There was only the knowledge of good, and that was all that God intended to provide. Therefore, when pride began to manifest itself in Lucifer, he had no idea where it would lead him or what it would do to him and his followers, even though the Almighty laid all the consequences before him as clearly as possible under the circumstances. To the covering cherub and his supporters, it appeared as a fascinating, new realm of study and experimentation, offering the prospects of wonderful rewards, and total emancipation from the re-



Because the entrance of sin has made manifest the terrible out-working of iniquity, and because this crisis has revealed wonders of the character of God hitherto hidden from sight, there is available to those children who have been born subsequent to the fall, an education and a training which are immeasurably superior to that available before the fall. Unfortunately, too few infants have been exposed to this light, but in the cases of those who have, the most wonderful results have been achieved.

straints that their perverted minds imagined had confined them. So they embarked on their search into the knowledge of evil, a field of learning they could have better done without.

God's warnings and pleadings went unheeded and they became determined not to abandon their quest. One would think that, in this kind of situation, the word of the Almighty would have been all that was necessary to settle the issue forever, but it proved otherwise. They had lost faith in that word, having, in their pride, deemed their own capacities and knowledge to be more reliable, even as men of the world do at the present time.

Once they had come to this terrible condition of wicked unbelief, they could learn the truth only by suffering the fearful consequences of their chosen course. That which could not be settled by declaration, must be forever cleared up by demonstration. Angels and men, both loyal and rebellious, must see for themselves the actual outworking of the devil's teachings on the one hand, and the principles of righteousness on the other.

Therefore, since the fall, the education of God's children on this earth, in Heaven, and throughout the unfallen worlds, has included courses of study not available to and therefore absent from the training of those who lived before the fall. Whereas those who lived before the entrance of sin could learn only the knowledge of good, those who have lived this side of that terrible debut not only have access to the knowledge of evil, but are actually required to understand it.

The acquirement of the knowledge of evil does not necessitate actual participation in iniquity. This is proved by the fact that the sinless beings throughout the universe gain their knowledge of it by simply observing wickedness at work in this sin-cursed world to which, fortunately, it has been confined. The objective in gaining the knowledge of evil is not to give those concerned an experience in the pleasures and subsequent pains of sin. Rather, the intent is to equip all with a very clear comprehension of the actual nature of sin, to develop in every candidate for the kingdom the capacity to recognize its advances even under the cleverest of disguises, and to build into each believer a disposition to instantly and totally reject sin the moment it makes any advances upon him.

There is very good reason for the knowledge of good and evil being now required whereas, before the fall, the understanding of good was all that was needed. As a suitor, sin has entered the previously uncontested arena once occupied by righteousness alone. It is able to make itself appear more attractive than obedience in the eyes of those who have not been soundly educated in discerning the real nature of its claims and the true effects of its practices. The insistent advances of this would-be benefactor must be either accepted or rejected, for they cannot be



ignored. Everyone throughout the entire universe must make an intelligent decision for good or for evil.

One would think that this would be a simple choice to make, and it would be but for sin's incredible capacity to represent itself as being the infinitely superior alternative to the "bondage" and "oppression" which the devil claims is characteristic of God's kingdom.

Striking proof of sin's deceptive power is given by the extent and depth of the approving vote given it by such a significant proportion of the angels including the highest and best of them, Lucifer. Fully one third of the angelic host believed that the alternative life-style was to be preferred, and consequently opted to abandon the heavenly courts in favor of a sinful existence however long it would last.

One third might seem like a relatively insignificant proportion—after all, it is the minority group—until one begins to *realize* how many it took to make up that one third. The Scriptures declare that the loyal angels still serving God today number ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands. "Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." *Revelation* 5:11.

Thus the number of angels who have remained loyal to God and surround His throne, the twenty-four elders, and the four living creatures, is ten thousand squared plus thousands of thousands. Ten thousand times itself is one hundred million. We are not told how many thousands by how many thousands make up the other figure. One thousand by one thousand is a million. Five by five is twenty five million and so on. If the figures given are to be taken literally, then we could safely say that at least one hundred million angels have remained loyal to Christ and His righteousness. Now these are the two thirds who chose not to join Lucifer in his rebellion. If the two thirds number at least one hundred million, then the one third who left must add up to at least fifty million. To attract the support of so large a number of highly educated and intelligent beings, sin must have appeared very attractive indeed.

But this is not all. It is a mistake to suppose that the angels who remained loyal were untouched by the subtle sophistries presented in favor of the introduction of evil into the universal kingdom. Serious doubts about the integrity of God were stirred in their minds and these uncertainties took over four thousand years to eradicate. It was only when the Saviour finally hung on Calvary suffering the unrestrained fury of devilish hatred and malice, while exhibiting the full glory of His Father's character of love with a patience and constancy that was

astonishing, that they were finally and fully cured of all sympathy with the cause of evil.

"Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion." *The Desire of Ages*, 758.

So it was that by the time Christ died, the angels had acquired a knowledge of good and evil such as they never could have had before the emergence of sin. None should have any difficulty in seeing that this was not due to any deficiency on the part of God prior to sin's tragic entrance, but rather to the fact that, until iniquity arose, the circumstances had never developed under which there would be the necessity and the possibility of providing such a searching revelation of good and evil.

Thus, in the nature of the case, the training available to both angels and men subsequent to the fall is decidedly superior to that which was possible before sin appeared. Being so much better, it must in turn produce better results. It does. Whereas those created beings who were educated under the knowledge available before sin's entrance were not totally secure, all who are rightly trained since then will prove to be forever immune to the deadly sophistry of wickedness.

"Satan's rebellion was to be a lesson to the universe through all coming ages, a perpetual testimony to the nature and terrible results of sin. The working out of Satan's rule, its effects upon both men and angels, would show what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority. It would testify that with the existence of God's government and His law is bound up the well-being of all the creatures He has made. Thus the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard to all holy intelligences, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression, to save them from committing sin and suffering its punishments." *The Great Controversy*, 499.

So, the training given to Lucifer, which did not include a knowledge of evil, while really adequate enough to keep him from going into rebellion, lacked the absolute security which is included in the education being given to every child who, since the fall, is truly being trained in the way that he should go.

Let it be reiterated that acquiring the knowledge of evil does not require an experience in sinning. Instead, it involves the development of the capacity to recognize and hate iniquity for what it is, and to learn to shun it, while gladly choosing righteousness instead.

The education which includes the knowledge of both good and evil and which has been available only since the rebellion began, is the most effective education ever offered to created beings. It is of such excellence

that the Lord can say with confidence to the parents who become His messengers in teaching it: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Remember that it is to fallen human beings that this promise is made, not to spotless angels before the knowledge of evil appeared. Rejoice then in the certainty that the promise is true. Lucifer's fall does not allow for any admission of unreliability in God's assurance. Know then with certainty that when your children are trained according to the divine principles now shining forth in the light God is revealing, they will not, when they are old, depart from the way in which they should go.

This means that the supreme Ruler of the universe has Himself gone on record assuring all that, as surely as the child is rightly trained, so certainly will he walk forever in God's ways and as positively will be reserved a place in the kingdom. So, in the light of this statement, if, when they come to maturity, the children do not walk in the way they should go, then the blame must rest entirely with the parents. They manifestly have failed to learn and apply the principles of child salvation.

There was the time when parents could be excused for such tragic failures because the light on child salvation was hidden from them, but that day is now past. The truth about this parental responsibility is shining in clearer and clearer rays and leaves every parent to whom the light is accessible with no excuse whatsoever. Under these circumstances, God will hold the parents accountable to the extent that, if they fail to bring salvation to their children, then they will forfeit this blessing for themselves as well. God has declared that those parents who come to the gates of Paradise without their children will not be given the admittance they were expecting, as it is written:

"It is the privilege of parents to take their children with them to the gates of the city of God, saying, 'I have tried to instruct my children to love the Lord, to do His will, and to glorify Him.' To such the gate will be thrown open, and parents and children will enter in. But all cannot enter. Some are left outside with their children, whose characters have not been transformed by submission to the will of God. A hand is raised, and the words are spoken, 'You have neglected home duties. You have failed to do the work that would have fitted the soul for a home in heaven. You cannot enter.' The gates are closed to the children because they have not learned to do the will of God, and to parents because they have neglected the responsibilities resting upon them." *Child Guidance*, 13.

"Light has been shining from the word of God and the testimonies of His Spirit so that none need err in regard to their duty. God requires parents to bring up their children to know Him and to respect His claims; they are to train their little ones, as the younger members of the Lord's family, to have beautiful characters and lovely tempers, that they may be

fitted to shine in the heavenly courts. By neglecting their duty and indulging their children in wrong, parents close to them the gates to the city of God.

"These facts must be pressed home upon parents; they must arouse, and take up their long-neglected work." Testimonies 5:325, 326.

No wonder there will be "wailing and gnashing of teeth". *Matthew* 13:42. There can be no greater personal tragedy or crushing disappointment than to come to the end fully confident of a place in the kingdom only to be denied entrance and be turned back into the darkness of eternal oblivion.

But this need not be. There is a way of training our children which will bring personal salvation to them. Learn it and apply it successfully, and both your salvation and theirs is assured. The gates will not be closed against you.



# The Model Child

## Chapter 4

In the wonderful work of bringing salvation to the children, it is not given to parents to set the standard for acceptable behavior even though it is critically important that an ideal be revealed and its attainment diligently sought. If God had left each parent to determine these vital matters, there would be a very wide range of standards indeed, and all of them far too low for divine acceptance. Such a situation could only lead to great confusion and distress.

These difficulties are solved by no less a Person than God Himself who has set the standard for childhood behavior. Its level is so exalted as to surpass the highest expectations of the human mind, for it is nothing short of perfection. There is no difference between what the Lord requires of children and what He expects of adult Christians so far as the quality of their obedience is concerned. Of course, adults with their increased capacities can render a much larger service than little children, and God expects each to serve according to his or her capacities, but the same perfect root must be the foundation of every true Christian's behavior.

"God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' This command is a promise. The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning.

"The tempter's agency is not to be accounted an excuse for one wrong act. Satan is jubilant when he hears the professed followers of

Christ making excuses for their deformity of character. It is these excuses that lead to sin. There is no excuse for sinning. A holy temper, a Christ-like life, is accessible to every repenting, believing child of God." *The Desire of Ages*, 311.

The command to be perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect is a frightening and discouraging commission until it is truly realized that this command is a promise. In other words, "As the will of man co-operates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings." *Christ's Object Lessons*, 333.

Therefore the directive to be perfect is in fact God's promise that He Himself will perfect the believer who cooperates with Him. It is God's work to achieve this wonderful ideal, not ours. Certainly, we have a part to play, but it is the Almighty who, through His creative power, will make men perfect. Scripture after scripture testifies to this truth.

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"He who calls you is faithful, *who also will do it.*" *1 Thessalonians* 5:23, 24.

"... being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." *Philippians* 1:6

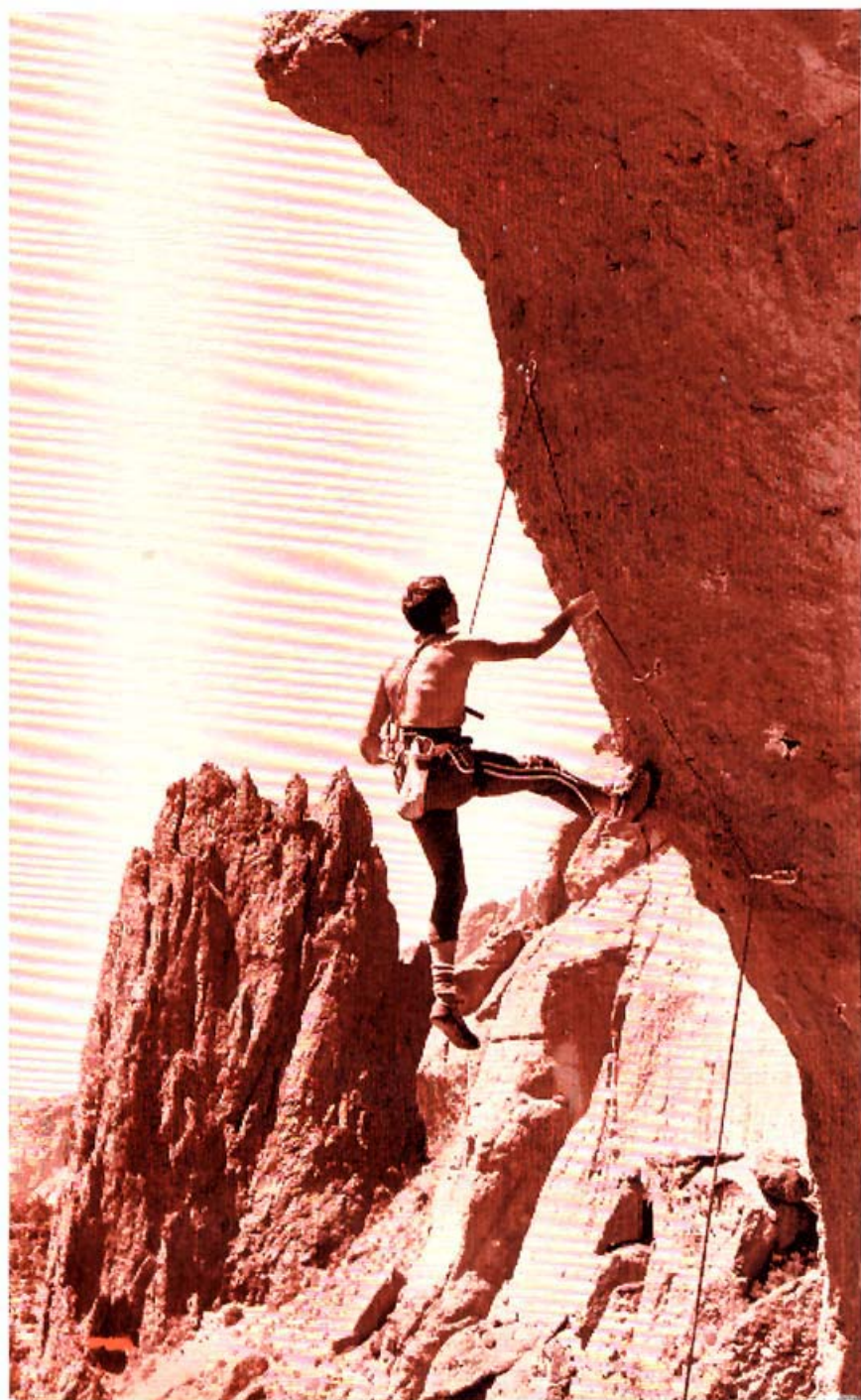
"God has made provision that we may become like unto Him, and *He will accomplish this* for all who do not interpose a perverse will and thus frustrate His grace." *Thoughts from Mount of Blessing*, 76.

"The Father ratified the covenant made with Christ, that He would receive repentant and obedient men, and would love them even as He loves His Son. Christ was to complete His work, and fulfill His pledge to 'make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.' *Isaiah* 13:12. All power in heaven and on earth was given to the Prince of Life, and He returned to His followers in a world of sin, that He might impart to them of His power and glory." *The Desire of Ages*, 790.

There are many more assurances from the Almighty that He will perfect the work of salvation and grace in the believer, but we will leave the readers to search these out for themselves. As each one is found and read, the assurance will deepen and strengthen that perfecting righteousness in the believer is His work, His promise!

But what has this to do with child salvation? It has everything to do with it, for every command, ideal, and promise made to adults is equally applicable to children, as it is written:

"God's promise is given as much to children and youth as to those of more mature age. Whenever God has given a promise, let the children



and youth turn it into a petition, and beg the Lord to do those things for them in their experience, that He did for Jesus, His only begotten Son, when in human necessity He looked to God, asking for the things which He needed. Every blessing the Father has provided for those of more mature experience, has been provided for children and youth through Jesus Christ." *Sons and Daughters*, 128.

To the parents has been made the command and the promise, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." *Matthew* 5:48. So certainly as these words are spoken to the parents, they are addressed to the children also. As God is perfect, so both the adults and the little ones are likewise to be the same. What a wonderful prospect for parents—perfect children! What a joy and solace to every mother and father to have younger members of the family who are living God's ideal of true Christian perfection! This is the way God intended it to be and, for its achievement in every household, He has made full provision. The tragedy is that too few have had their eyes opened to see and lay hold upon the good things the Lord has provided.

It is essential for all those who would lead their children into the joy of salvation and Christian perfection, that they have very clear and decided views of what the divine standard is for the little ones. If care is not taken to acquire this, they will aim far too low, will consequently achieve less than the Lord can accept, and will doom their children to eternal destruction when they should have been blessed with eternal life. Therefore, adequate time must be devoted to diligent searching of the Scriptures until the will of God for the children is truly understood. Even then there must be no stopping place, no relaxation of effort. Much further consideration must be given to the matter to ensure that the freshness and power in the theme does not wane but rather grows brighter and more impressive every day.

If it is not learned now that there exists only one standard acceptable to God both for children and adults, it will later be discovered on the great day of final reckoning that the Lord does not have a variety of standards for those who would enter the kingdom. It will then be seen, too late, that the children have been measured against the same undeviating standards of righteousness and truth as everyone else.

Despite this, a *unified and consistent* concept of what normal infant, child, and adolescent disposition and behavior should be, is not in circulation today. What one parent will accept as the best that can be

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** When we compare the best that we thought we could expect from our children with what Christ achieved as the model child, boy, youth, and man, we suddenly realize that we have been fumbling around in the lowlands and that we need to begin scaling the heights which we previously thought to be unclimbable.



expected, another will barely tolerate, and yet another will reject as unacceptable and unendurable. Some will be criticized as overly lenient and inconsistent, while others will be charged with harshness and even cruelty. Generally speaking though, it is amazing to see what adults will tolerate as the "best that can be expected" from their children! They seem totally prepared to suffer embarrassment, disobedience, tantrums, rebellion, and disloyalty as a matter of course. How sad to see them put through such agonies when there is no need for it.

Among all those who are dedicated to achieving God's purposes in the saving of their children, this confusion must end. These many and varied standards must be replaced with a common awareness of what the children of Christian parents should be.

How is this to be achieved? Will it be the product of consensus among parents, church leaders, educators, administrators, and law enforcement agencies? This would be expecting far too much. So disparate are the concepts held by the individuals occupying these various positions that it would be impossible for them to agree on what the ideal child should be like. All of them would set their target below the divine standard for childhood behavior. Even if they could work out some compromise acceptable to all, they would never be able to harmonize on the procedures by which a child was to be raised. Therefore, it must be recognized that no help is to come from these sources, for human beings do not have the answers to these weighty matters as their track record proves. Not even God's own people have been able to consistently bring up children blessed with Christian perfection.

There is only One who can reveal the truth on this subject—the almighty Sovereign of the universe. He is the infinite Source of light on this subject as He is on all other matters, while we remain dependent, helpless receivers. Without Him we can know and achieve nothing. Far more than we could ever *realize*, is His dedicated desire to impart to us the light on child salvation. He wants the little ones to be saved. He desires that they shall be rescued from evil at the earliest possible moment in their lives, filled with His righteousness, and raised as living witnesses to His power and glory. Therefore, it must be expected that He has communicated in the clearest way possible, a living picture of what every child can be and is to be. That, praise His holy name, He has done, not just in words of instruction, but in the way we can understand best—in a living example and perfect demonstration. That model is found in the impeccable life of Jesus as a newly born infant, tiny toddler, growing child, robust boy, and splendid youth. At every stage of His development, His life was a living witness to what we can be at the same age level. That one perfect pattern is to be the constant study of every parent. It removes all assumptions and guesswork in regard to what parents are to expect in their children's development.

"Jesus is the perfect pattern, and it is the duty and privilege of every child and youth to copy the pattern. Let children bear in mind that the child Jesus had taken upon Himself human nature, and was in the likeness of sinful flesh, and was tempted of Satan as all children are tempted. He was able to resist the temptation of Satan through His dependence upon the divine power of His heavenly Father, as He was subject to His will, and obedient to all His commands. He kept His Father's statutes, precepts, and laws. He was continually seeking counsel of God, and was obedient to His will.

"It is the duty and privilege of every child to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. . . . It will please the Lord Jesus to have the children ask Him for every spiritual grace, to bring all their perplexities and trials to the Saviour; for He knows how to help the children and youth, because He was a child Himself, and was once subject to all the trials, disappointments, and perplexities to which children and youth are subject. God's promise is given as much to children and youth as to those of more mature age. Whenever God has given a promise, let the children and youth turn it into a petition, and beg the Lord to do those things for them in their experience, that He did for Jesus, His only begotten Son, when in human necessity He looked to God, asking for the things which He needed. Every blessing the Father has provided for those of more mature experience, has been provided for children and youth through Jesus Christ." *Sons and Daughters of God*, 128.

Much attention has been given to Christ the man as the perfect example for adults, but little notice has been taken of His childhood role as an example of what it is the "duty and privilege of every child and youth" to be. This is surprising in view of the many statements to this effect of which the one quoted above and those following are examples.

"When we look upon His patient self-denial, His shrinking from all notoriety, devoting Himself to His daily labor in a humble sphere, what a beautiful light is shed about His life! *How clearly is pointed out the path in which children and youth should walk!*" *Sons and Daughters of God*, 129.

"He was a perfect pattern for all youth." *Sons and Daughters of God*, 130.

"In the life of Christ we see the only safe pattern for all children and youth." *Sons and Daughters of God*, 132.

"He must set such an example that little children, the younger members of the Lord's family, would see nothing in His life or character to justify any evil deed." *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 401.

"The early life of Christ was subjected to severe trials, hardships, and conflicts, that He might develop the perfect character which makes Him a perfect example for children, youth, and manhood." *My Life Today*, 296.

## Heaven Loves the Children



Jesus has an infinite love for and interest in children. One reason for this is that He sees the tremendous potential in them. He knows what mighty forces for good they can and will become if they are His from their earliest moments, and are rightly trained thereafter. Parents will manifest a large degree of the same love for and interest in their children when they realize the possibilities to be developed in them.

"Jesus was interested in children. He did not step into our world a fully matured man. Had He done this, children would not have had His example to copy. Christ was a child; He had the experience of a child; He felt the disappointments and trials that children feel; He knew the temptations of children and youth. But Christ was in His child life and youthful life an example to all children and youth. In childhood His hands were engaged in useful acts. In youth He worked at the carpenter's trade with His Father, and was subject to His parents, thus giving in His life a lesson to all children and young. If Christ had never been a child Himself, the youth might now think that He could not sympathize with them. But He lived their example, and all children and youth may find in

Jesus one to whom they can carry all their griefs and all their disappointments, and in Him they will find a Friend who will help them." *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, 54, 55.

"Jesus was the pattern for children, and He was also the father's example." *The Desire of Ages*, 515.

The message conveyed in these statements is so strong that parents and others who have for so long been accustomed to accepting unlovely behavior from children as normal and unavoidable, are apt to miss its full impact. No one questions that Christ as an infant, child, and youth was different from the unconverted children around Him, but they have never dared to believe that their children could be as sweet, lovely, respectful, and obedient as the child Jesus was.

Yet that is the very point which His early years emphasize. All the sinless perfection manifested in His life, is to be revealed in the lives of our children, and no parent should now be prepared to accept anything less than this as the norm for their offspring. Those children who have had a disadvantageous beginning in life will not reach the same levels of excellence as Christ and others attained, but they can be led to the same quality of experience, the same purity of sinless living. "He is a perfect and holy example, given for us to imitate. We cannot equal the pattern; but we shall not be approved of God if we do not copy it and, according to the ability which God has given, resemble it." Testimonies 2:549.

Living faith must grasp these truths until they become the immovable conviction of the heart, and the believers are inspired with the glorious realization that their children can be beautiful in character—loving, respectful, obedient, deeply spiritual, dedicated to the highest ideals, industrious, helpful, sober, studious, thoughtful, intensely interested in God's holy word, and totally disinterested in the world and its ways.

These ideas are so new and wonderful that many will tend to brush them off as being too good to be true. But the witness of Christ's life argues unassailably that this is not only the level to which the children may be led, but that there is nothing less which the eternal Father will accept as normal childhood behavior.

Parents who are prepared to claim the promises and aim for these high ideals, need to make an earnest study of Christ's life from infancy to manhood so that they will always have the perfect pattern before them.

The Scriptures themselves are brief in their description of Christ's early years. There is some information about His birth, the adoration of the shepherds and the wise men, the dedication, the flight to Egypt and return, and the years spent at the carpenter's bench. But we have not discerned from these historical records all that needs to be understood concerning His character and disposition, nor have we realized the fearful pressure of temptation He had to withstand. Here are the brief statements

covering this vital period in His life: "And the child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. . . .

"Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart.

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men." *Luke 2:40, 51, 52.*

However, the Spirit of Prophecy provides a considerable amount of information about the character, disposition, and spirit of the child Jesus, and the man He grew to be. Parents who study this will find themselves reading about the perfect child; the kind that anyone would be delighted to have. Let all rejoice in the knowledge that they too can have the same beautiful little beings inhabiting their dwellings and filling their lives with sunshine. It is not too good to be true, but is what the Lord in His infinite love, measureless power, and undisputed wisdom, plans for every home.

Read with wonder and confident, joyful expectation these descriptions of that beautiful child.

"Wonderful in its significance is the brief record of His early life: The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him.' In the sunlight of His Father's countenance, Jesus 'increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.' *Luke 2:52.* His mind was active and penetrating, with a thoughtfulness and wisdom beyond His years. Yet His character was beautiful in its symmetry. The powers of mind and body developed gradually, in keeping with the laws of childhood.

"As a child, Jesus manifested a peculiar loveliness of disposition. His willing hands were ever ready to serve others. He manifested a patience that nothing could disturb, and a truthfulness that would never sacrifice integrity. In principle firm as a rock, His life revealed the grace of unselfish courtesy.

"With deep earnestness the mother of Jesus watched the unfolding of His powers, and beheld the impress of perfection upon His character. With delight she sought to encourage that bright, receptive mind. Through the Holy Spirit she received wisdom to co-operate with the heavenly agencies in the development of this child, who could claim only God as His Father." *The Desire of Ages*, 68, 69.

A beautifully symmetrical character; a peculiar loveliness of disposition; an unfailing willingness to serve others; patience that could not be disturbed; and a truthfulness that would never let Him stoop to tell a lie regardless of the pressure—what desirable characteristics in every youthful member of every family!

What a child! How different He was from even the best that we know today, but in no wise other than what every youngster can be, for:

"Every child may gain knowledge as Jesus did." *The Desire of Ages*, 70.

"In childhood He did the works of an obedient child. He spoke and acted with the wisdom of a child and not of a man, honoring His parents and carrying out their wishes in helpful ways, according to the ability of a child. But at each stage of His development He was perfect, with the simple, natural grace of a sinless life." Christ's *Object Lessons*, 83.

"During all these secluded years His life flowed out in currents of sympathy and helpfulness. His unselfishness and patient endurance, His courage and faithfulness, His resistance of temptation, His unfailing peace and quiet joyfulness, were a constant inspiration. He brought a pure, sweet atmosphere into the home, and His life was as leaven working amidst the elements of society. None said that He had wrought a miracle; yet virtue—the healing, life-giving power of love—went out from Him to the tempted, the sick, and the disheartened. In an unobtrusive way, from His very childhood, He ministered to others, and because of this, when He began His public ministry, many heard Him gladly.

"The Saviour's early years are more than an example to the youth. They are a lesson, and should be an encouragement, to every parent. The circle of family and neighborhood duties is the very first field of effort for those who would work for the uplifting of their fellow men. There is no more important field of effort than that committed to the founders and guardians of the home. No work entrusted to human beings involves greater or more far-reaching results than does the work of fathers and mothers." *The Ministry of Healing*, 350, 351.

The list of statements which could be quoted is very long and should be searched out by every diligent parent who truly recognizes his responsibility to bring up children after the divine pattern. But a few more references will be listed from which are quoted the most important thoughts in each paragraph.

"He was bright and cheerful. ..." *The Desire of Ages*, 89.

"Neither gain nor pleasure, applause nor censure, could induce Him to consent to a wrong act. . . . Jesus lived in a peasant's home, and faithfully and cheerfully acted His part in bearing the burdens of the household." *The Desire of Ages*, 72.

"Present before the children Jesus, as a child obedient to His parents, as a youth faithful and industrious, helping to support the family." *Testimonies* 6:359.

"He was faithful in the discharge of His home duties, and the early morning hours, instead of being wasted in bed, often found Him in a retired place, meditating and searching the Scriptures and in prayer." *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 402.

As an infant and a child, Christ did not escape temptation. On the contrary, He felt the pressure of Satan's determined, ruthless, and utterly cruel efforts to break down His resistance and lead Him to commit just one wrong act. There is no temptation faced by our children that the



child Jesus did not face in greater measure than has ever been experienced by any other child who has ever lived. But not even by a thought could the evil one lead Him to sin.

"The life of Jesus was a life in harmony with God. While He was a child, He thought and spoke as a child; but no trace of sin marred the image of God within Him. Yet He was not exempt from temptation. The inhabitants of Nazareth were proverbial for their wickedness. The low estimate in which they were generally held is shown by Nathanael's question, 'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?' John 1:46. Jesus was placed where His character would be tested. It was necessary for Him to be constantly on guard in order to preserve His purity. He was subject to all the conflicts which we have to meet, that He might be an example to us in childhood, youth, and manhood.

"Satan was unwearied in his efforts to overcome the Child of Nazareth. From His earliest years Jesus was guarded by heavenly angels, yet His life was one long struggle against the powers of darkness. That there should be upon the earth one life free from the defilement of evil was an offense and a perplexity to the prince of darkness. He left no means untried to ensnare Jesus. No child of humanity will ever be called to live a holy life amid so fierce a conflict with temptation as was our Saviour." *The Desire of Ages*, 71.

It was just as essential for Christ to live a sinless life as a child, as it was for Him to maintain it as a man. He had come to demonstrate that there is no situation in which human beings can be placed from infancy to old age except they can live a perfectly sinless life.

"Of the bitterness that falls to the lot of humanity, there was no part which Christ did not taste. There were those who tried to cast contempt upon Him because of His birth, and even in His childhood He had to meet their scornful looks and evil whisperings. If He had responded by an impatient word or look, if He had conceded to His brothers by even one wrong act, He would have failed of being a perfect example. Thus He would have failed of carrying out the plan for our redemption. Had He even admitted that there could be an excuse for sin, Satan would have triumphed, and the world would have been lost. This is why the tempter worked to make His life as trying as possible, that He might be led to sin.

"But to every temptation He had one answer, 'It is written.' He rarely rebuked any wrongdoing of His brothers, but He had a word from God to speak to them. Often He was accused of cowardice for refusing to unite with them in some forbidden act; but His answer was, It is written,

**OPPOSITE PAGE: Jesus' serene, pure life, lived in the midst of the corruption of His time, was like the sweetness and purity of a lily growing in the midst of thorns. So too may be the lives of everyone of our children.**



The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.' *Job 28:28.*" *The Desire of Ages*, 88, 89.

Beginning when He was but a child and increasing wonderfully as He moved into youth and manhood, Christ's life was a heavenly blessing to His community. Everywhere He went, He was an encouragement to those who were battling with temptation, a strength to the weak, an uplift to the despondent, and an example of righteousness to all. By His word and by His powerful example which vindicated and supported that word, He brought deliverance and hope to those fighting a desperate battle against temptation.

"His presence brought a purer atmosphere into the home, and His life was as leaven working amid the elements of society. Harmless and undefiled, He walked among the thoughtless, the rude, the uncourteous; amid the unjust publicans, the reckless prodigals, the unrighteous Samaritans, the heathen soldiers, the rough peasants, and the mixed multitude. He spoke a word of sympathy here and a word there, as He saw men weary, yet compelled to bear heavy burdens. He shared their burdens, and repeated to them the lessons He had learned from nature, of the love, the kindness, the goodness of God.

"He taught all to look upon themselves as endowed with precious talents, which if rightly employed would secure for them eternal riches. He weeded all vanity from life, and by His own example taught that every moment of time is fraught with eternal results; that it is to be cherished as a treasure, and to be employed for holy purposes. He passed by no human being as worthless, but sought to apply the saving remedy to every soul. In whatever company He found Himself, He presented a lesson that was appropriate to the time and the circumstances. He sought to inspire with hope the most rough and unpromising, setting before them the assurance that they might become blameless and harmless, attaining such a character as would make them manifest as the children of God. Often He met those who had drifted under Satan's control, and who had no power to break from his snare. To such a one, discouraged, sick, tempted, and fallen, Jesus would speak words of tenderest pity, words that were needed and could be understood. Others He met who were fighting a hand-to-hand battle with the adversary of souls. These He encouraged to persevere, assuring them that they would win; for angels of God were on their side, and would give them the victory. Those whom He thus helped were convinced that here was One in whom they could trust with perfect confidence. He would not betray the secrets they poured into His sympathizing ear.

"Jesus was the healer of the body as well as of the soul. He was interested in every phase of suffering that came under His notice, and to every sufferer He brought relief, His kind words having a soothing balm.

None could say that He had worked *a* miracle; but virtue—the healing power of love—went out from Him to the sick and distressed. Thus in an unobtrusive way He worked for the people from His very childhood. And this was why, after His public ministry began, so many heard Him gladly." *The Desire of Ages*, 90-92.

This is a record of the childhood, youth, and early manhood of Jesus. It is a beautiful and thrilling account, but no longer is it to be read only as the revelation of the beauty and power of Christ's life. It is to be earnestly and confidently contemplated as the prophecy of what every Christian child is to be. Parents, grasp this marvelous record as the assurance and promise that, once the divine provisions have been correctly applied, your children will possess the same qualities and powers.

Then you will be able to testify to the truth that: "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is His reward.

"Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth.

"Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate." *Psalms* 127:3-5.



# Triumphant over the Confederacy

## Chapter 5

One of the great disappointments experienced by parents is the proneness of their offspring to succumb to the pressures society brings to bear upon them. Ridicule and intimidation are powerful weapons which children find difficult to resist. They hate to be singular. Instead, they are driven by an intense longing to be accepted by the neighborhood children or their school playmates. For the average child whose life style is patterned after the world around him, this is not a stressful problem. But, those who adhere to principles which mark them as being singular, are subjected to rejection and persecution that imposes an emotional stress which tends to scar them for the remainder of their lives. Children in this category suffer fearful temptation to compromise the faith of their fathers and follow the ways of the world. There are many who yield to this severe pressure and, in the end, depart altogether from the path of obedience.

There was no one in history who, as a child, understood the power of this persecution better than the child Jesus. An incredibly powerful confederacy united for the purpose of breaking His will and forcing Him to conform to the traditions and practices of the religious leaders. The members of this confederacy were: the influential, highly educated and skilled rabbis, who gained some support from Christ's parents in their evil work because Joseph and Mary could not clearly understand His mission; the sons of Joseph from a former marriage; and the Pharisees who were offended because Jesus did not endorse and uphold their rigid exclusiveness. The Pharisees' anger and resentment were intensified as they saw Him aiding the very ones they had made outcasts from society and also, as they supposed, from God.

To appreciate the staggering burden of temptation under which He



As a jet rises high above the world below, so Jesus lived in an atmosphere and at an elevated level unknown to the Jewish people of His time. Therefore no one understood Him or His mission, yet He lived a perfectly sinless life.

labored, let us examine each element in the confederacy, beginning with the learned rabbis.

"From its earliest years the Jewish child was surrounded with the requirements of the rabbis. Rigid rules were prescribed for every act, down to the smallest details of life. Under the synagogue teachers the youth were instructed in the countless regulations which as orthodox Israelites they were expected to observe. But Jesus did not interest Himself in these matters. From childhood He acted independently of the rabbinical laws. The Scriptures of the Old Testament were His constant study, and the words, 'Thus saith the Lord,' were ever upon His lips.

"As the condition of the people began to open to His mind, He saw that the requirements of society and the requirements of God were in constant collision. Men were departing from the word of God, and exalting theories of their own invention. They were observing traditional rites that possessed no virtue. Their service was a mere round of ceremonies; the sacred truths it was designed to teach were hidden from

the worshipers. He saw that in their faithless services they found no *peace*. They did not know the freedom of spirit that would come to them by serving God in truth. Jesus had come to teach the meaning of the worship of God, and He could not sanction the mingling of human requirements with the divine precepts. He did not attack the precepts or practices of the learned teachers; but when reproved for His own simple habits, He presented the word of God in justification of His conduct." *The Desire of Ages*, 84, 85.

There is nothing the establishment can bear less than non-conformity to its decrees and institutions, especially when the one who does not bow to its edicts is able to powerfully and effectively justify his actions from the very books which they claim to be following; in this case, the Old Testament Scriptures. In Christ, the child and youth, they encountered the most uncompromising individual they had ever met, and they were determined to use every facility, argument, and pressure at their command to force Him to yield.

Contemplate the seeming unevenness of the conflict. We are not informed how old Christ was when the battle first began, except that He was still referred to as "a child". *The Desire of Ages*, 85. No doubt He came to the notice of the rabbis when He failed to attend the village school. "The child Jesus did not *receive* instruction in the synagogue schools." *The Desire of Ages*, 70.

Against Him were pitted the rabbis, the best educated and most experienced men in Israel, who were both powerful and cunning in the art of bending minds to their wills. To gain some real appreciation of the seeming imbalance in the conflict, imagine a child between the ages of eight and twelve. Then think of what he could manage and what the outcome would be if he were confronted by a large group of the best theologians in the land. One would not hesitate to conclude that the child would have absolutely no hope of emerging from the conflict as the winner. Yet, in just such a situation, this is what the child Jesus was able to do every time, and, what He did, every child will be able to do if he receives, as soon as possible after conception, all that Jesus received from His earliest moments.

Because His parents did not understand Him or His mission, He was forced to defend His stand with no other human support. This significantly tipped the advantage in the rabbis' favor, but, try as they might, scheme as they did, and bully as they were prone to do, they could not bring Him to yield to their sophistries. To every demand from them, He required their authority from the Scriptures, and when they could not provide it, He would not obey them or respect the traditions which were no more than human inventions powerless to save the soul or to benefit those who followed them.

"In every gentle and submissive way, Jesus tried to please those with whom He came in contact. Because He was so gentle and unobtrusive, the scribes and elders supposed that He would be easily influenced by their teaching. They urged Him to receive the maxims and traditions that had been handed down from the ancient rabbis, but He asked for their authority in Holy Writ. He would hear every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; but He could not obey the inventions of men. Jesus seemed to know the Scriptures from beginning to end, and He presented them in their true import. The rabbis were ashamed to be instructed by a child. They claimed that it was their office to explain the Scriptures, and that it was His place to accept their interpretation. They were indignant that He should stand in opposition to their word." *The Desire of Ages*, 85.

What an amazing, incredible child was this who could stand erect and fearless before those lordly, dignified, towering authoritarians. Yet they could not charge Him with defiance or rebelliousness, for He was ever courteous, respectful, calm, and honorable. Surrounding Him was an atmosphere of simplicity and grace that was beautiful in every respect.

He perceived with perfect clarity and force the true nature of what they required of Him, and He was able to select and present exactly the right Scriptures to support His stand, leaving them outclassed, confused, and furious.

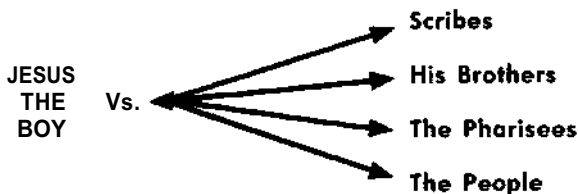
Every Christian parent would be delighted to have such a child! What a satisfaction it would be to know that your little girl or boy could be trusted to stand unmoved even under the severest pressure to do wrong. What a witness such a life would be; what a power for good; what an irresistible influence for righteousness.

Yet, even though rebuked and shamed by that spotless life, the rabbis would not yield to the convictions the Holy Spirit generated in them through the ministry of this wonderful child. They did exactly what every rebel against God's law will always do—they sought out further human support for their cause. In this case, they turned to Joseph and Mary and accused the Child of total disrespect for the established authority of the religious leaders.

"They knew that no authority could be found in Scripture for their traditions. They realized that in spiritual understanding Jesus was far in advance of them. Yet they were angry because He did not obey their dictates. Failing to convince Him, they sought Joseph and Mary, and set before them His course of non-compliance. Thus He suffered rebuke and censure." *The Desire of Ages*, 85, 86.

If Joseph and Mary had possessed the same comprehensive and clear understanding of the Scriptures that Jesus had, they could have joined with Him in defending the principles of God's kingdom. But they were confused by the popular teaching that the Messiah had come, not to

## **JESUS VERSUS THE CONFEDERACY OF EVIL**



**Lacking parents who understood His mission. He was left without human support and counsel. Yet, by the Word of God, He triumphed over them all, thus showing the way in which every child may do likewise.**

transform the people, but to destroy the Romans. Therefore, they were deeply troubled by the Saviour's stand and tended to side with the authorities.

Christ, as a little child, was already far in advance of Joseph, Mary, and His brothers (Joseph's sons by a previous marriage). His parents were not leading Him. He was leading them. This situation would not have existed had they been blessed with the divine nature from their earliest moments, and parents today who, from their infants' earliest days, apply the principles set forth here, must be prepared for their little ones to outstrip them too. It will be done without pride or any spirit of superiority. The children will have the same simple courtesy and beautiful grace that marked the life and character of Jesus.

"The life of Christ was marked with respect and love for His mother. Mary believed in her heart that the holy child born of her was the long-promised Messiah, yet she dared not express her faith. Throughout His life on earth she was a partaker in His sufferings. She witnessed with sorrow the trials brought upon Him in His childhood and youth. By her vindication of what she knew to be right in His conduct, she herself was brought into trying positions. She looked upon the associations of the home, and the mother's tender watch-care over her children, as of vital importance in the formation of character. The sons and daughters of Joseph knew this, and by appealing to her anxiety, they tried to correct the practices of Jesus according to their standard.

"Mary often remonstrated with Jesus, and urged Him to conform to the usages of the rabbis. But He could not be persuaded to change His habits of contemplating the works of God and seeking to alleviate the suffering of men or even of dumb animals. When the priests and teachers required Mary's aid in controlling Jesus, she was greatly troubled; but peace came to her heart as He presented the statements of Scripture upholding His practices." *The Desire of Ages*, 90.

"At a very early age, Jesus had begun to act for Himself in the formation of His character, and not even respect and love for His parents could turn Him from obedience to God's word. 'It is written' was His reason for every act that varied from the family customs. But the influence of the rabbis made His life a bitter one. Even in His youth He had to learn the hard lesson of silence and patient endurance." *The Desire of Ages*, 86.

Although the rabbis failed to gain unequivocal support from Christ's parents, they definitely received it from His so-called brothers. Joseph was not Christ's father. Therefore his children were not related to Jesus at all, yet, because their father Joseph was married to His mother Mary, they regarded themselves as being His older brothers with all the authority and privileges over the younger member of the household that older brothers imagine they have. They required His obedience to them, not on the basis of what was right or wrong, but simply because they were the older members of the family. Thus they provided relentless, ruthless, and dedicated support for the religious authorities, and subjected Christ to a very trying life indeed.

"His brothers, as the sons of Joseph were called, sided with the rabbis. They insisted that the traditions must be heeded, as if they were the requirements of God. They even regarded the precepts of men more highly than the word of God, and they were greatly annoyed at the clear penetration of Jesus in distinguishing between the false and the true. His strict obedience to the law of God they condemned as stubbornness. They were surprised at the knowledge and wisdom He showed in answering the rabbis. They knew that He had not received instruction from the wise men, yet they could not but see that He was an instructor to them. They recognized that His education was of a higher type than their own. But they did not discern that He had access to the tree of life, a source of knowledge of which they were ignorant." *The Desire of Ages*, 86.

The rabbis, supported by their formidable allies, the sons of Joseph, comprised a confederacy which brought a fearful pressure of temptation on the Child, but it did not prove sufficient to lead Him into sin. Determined to leave no available force unused, Satan drew the powerful Pharisees into the conflict as well. No one in Israel was more feared than these religious leaders who had a weight of authority that swayed the



nation. They had the people living in fear of them as if they were God Himself. If there were any who could have intimidated Jesus, they were the ones.

"Christ was not exclusive, and He had given special offense to the Pharisees by departing in this respect from their rigid rules. He found the domain of religion fenced in by high walls of seclusion, as too sacred a matter for everyday life. These walls of partition He overthrew. In His contact with men He did not ask, What is your creed? To what church do you belong? He exercised His helping power in behalf of all who needed help. Instead of secluding Himself in a hermit's cell in order to show His heavenly character, He labored earnestly for humanity. He inculcated the principle that Bible religion does not consist in the mortification of the body. He taught that pure and undefiled religion is not meant only for set times and special occasions. At all times and in all places He manifested a loving interest in men, and shed about Him the light of a cheerful piety. All this was a rebuke to the Pharisees. It showed that religion does not consist in selfishness, and that their morbid devotion to personal interest was far from being true godliness. This had roused their enmity against Jesus, so that they tried to enforce His conformity to their regulations.

"Jesus worked to relieve every case of suffering that He saw. He had little money to give, but He often denied Himself of food in order to *relieve* those who appeared more needy than He. His brothers felt that His influence went far to counteract theirs. He possessed a tact which none of them had, or desired to have. When they spoke harshly to poor, degraded beings, Jesus sought out these very ones, and spoke to them words of encouragement. To those who were in need He would give a cup of cold water, and would quietly place His own meal in their hands. As He relieved their sufferings, the truths He taught were associated with His acts of mercy, and were thus riveted in the memory.

"All this displeased His brothers. Being older than Jesus, they felt that He should be under their dictation. They charged Him with thinking Himself superior to them, and reproved Him for setting Himself above their teachers and the priests and rulers of the people. Often they threatened and tried to intimidate Him; but He passed on, making the Scriptures His guide." *The Desire of Ages*, 86, 87.

Christ's childhood certainly proves the truth of the statement: "The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan." *The Desire of Ages*, 324.

His life also proves to every parent that their children can be as impregnable as the child Jesus was. Furthermore, the joyous news is that they will be unassailable citadels when trained aright. Wonderful and glorious is the future of fathers, mothers, and children, as the good news



**Jesus, even as a little child, did not need supervision to ensure His obedience, for the spirit of obedience was in Him. Happy indeed will be those parents today who know that the same spirit in their children will make them to be perfectly obedient no matter what the pressure might be.**

of salvation for the children is spread abroad, the principles faithfully applied, the procedures carefully followed, and the rewards abundantly realized.

Built into the Saviour from His earliest moments was an absence of any disposition to fight for His rights, even though, like everyone else, He had His rights. For example, He had the right to study the Scriptures for Himself and to permit the power of God in the Word to mold and fashion Him accordingly; He had the right to be left free from pressures and persecution; to be respected and loved, not to be criticized and maligned. No members of the confederacy accorded Him these or any other of His rights, but this did not dismay Him. He silently suffered their abuse and went the second mile, turned the other cheek, loved His enemies, and did good to those who did Him nothing but evil.

"Jesus loved His brothers, and treated them with unfailing kindness; but they were jealous of Him, and manifested the most decided unbelief

and contempt. They could not understand His conduct." *The Desire of Ages*, 87.

"Jesus did not contend for His rights. Often His work was made unnecessarily severe because He was willing and uncomplaining. Yet He did not fail nor become discouraged. He lived above these difficulties, as if in the light of God's countenance. He did not retaliate when roughly used, but bore insult patiently.

"Again and again He was asked, Why do You submit to such despiteful usage, even from Your brothers? It is written, He said, 'My son, forget not My law; but let thine heart keep My commandments: for length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: so shalt thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man.' *Proverbs* 3:1-4." *The Desire of Ages*, 89.

The Saviour never occupied Himself with thoughts of His own vindication. His only care was to ensure that He related Himself correctly to the other person. He knew that He did not have to answer for what they did to Him, but that He did have to answer for His actions and reactions toward them.

"Christ, our example, did nothing to vindicate or deliver Himself. He committed His case to God." *Christ's Object Lessons*, 171.

One of the great fears which plague modern parents, educationalists, psychologists, and the authorities, is that if the child suffers rejection, persecution, and other severe emotional stresses during its formative years, it will grow up with a dangerous grudge against society, have emotional scars, be maladjusted, mistrustful of human beings, and unable to communicate.

These manifestations of deviant behavior in consequence of unnatural stresses and pressures in childhood, are so widespread today that parents and authorities are justifiably concerned.

But Jesus suffered no such consequences. Although subjected to fearful pressures, rejections, persecutions, and abuses, He arrived at manhood with no personality problems. What a testimony this is to true education! This education more than balanced the evil effects of His environment and brought Him through, a perfectly symmetrical Christian.

Let parents grasp this fact with glad hearts. They can rest in perfect confidence that, *if their child gains knowledge as Jesus did*, as he certainly will once the correct principles are applied and the right procedures adopted, then, no matter how much he might be persecuted or rejected, he will come through as a perfectly balanced Christian, completely free from personality or emotional problems. He will demonstrate a marvelous, inbuilt capacity to live above all insult, rejection, abuse, persecution, misunderstandings, lack of appreciation, and other woes that trouble mankind. No matter how dark the clouds

around him, just as Jesus did, he will ever live in the bright sunshine of God's presence and approval. Of him it will be constantly true that: "Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble", or, as the *King James Version* reads: "Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them." *Psalms* 119:165.

What a wonderful relief for parents to be able to completely dismiss all fear of emotional scarring in their children's lives. Now they can know that all they have to do is concentrate on giving them the same advantages and education which the Exemplar had, and the rest will occur as naturally as the sturdy growth of a well cared for plant.

Wonderful and inspiring is the record of Christ's childhood, youth, and early manhood. During that difficult period when assailed by the full confederacy of evil, He lived as sinlessly and perfectly as He did after His entry into public ministry. In the light of that achievement on the part of One who possessed in His humanity every liability and handicap known to us, while at the same time exercising no power which is not freely offered to us, there is no excuse for either adults or children to sin.

Parents who are determined to bring their children up as true Christians need to diligently study the life of Christ as a child so that the pattern will always be fresh and vivid in their minds. If they do this, then their faith will be living and vigorous, their courage strong, and their achievements marvelous.

The necessity for this cannot be over-emphasized. Consciously and deliberately set aside a liberal portion of every day for the study of that wonderful Child. Read the statements over and over until they are literally embedded in the mind and the entire life is refreshed by them. Plead with the Lord to make the truth so plain and powerful that your whole life will be inspired by it. Make a concerted, positive, diligent, and consistent effort, and you will have taken a giant step forward in the task of raising your children successfully. Do not imagine that a careless and over-confident attitude is ever going to produce great results. Success is to the worker; the soul who is up communing with nature and God long before those on the spiritual lowlands have stirred from their slumbers, and who works earnestly and faithfully through the rest of the day under God's personal supervision. So let us arise to the task, and let God save the children.



# The Head and not the Tail

## Chapter 6

When God set His people in the promised land, He declared that if they would obey His directives and adopt His all-wise procedures, there would be no other people on earth to compare with them. Here is His solemn statement to them and to us:

"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth.

"And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God:

"Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country.

"Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.

"Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

"Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

"The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways.

"The Lord will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

"The Lord will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in His ways.

"Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of you.

"And the Lord will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give you.

"The Lord will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow.

"And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them.

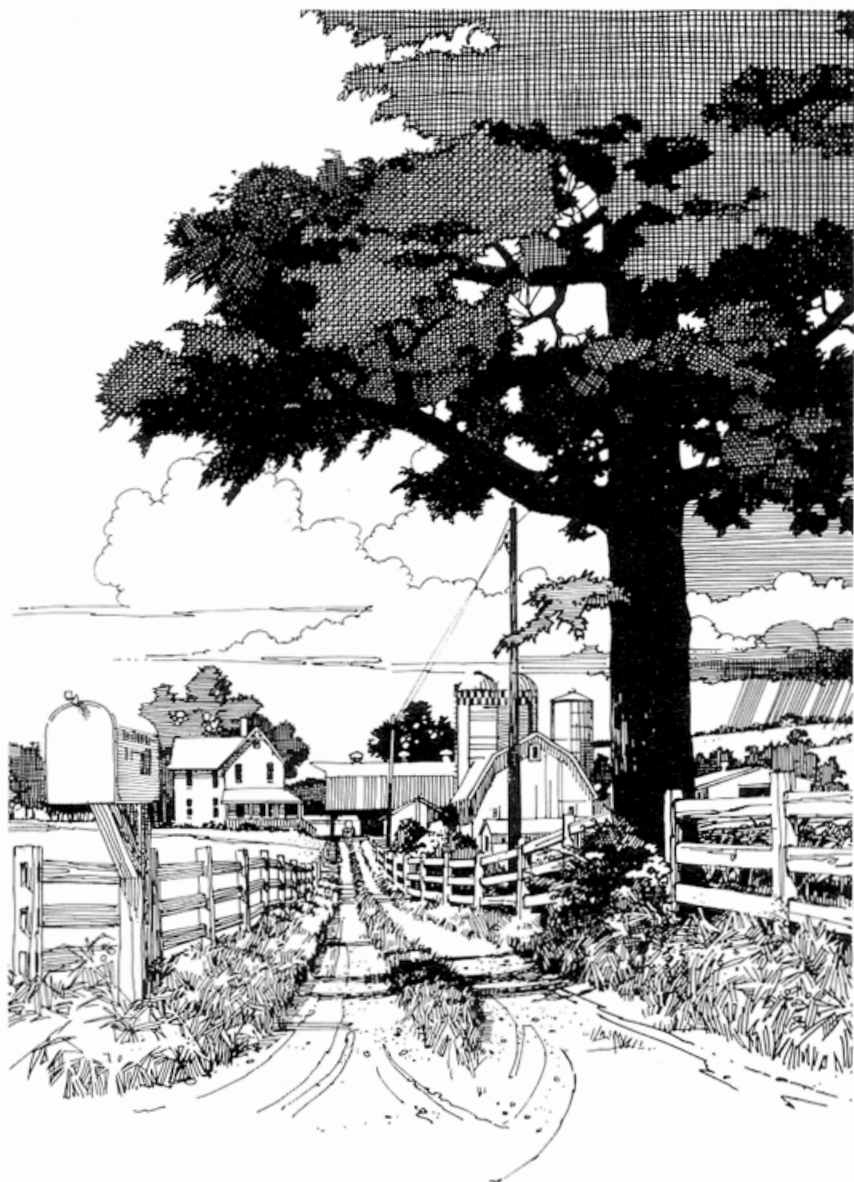
"So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them." Deuteronomy 28:1-14.

Never in history has a full and sustained fulfillment of these declarations been produced. There were occasions when the nations around witnessed the marvelous prosperity and power of God's people, but these periods were quickly followed by times of destitution and oppression caused by their turning from God's ways to their own. Mostly, the Israel of God has been a despised and downtrodden people. It was never God's purpose that this should be, for He desired to finish His work through the prosperity and exaltation, not the deprivation, of His people.

"Had Israel been true to God, He could have accomplished His purpose through their honor and exaltation. If they had walked in the ways of obedience, He would have made them 'high above all nations which He hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honor.' 'All people of the earth,' said Moses, 'shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee.' The nations which shall hear all these statutes' shall say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' Deuteronomy 26:19; 28:10; 4:6. But because of their unfaithfulness, God's purpose could be wrought out only through continued adversity and humiliation." *The Desire of Ages*, 28.

How tragic that the Jews chose the hard way to be God's instruments when they could have lived lives of power and prosperity. They could have always been the head and not the tail, the leader of the nations, the righteous rulers of the entire world. They could have been the instruments whereby God would have long since finished the work and ended the dark reign of sin.

So persistently has failure marked the church down through the centuries, that God's people have come to accept this as the best that can be expected. Passages such as those quoted above are regarded as idealistic but hopelessly unreal.



It has ever been God's plan for His people to be models of responsible prosperity in the physical, mental, material, and spiritual worlds. This they would have been had they understood and practiced the principles of righteousness in all the training of themselves and their children.

But this is not so. They are the exact expression of what God intends for His people and what they will actually experience if they understand and establish His ways in their lives. He intends that all shall grasp the truth that obedience to His principles is the cause which will produce the desirable results described in *Deuteronomy* 28.

When I was younger, I often questioned why the intellectual power and wealth of the world were in the hands of the disobedient and unjustified. Why was it that my children who came from a home where the principles of truth were respected and lived as best we knew how, were merely average among the worldly children at school? It seemed as if God's statements were rather hollow and unreliable. One was *tempted to think* that Jehovah, in making His promises, was merely holding up incentives to motivate us to obedience, when in fact the rewards did not really exist. It *seemed* that He employed the same tactics as the politicians who promise so much in order to secure the support of the electorate, and then promptly forget their assurances when the election is over. But, even though this witness of sight and circumstances *seemed* very convincing, I still clung to the conviction that the Lord is true and that our failure to achieve the divinely declared standards of excellence was our fault and not God's.

The time has arrived when I no longer have any difficulty in believing these mighty promises and can clearly see where the shortcoming rests. The secret has been revealed in Christ's life as an infant, child, boy, youth, and man. When parents learn the cause of Christ's obedience on earth, and how to establish that same cause in their children, they will then see in their offspring the same wonderful results.

In Jesus at every stage of development from His conception to His ascension, we see the truth of God's promises to His people fulfilled, which in turn means that in Him we see what God intended and promised that every one of His people should be. Therefore, the life of Christ from His earliest moments on earth to His ascension should be studied not merely as something beautiful to admire, but as a living revelation of what each of us can and ought to be. With never ending delight and renewed inspiration we shall behold the Saviour who enjoyed perfect health, exercised incredible mental powers and perceptions, possessed all the material necessities for His work, and was filled with spiritual powers equaled by no other.

When time is taken to survey the astonishing powers the child Jesus manifested, one is inclined to dismiss as impossible any hope of our children's matching His brilliant success. The tendency is to believe that Jesus was more blessed with natural ability than our children could ever hope to be. But, the Saviour was not born a child prodigy, nor was he naturally endowed with exceptional intellectual powers. He possessed no advantages whatsoever that are not available to everyone of us.



"Jesus revealed no qualities, and exercised no powers, that men may not have through faith in Him. His perfect humanity is that which all His followers may possess, if they will be in subjection to God as He was." *The Desire of Ages*, 664.

What a tremendous promise this statement contains! When the life of Christ is studied in the light of these words, we begin to realize how far we have fallen short of what we might have been. Thoroughly ashamed, we see how low has been the accepted standard of human behavior at all age levels, and we become painfully aware of the need to exert every effort in the right way to make the most of what remains.

When the full beauty, impact, and power of this truth is realized by parents, they will discard their darkness and unbelief and grasp the mighty challenge thus laid before them to bring forth children who will truly be like the child Jesus. These blessed little ones will have physical health, mental and intellectual powers, and spiritual purity and righteousness unmatched by those who are of the world. They will be the head and not the tail; above and not beneath.

Parents would do well to constantly study and behold the excellence of Christ's life as a child so that the divine pattern is kept ever fresh in their minds. It is essential that this study be undertaken with flawless faith in the assurance that all that Christ received as a child, can likewise be possessed by the little ones today. So, let us here and now begin a careful consideration of Christ's capacities as the Pattern Child.

The cultivated power of Christ's unimpaired mind began to be manifest at an early age. Nowhere was this more remarkable than in His incredible ability to rightly evaluate the true nature of the current teachings of His time and to discern their evil effect on the minds of the populace. He was able to accurately understand where and how these philosophies conflicted with the messages of God in the Scriptures. Furthermore, He, as a child, could see these things as no other in the world could. While all, from the youngest and most illiterate to the oldest and most highly educated, evaluated practically all things incorrectly, He alone saw them as they really were. To do this as a mature, spiritually enlightened adult is one thing, but to display this capacity as a child is nothing short of incredible. This gave Him the absolute certainty of knowing just where the real truth actually was to be found. He thus had the light which enabled Him to utterly reject the false teachings of His time and to follow where the Lord led the way.

This is a vital capacity for those of us who are seeking to walk in God's ways and be found in the kingdom. The devil depends on deception to ensnare mankind. He blinds their eyes so that they think light is darkness, and darkness is light. The Laodiceans, for instance, are sure they are rich in salvation when they are not even saved. Fortunately, none need remain in this situation, for the Lord has offered the eyesalve

so that all may see correctly. Every believer should covet this precious gift so that he can rightly discern and be faithful to the truth as it is in Jesus.

In Christ's time, the religious leaders controlled the school system in which the children and youth were educated. Because the parents were blind to the real nature of what was being inculcated into their children, they fully supported the religious teachers and trustingly sent their precious little ones to these men who systematically trained them to reject God. They did not do this maliciously or deliberately, for they really believed that what they were teaching was truth sent from heaven, but the negative effect was there as fully as if they had been conscious of the evil they were perpetrating.

"From its earliest years the Jewish child was surrounded with the requirements of the rabbis. Rigid rules were prescribed for every act, down to the smallest details of life. Under the synagogue teachers the youth were instructed in the countless regulations which as orthodox Israelites they were expected to observe." *The Desire of Ages*, 84.

There was no religious training more *professedly* righteous, God-ordained, or soul saving, than that offered by the Jewish rabbis, yet in actual fact there was none better designed to rob its victims of eternal life. The tragedy was that none could see it at the time, with the result that, apart from John the Baptist and Christ, every child was sent to these schools with the confident expectation that he or she would be fitted for this life and the next.

Christ did not attend these schools because of His keen discernment of what was really taught in them, and because of His Father's protective care over Him. While His immediate family and the Jews in general had the greatest faith in the system, He saw no value in it and therefore showed no interest in Jewish theology or philosophy.

"But Jesus did not interest Himself in these matters. From childhood He acted independently of the rabbinical laws. The Scriptures of the Old Testament were his constant study, and the words, Thus saith the Lord,' were ever upon His lips." *The Desire of Ages*, 84.

What incredible perception for a child approaching school age! Such remarkable capacities, which should be the desire of every adult, are a positive yet unexpected marvel when found in children. Consider the revelation of Christ's wonderful perceptiveness as a child as it is written in the following paragraph:

"As the condition of the people began to open to His mind, He saw that the requirements of society and the requirements of God were in constant collision. Men were departing from the word of God, and exalting theories of their own invention. They were observing traditional rites that possessed no virtue. Their service was a mere round of ceremonies; the sacred truths it was designed to teach were hidden from the worshippers. He saw that in their faithless services they found no

*peace*. They did not know the freedom of spirit that would come to them by serving God in truth. Jesus had come to teach the meaning of the worship of God, and He could not sanction the mingling of human requirements with the divine precepts. He did not attack the precepts or practices of the learned teachers; but when reproved for His own simple habits, He presented the word of God in justification of His conduct." *The Desire of Ages*, 84, 85.

The strong words in this paragraph are, "He saw . . . ." In other words He perceived, discerned, understood, or correctly evaluated all these things which none of the others could see. *He saw* the collision between the requirements of God and man, and that the two could never be reconciled. *He saw* that men were departing from God's word while exalting their own theories. *He saw* that there was no saving virtue in their traditional rites and services and that the sacred truths they were designed to teach were hidden from the worshipers. *He saw* that the devotees to the Jewish religion were finding neither peace nor freedom of spirit in their worship. Seeing all this, He longed that one and all could enjoy the same blessed walk with God which He constantly experienced and enjoyed.

These were things that Christ's elders should have taught Him, but it was He who taught them. When the rabbis confronted Him with their demands that He submit to their usages, He showed an astonishing ability to instantly recognize how completely unscriptural their positions were. Furthermore, His mind was an incredible storehouse of correctly understood Scriptural truth which He was able to apply with perfect discernment. He knew just which Scriptures to quote in order to refute the arguments of the learned teachers in Israel. He was never defeated in any of these encounters.

When He came to the temple for His first Passover visit, it was once again apparent that His mental and spiritual development was far ahead of the best and most highly educated minds in Israel. Through Him, God was showing them what they would have been if, from their earliest moments, God had been their Father and they had been taught by the Holy Spirit from their mothers' wombs.

The most specific and illuminating revelation of Christ's spiritual and mental superiority over the religious leaders and teachers was when He went to the Passover at the age of twelve. It was then that He was directed by the Holy Spirit to attend the special school organized by the rabbis to capitalize on the opportunity afforded by the assembling of so many people to the feast. There were present from remote areas of the nation children whom the teachers would never otherwise have seen. It is evident that Jesus Himself fell into this category, for it is clear that the manifestation of His incredible knowledge and wisdom came as a complete surprise to the Jewish instructors in Jerusalem.

Those educators rested in the unchallenged confidence that they were the ultimate human authorities on religious matters. They had devoted their entire lifetimes to learning and teaching, and were sure that there was no one who could successfully challenge them. They expected to be revered and obeyed and, for the most part, they were. The last thing that they could ever have anticipated was the emergence of a twelve-year-old with knowledge and wisdom far surpassing theirs.

Yet, Christ's brief presentation in their classroom faced them with what they had never let themselves fear because they had never deemed it possible. Here was a twelve-year-old in fact, who was actually blessed with knowledge, understanding, perceptions, evaluations, and wisdom which they were far from possessing, and which they had never previously seen. It was a wonderful opportunity for them to evaluate the contrast between two systems of education—that which God had used in the rearing of His Son, versus that to which the Jews had turned instead. Let it be noted that God was not revealing something new in education when Christ stood before those grave, self-important, and supposedly well educated men. Long, long before, when their forefathers had entered the promised land, the divinely formulated principles of child training had been spelled out.<sup>1</sup> Had they believed in and followed them, the entire nation would have been as Jesus was—the head, and not the tail; above only, and not beneath.

Education is not the end in itself, even though some pursue learning for its own sake. Rather, it is the means whereby capacities are developed till fitness to fill responsible positions has been achieved. The quality and value of the educational system adopted is revealed in the product at the end of the line. When Jesus stood before those men during the Passover visit, there was provided a marvelous opportunity to compare the product of one system of education with the other. That comparison leaves us with a choice between two systems: one, which in a mere twelve years had built such capacities into Christ that He was far ahead of the wisest men of His day; or another, the education of human devising that, after sixty or more years of intensive training, still left those Jewish leaders far behind a twelve-year-old. It is the difference between having God for the Teacher as Jesus did, or Satan as did the Jewish leaders.

"In the presence of such a Teacher, of such opportunity for divine education, what worse than folly is it to seek an education apart from Him—to seek to be wise apart from Wisdom; to be true while rejecting Truth; to seek illumination apart from the Light, and existence without the Life; to turn from the Fountain of living waters, and hew out broken cisterns, that can hold no water." *Education*, 83.

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<sup>1</sup>See *Education*, 33-50.

Let it be stressed that Jesus at no time received any special endowments not available to all other children of God. Therefore, what He became is a picture of what every other child may become. That is one of the great messages of His entire life from infancy to His departure for heaven, because He came to demonstrate in Himself what heaven's education will produce.

Wonderfully and admirably, there was no trace of pride and self-exaltation in Christ's acquirement of knowledge and wisdom. On the contrary, the more He understood of His heavenly Father, the more established in humility He became.

Thus when He arrived at the special classroom in operation during the Passover, He would have entered so quietly and unobtrusively that no one would have noticed His coming into the room and selecting His seat. He came to learn and, for a time, listened attentively. Then He began to ask questions in that humble and teachable manner which disarms prejudice, and hopefully leads the one questioned to *realize* the limitations of his knowledge.

"As one seeking for wisdom, He questioned these teachers in regard to the prophecies, and to events then taking place that pointed to the advent of the Messiah.

"Jesus presented Himself as one thirsting for a knowledge of God. His questions were suggestive of deep truths which had long been obscured, yet which were vital to the salvation of souls. While showing how narrow and superficial was the wisdom of the wise men, every question put before them a divine lesson, and placed truth in a new aspect. The rabbis spoke of the wonderful elevation which the Messiah's coming would bring to the Jewish nation; but Jesus presented the prophecy of *Isaiah*, and asked them the meaning of those scriptures that point to the suffering and death of the Lamb of God.

"The doctors turned upon Him with questions, and they were amazed at His answers. With the humility of a child He repeated the words of Scripture, giving them a depth of meaning that the wise men had not conceived of. If followed, the lines of truth He pointed out would have worked a reformation in the religion of the day. A deep interest in spiritual things would have been awakened; and when Jesus began His ministry, many would have been prepared to receive Him." *The Desire of Ages*, 78, 79.

Christ's encounter with the religious instructors of His time certainly made startlingly clear His tremendous superiority over them in matters of religion. He was the head; they were the tail; He was above; they were beneath. However, even though religion was the only topic discussed during His time with them, one must not therefore permit the impression to settle in the mind that Christ was a specialist in theology to the exclusion of the other branches of learning. On the contrary, His was a



**By conducting experiments with this laser beam, the scientist is learning some of the secrets the Lord created in nature. What men in their pride have failed to realize is that they could have known these things centuries earlier had they, as Jesus did, made God to be their Teacher.**

broad and comprehensive education which encompassed many areas of science, such as biology, astronomy, mathematics, physiology, physics, and more. Furthermore, His penetration into these fields was so extensive that He was centuries in advance of His time as this statement confirms:

" 'Never man spake like this man.' John 7:46. This would have been true of Christ had He taught only in the realm of the physical and the intellectual, or in matters of theory and speculation solely. He might have unlocked mysteries that have required centuries of toil and study to penetrate. He might have made suggestions in scientific lines that, till the close of time, would have afforded food for thought and stimulus for invention." *Education*, 81.

This is what He might have done. Had He done so, the world would have honored Him, followed Him, and enriched Him, even as they do their eminent scientists of the present.

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

What an intellectual giant Jesus was when upon this earth is revealed by what He had the capacity to do. "He might have unlocked mysteries that have required centuries of toil and study to penetrate. He might have made suggestions in scientific lines that, till the close of time, would have afforded food for thought and stimulus for invention."

There was not a scientist on earth in His day who could have done that. All that they had gathered from the works of their predecessors and built on themselves could be learned by their students in a few years of diligent study. Slowly and painfully thereafter, men who hungered for an understanding of the secrets of nature and science, struggled to comprehend and to record what they had dimly glimpsed. Each generation took a few steps, each added a small contribution, and each thus contributed to the overall accumulation of human understanding. Some may feel that tremendous strides have been made, especially over the past century, but this will appear so only when the basis of comparison is previous human accomplishment. But, when the progress made is read in the light of what would have been learned if men had been taught by the same Instructor who tutored Christ, then it will be seen how little has really been achieved!

Let all guard against the disposition to dismiss Christ's achievements as being nothing remarkable because of His being the eternally pre-existent, omniscient God. There is no question about His being that, but it must never be forgotten that He laid all that aside and came into this world as empty of knowledge as any one of us. From that point, He had to acquire knowledge as every other child may gain it, as it is written: "Every child may gain knowledge as Jesus did." *The Desire of Ages*, 70.

Had Jesus arrived in humanity with all the knowledge He had as the Creator of the universe, then certainly His ability to unlock "... mysteries that have required centuries of toil and study to penetrate", and to "... have made suggestions in scientific lines that, till the close of time, would have afforded food for thought and stimulus for invention", would be quite unremarkable. We would expect that of the Creator God. He knows everything. Not even the future is hidden from Him.

But, to develop these capacities after leaving heaven and becoming totally emptied of the knowledge He had as the Creator, and being limited to those means alone that are available to any child of humanity, is more than remarkable. It is incredible!

It is also very encouraging, to those who have the faith to believe, that Christ's intellectual achievements were an illustration of the attainments possible to His children even in this life.

"In Him was found the perfect ideal.

"To reveal this ideal as the only true standard for attainment; to show what every human being might become; what, through the indwelling of humanity by divinity, all who received Him would become—for this, Christ came to the world. He came to show how men are to be trained as befits the sons of God; how on earth they are to practice the principles and live the life of heaven." *Education*, 73, 74.

That which makes the achievement of Christ even more remarkable is that He did not begin as scientists and educators do. Unlike them, he

began right at the beginning, whereas they start at the point to which the previous generation brought them, and then make what progress they can from there. The rate of advancement varies from generation to generation depending on whether or not there is an Isaac Newton, a Galileo, a Louis Pasteur, or an Albert Einstein among them.

In order to acquire the knowledge accumulated by previous generations, young people attend the schools and universities in which this information is disseminated. When those among them who have a desire and aptitude to advance human knowledge have learned all that can be taught them in these institutions, they begin their research programs, and thus make their contribution to the common store of information.

However, Jesus did not follow this procedure. On the contrary, He gained all His learning without reference to what men had already discovered in scientific fields, for He attended none of the schools where this knowledge was stored and wherein it was inculcated into the minds of those who sought it. Yet, in *a* few short years He had learned that which men had taken centuries to learn, and in a few more, knew what researchers would yet require hundreds and hundreds of years to unravel.

If today, a child does not attend some school or the other in which he gains a learning in the knowledge of the sciences gathered so painstakingly over so many centuries, he is regarded as being handicapped, ignorant, or even illiterate. He will be seriously disadvantaged in the endless competition for the material necessities of life, and will certainly not stand with those who march in the vanguard of advancing understanding.

The Pharisees expected Christ to be in this category. They thought that He would be ignorant, uncultured, and unlearned because He had not followed the standard procedure of attending the schools wherein man's learning had been accumulated. "And the Jews marvelled, saying, 'How does this man know letters, never having studied?' " *John* 7:15.

But Jesus had studied with a diligence, interest, and thoroughness manifest in no other student. His life demonstrates the immeasurably superior results of the educational system devised by the Almighty in which God Himself is the Teacher. He showed what it means to be the head and not the tail; above only, and not beneath.

One may develop the impression from the course which Christ followed that we are to despise and reject the knowledge acquired by men throughout the millennia of the past. This is not true, especially in the field of religion. To pay no heed to the truths revealed in the past would involve discarding the Bible and starting from the beginning again. The Saviour certainly did not do that. Instead, His first lessons were from the Old Testament scriptures. "His mother was His first human teacher. From her lips and from the scrolls of the prophets, He learned of heavenly



things. The very words which He Himself had spoken to Moses for Israel He was now taught at His mother's knee." *The Desire of Ages*, 70.

The point is that His mother taught Him the truths which had been revealed in the past, whereas the instruction offered in the schools of His day, whether it was on religion or the sciences, was so defiled with error that it was impossible to arrive at the truth. It was because Christ had no desire to drink from polluted fountains that He turned away from human accumulations of supposed wisdom to *receive* instruction in the sciences from His Father only.

"Since He gained knowledge as we may do, His intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures shows how diligently His early years were given to the study of God's word. And spread out before Him was the great library of God's created works. He who had made all things studied the lessons which His own hand had written in earth and sea and sky. Apart from the unholy ways of the world, He gathered stores of scientific knowledge from nature. He studied the life of plants and animals, and the life of man. From His earliest years He was possessed of one purpose; He lived to bless others. For this He found resources in nature; new ideas of ways and means flashed into His mind as He studied plant life and animal life. Continually He was seeking to draw from things seen illustrations by which to present the living oracles of God. The parables by which, during His ministry, He loved to teach His lessons of truth show how open His spirit was to the influences of nature, and how He had gathered the spiritual teaching from the surroundings of His daily life.

"Thus to Jesus the significance of the word and the works of God was unfolded, as He was trying to understand the reason of things. Heavenly beings were His attendants, and the culture of holy thoughts and communings was His. From the first dawning of intelligence He was constantly growing in spiritual grace and knowledge of truth." *The Desire of Ages*, 70.

And so ". . . Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men." *Luke* 2:52.

Christ's superior attainments are truly wonderful and are to be viewed as the ideal for which every believer is to aim. However, it all could have been marred if the slightest traces of pride had been present in Him. But Jesus resolutely guarded against any such development. Though superior in every way, He never presented Himself as such; never made comparisons between Himself and other children; and never strove for the highest place. There was only one motivation in His life: "... He lived to bless others." *The Desire of Ages*, 70.

Totally forgetful of self, He reached for the highest levels of knowledge and efficiency so that He could provide the greatest blessings to those for whom He ministered. Never once did He measure Himself by others, for God alone was His standard.

The life of Jesus and the message on child salvation hold up before parents and children the possibility of acquiring the deepest, highest, and broadest understandings of truth in every branch of learning. It invites them to develop marvelous capacities for service to God and man. It provides that, in the fullest sense of the word, they shall be the head, and not the tail; above only, and not beneath.

Such a prospect is attractive to every parent from one point of view or the other. The Christian parent desires it so that the Lord will be glorified and a telling blow delivered against the reign of sin. His motives are without a blemish. On the other hand, the unconverted would naturally like to see their children above all the rest, but this must never be the motivation. That is the way of the world as they walk in pride and selfishness. Such a spirit cultivates unholy ambition, rivalry, strife, oppression, deceit, suffering, and sorrow.

But the worldling is not the only one in danger of pride and selfishness. Christian parents have a sinful humanity and live in a world where heavy pressures are brought to bear upon them, and there is danger that materialism will divert the life from its true objectives. There must be continual watchfulness so that the first appearing of any tendency for this to develop will be detected and as quickly cleansed away.

Never forget that it was the brightest, the most highly educated, and the most efficient angel in heaven into whose heart thoughts of conscious superiority began to enter and take command. He started comparing himself with others, and then took pride in the supposed fact that he was superior to them. His inflated estimation of his own greatness went so far beyond reality that he was able to fancy himself better than Michael, the Archangel. This led him to expect personal promotion above Jesus, which was nothing short of the attempted exaltation of himself into God's place, and the demotion of Jehovah to a position under Lucifer's authority.

When the Lord could not see him as he saw himself and accordingly could not grant him his desires, Lucifer resolutely determined to usurp the highest positions in the universe. Thus he entered into his warfare against his Creator. "Thus he drew men to join him in rebellion against God, and the night of woe settled down upon the world." *The Desire of Ages*, 22.

For almost six thousand years now, the devil has been demonstrating the fearful outcome of viewing the gifts of God in the wrong light. What he should have regarded as an endowment to be used in loving service to others, came to be looked upon as a means of self-glorification. That was the beginning of his downfall, and the same attitude, if permitted to intrude and reign, will produce the same results today no matter how secure one may feel against it.



There is nothing wrong with devoting one's efforts to the attainment of the highest possible levels of physical, mental, and spiritual excellence. In fact, this is what the Lord has planned and provided for His people, and it is what He expects them to achieve. To whatever extent they fall short of His ideal, He will hold them accountable, for, in direct proportion to their deficiencies, they will have robbed the needy whom they have been appointed to serve.

"The Lord desires His people to reach the highest round of the ladder that they may glorify Him by possessing the ability He is willing to bestow. Through the grace of God every provision has been made for us to reveal that we act upon better plans than those upon which the world acts. We are to show a superiority in intellect, in understanding, in skill and knowledge, because we believe in God and in His power to work upon human hearts.

"But those who have not a large endowment of gifts need not become discouraged. Let them use what they have, faithfully guarding every weak point in their characters, seeking by divine grace to make it strong. Into every action of life we are to weave faithfulness and loyalty, cultivating the attributes that will enable us to accomplish the work." Christ's *Object Lessons*, 358.

So then, while, by the grace of God and their own diligent effort, every parent is to aim for the highest achievements in themselves and their children, they must never lose sight of the danger which lurks in this pathway. They must ever *realize* that the gifts of God are to be used in service to others, and never as a means of exalting one person above another. It must never be forgotten that if anyone follows in Lucifer's footsteps, the very endowments designed and bestowed for the blessing and benefit of all, will prove to be a terrible curse. Christ and Christ alone is the revelation of what God desires each of us to be and we are to compare ourselves with no one else but Him.

Jesus attained such wonderful levels of achievement through several factors. Firstly, because sin never dwelt in Him, He suffered no impairment of His faculties. Secondly, God, and not Satan or his agents, was His Teacher. Thirdly, His study of the Scriptures had a regenerating effect on His mind, and fourthly, the presence of the divine nature within Him was invigorating to His whole being. Thus He walked among men as the head, and not the tail; above only, and never beneath.

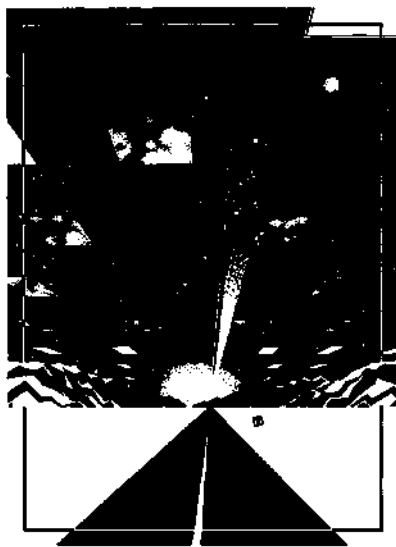
When, from the child's earliest moments, these same three factors become the dominating elements in the education of our children, they

**OPPOSITE PAGE: By being truly born again, and by communion with God through nature and the Scriptures, every child may gain knowledge as Jesus did. Those who do, will be the head and not the tail and, as such, will use their God-given acquirements to bless and uplift humanity.**

too will be the head, and not the tail; above, and not beneath. Then the true superiority of Christianity over the ways of man will truly be seen. Then will the Lord be glorified and His ways shown to be past understanding. Then shall men and women from all nations be gathered to the Saviour and the work will be finished.

Satan has a terrible fear of this eventuality. He saw what was achieved by the lives of Jesus Christ, John the Baptist, Jeremiah, and Daniel and his three friends, when the fullness of divine excellence was developed in them. He knows that if a few people with these capacities can accomplish all that they did, what would a whole army of them do to his work and kingdom. He fears the day when there will be an army of believers trained as Jesus was.

God's promise, requirement, and expectation is that every one of His people shall be the head and not the tail so far as the world is concerned. Let it be seen in the closing days of earth's history what this means, even as Christ demonstrated it in His day on earth.



# The Secret of Christ's Intellectual Might

## Chapter 7

In His life on earth, the Saviour demonstrated the heights of intellectual and spiritual greatness to which He would have us attain. He revealed God's ideal for His people, an ideal which ". . . is higher than the highest human thought can reach." *The Desire of Ages*, 311. To this standard, He bids us aspire.

It is impossible for the true child of faith to consider this high strata of perfection without being inspired to strive for such a wonderful objective. It is most fortunate therefore, that Christ has also revealed the way in which every one of His beloved followers may arrive where He would have them be. He has done this both by declaration, and, even more importantly, by demonstration. Standing on the pinnacle of physical, mental, and spiritual achievement, He shows the heights to which we are likewise to rise. By pointing to the course He followed in order to stand upon the mountain top, He directs our attention to how the victory is to be gained. It is critically important that this be done, for there is nothing more discouraging and frustrating than to have set before you a highly desirable goal without any instructions as to how to reach it.

However, Christ's example as the great Achiever is completely destroyed if the follower clings to any suspicion that Christ, by virtue of His being an eternally pre-existent God, had brought with Him into this world an infinite store of knowledge, wisdom, and ability. It is essential that every believer in Jesus be absolutely established on the truth that, in the fullest sense of the word, Jesus had emptied Himself of everything when He appeared as a babe in Bethlehem. He left behind His

omniscience, His creative power, and His position as King of kings and Lord of lords. As an unborn infant, He was as destitute of knowledge as any other babe, and was limited to the same learning processes. It was as a human being that He acquired knowledge, faced temptation, and gained the victory over sin. Therefore, He can legitimately claim to be our example in all things, and it can be truthfully stated that: "Every child may gain knowledge as Jesus did." *The Desire of Ages*, 70.

Already this point has been stated in the last chapter, but now further evidences are to be presented confirming that Christ had neither the unreachable advantage of being blessed with infinite knowledge when He arrived on this rebellious planet, nor the privilege of special favor thereafter. This point is being stressed because no one will ever truly accept Christ as the Example of the way to attain the indicated pinnacle of achievement if there is the slightest adherence to the idea that He arrived here with anything more than what the children of men may have when they are born.

Consideration will now be given to a series of statements which confirm that Jesus was indeed emptied of all the infinite knowledge which He had before He came to this earth. These references are not exhaustive. The objective is to provide only enough witnesses to firmly establish the point.

He is described at His dedication as being "This unconscious babe . . . ." *The Desire of Ages*, 52. This does not mean that He was unconscious in the sense of being in a coma, but that He had a baby's unawareness of the significance of what was happening around Him. This would not have been true if He had come into the world possessed of infinite knowledge.

Speaking of the work of His loving mother, it is written that: "From her lips and from the scrolls of the prophets, He learned of heavenly things. The very words which He Himself had spoken to Moses for Israel He was now taught at His mother's knee." *The Desire of Ages*, 70.

There would have been no need for Him to have learned of heavenly things if He had come to earth with infinite knowledge. One never needs to learn what one already knows.

Again it is written that: "Since He gained knowledge as we may do, His intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures shows how diligently His early years were given to the study of God's word. . . . He who had made all things studied the lessons which His own hand had written in earth and sea and sky. . . . He studied the life of plants and animals, and the life of man." *The Desire of Ages*, 70

Again, it would have been unnecessary for Him to have gathered His information in this manner if He had come as the Omniscient One. But this is the way in which He learned, as it is written: "Thus to Jesus the significance of the word and the works of God was unfolded, as He was



**No babe enters this world with a vast store of knowledge, and neither did Jesus. Before coming to this earth, He emptied Himself of all that He had ever known. Then He acquired knowledge as every child may do, and in doing so demonstrated what every child may achieve.**

trying to understand the reason of things. Heavenly beings were His attendants, and the culture of holy thoughts and communings was His. From the first dawning of intelligence He was constantly growing in spiritual grace and knowledge of truth." *The Desire of Ages*, 70.

When Jesus arrived in this world, He did not at first know who He was, nor was He directly informed of this from heaven. It was through the study of the prophecies, and the gospel as it was revealed in the sanctuary service, that He came to recognize that He personally was the subject of those wonderful predictions. By the age of twelve, the question of who He was, was becoming clearer to Him. It was then that He accompanied His parents on His initial visit to the Passover.

"For the first time the child Jesus looked upon the temple. He saw the white-robed priests performing their solemn ministry. He beheld the bleeding victim upon the altar of sacrifice. With the worshipers he bowed in prayer, while the cloud of incense ascended before God. He witnessed the impressive rites of the paschal service. Day by day He saw their meaning more clearly. Every act seemed to be bound up with His own



life. New impulses were awakening within Him. Silent and absorbed, He seemed to be studying out a great problem. The mystery of His mission was opening to the Saviour." *The Desire of Ages*, 78.

By the same process and from the same inspired information, every Jew in the land should have unerringly identified this child as the Messiah. Jesus accomplished this just as they could have, through the study of the Scriptures under the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Once more, it is clear that the Saviour did not know who He was by virtue of inherited information, but by the diligent study of the Scriptures from which He came to understand that which previously He had not comprehended.

So totally did He empty Himself that He could truthfully testify, "I can of myself do nothing. . . ." *John* 5:30.

This is proved by His experience in quelling the storm on Galilee.

"When Jesus was awakened to meet the storm, He was in perfect peace. There was no trace of fear in word or look, for no fear was in His heart. But He rested not in the possession of almighty power. It was not as the 'Master of earth and sea and sky' that He reposed in quiet. That power He had laid down, and He says, 'I can of mine own self do nothing.' *John* 5:30. He trusted in the Father's might. It was in faith—faith in God's love and care—that Jesus rested, and the power of that word which stilled the storm was the power of God." *The Desire of Ages*, 336.

Thus, through these and other Scriptures, it is established that Jesus did not come into this world filled with knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. Instead, as every other human being must, He learned the lessons written in the Scriptures and the book of nature.

How was it then that He developed such high levels of intellectual and spiritual power far surpassing anything achieved by mortal man? This is a question which commands the attention of every parent, for, if they do not know how Christ achieved, they certainly cannot lead their children to follow His example. They will remain the tail, and never be the head. They will be below only and never above.

Briefly mentioned in the last chapter are four essential factors which assured Christ's arrival at the highest levels of physical, mental, and spiritual attainment. When parents ensure that the same four elements are present in their children's lives, the same results will be achieved. Those four factors are:

Sin never dwelt in Him, therefore His mind was never impaired.

The presence of divinity in Him invigorated, activated, and strengthened His powers to a remarkable degree.

God and His servants were His teachers, not Satan and his agents.

His consistent, diligent study of the Scriptures had a wonderfully strengthening and regenerating effect on His mind and body.

### The Unimpaired Mind

Sin's power to impair the mind and permanently rob it of much of its vitality is a factor in the raising of children to which virtually no thought has been given, yet it is by this means that Satan does great damage to the individual. Therefore, the importance of understanding how, when, and to what extent the mind is affected by sin's indwelling presence cannot be overemphasized. Close, Spirit-inspired, prayerful study must be given to this matter until mind and heart are impressed with the vital importance of being thoroughly aware of its significance, and of taking the steps necessary to prevent the prodigious loss of physical, mental, and spiritual power which attends every child who is not born again as early as possible after conception.

The discovery of this factor was occasioned by the growing awareness that sin has only one role wherever it resides—it is the great and terrible *destroyer*! It can be nothing else! Some may argue that it does give pleasure and this is true, but the fleeting, sensuous sensations sin provides are but the deadly lures by which the unsuspecting are enticed into the death trap. Before sin entered the universe, there was no decay, no destruction, and no death, but, when sin appeared, these were its attendants.

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, *and death through sin*, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." Romans 5:12.

"Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." *James* 1:15.

Thus the Scriptures confirm that death came in through sin. Once this truth has been grasped, it becomes necessary to define what sin actually is. Most folk think of the action of doing wrong as being the sin, but, while this definition is correct as far as it goes, it is really quite inadequate. Behind every transgression of God's law is the sinfulness from which the action sprang just as certainly as an evil tree brings forth fruit after its kind. Bearing the evil fruit does not make the tree evil. Instead, it is because the tree is bad that the fruit is bad.

Likewise, it is a mistake to suppose, as some do, that a newly born babe is innocent and holy until it commits its first sin. Committing sin does not make him unrighteous, because he is already that by inheritance. When Adam lost righteousness and life, and took upon himself sin and death, the laws of heredity dictated that what he had acquired must be passed on to his children, and through them to their children through every generation to the end of time. Therefore, he could not endow his offspring with the righteousness and life which he had lost, but could only give them instead the sin and death with which he was smitten. The Scriptures are very clear and strong in their affirmation of this truth.

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned— . . .

"Therefore, as through one man's offence judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one man's obedience many will be made righteous." Romans 5:12, 18, 19.

Thus the Scriptures plainly teach that every one is under condemnation initially, not because he himself has committed sin, but because of the sinful inheritance handed down from Adam. Our first parents certainly found neither joy nor satisfaction in bequeathing such a terrible endowment to their children, but, once they themselves had transgressed, they were powerless to stop the terrible consequences of their mistake.

Before the first man and woman disobeyed God, they were filled with the life and light of God, but when they chose another ruler, the devil, this beautiful blessedness departed from them and Satan infused them with his own evil spirit. Thus sin had become an indwelling presence, an evil entity which exercised a controlling mastery over them, and they were powerless to resist. The germination of Satan's implanted seed immediately began to destroy them, body, mind, and spirit.

Thus when a baby is conceived, it receives at that very point, a sinful inheritance. This means that sinfulness itself, as a controlling power, now reigns and rules in the unborn infant and will continue to do so until he is delivered from it by God's saving might. This inheritance is inescapable. No child of Adam apart from Christ has ever avoided this, though



Apart from the infant Jesus, no child has ever been conceived innocent and holy. Therefore, such conceptions can never be symbolized by good trees such as the blessed palm trees pictured here. Rather, thorn bushes are used in Scripture to typify this kind of babe, each of whom needs the creative power of God to transform him into a good tree, the planting of the Lord.

fortunately he can be saved from it. Therefore, and let none miss this vital point, the moment the child is conceived, sinfulness in him begins to destroy him. As the days go by, irreparable, permanent damage is being done which calls for urgent action to be taken to arrest this terrible decay.

The need to attend to this at the earliest possible moment becomes impressive when it is realized that the rate of impairment does not advance at the same pace throughout the entire life. Instead, the greatest amount of damage is effected during that period when the life is weakest and most delicate—the time nearest to life's commencement. When one considers how slender the hold on life is at this time, one marvels that any of us survive the determined efforts of sin to destroy us. Needless to say though, every one of us who was not endowed with deliverance from sin's indwelling presence from his earliest moments, has suffered serious mental, moral, and physical impairment. The longer the interval between conception and deliverance, the greater the damage done.

We would be startled if we could know the actual percentage of loss sustained by a person who is not delivered from sin's destructive work from his earliest possible moment. Unfortunately we have no way of accurately determining this in each individual case. Judging by Daniel's situation, it could be as high as a 90% loss, for it is plainly written that when King Nebuchadnezzar examined Daniel and his friends, ". . . he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm." *Daniel* 1:20.

It is also written in regard to the brilliance of Daniel's mind that: "The wisdom which God had imparted to him was as far superior to the wisdom of the great men of the world as the light of the sun shining in the heavens at noonday is brighter than the feeblest star." *The Sanctified Life*, 46, 47.

But then Daniel and his three friends, as has already been shown, were born again immediately after their conceptions, whereas the magicians had never been blessed with this advantage.

The minds of these Jewish youth, free from the destroying presence of indwelling sin, were unimpaired by sin's destructive activity. Further preserved by careful and abstemious living, strengthened by the regenerative effects of communion with God, and enlightened by heaven's tuition, they surpassed the Babylonians to an incredible degree. The Lord revealed to Nebuchadnezzar, had he been willing to see the light, what all of his people might have been, while the four worthies were enabled to see how enfeebled they would have been if they had suffered mental impairment during their prenatal months and thereafter.

But, it is in Christ that we see the finest witness to this principle. While He inherited the same sinful, fallen, mortal humanity that we likewise receive, He was never cursed with the indwelling sin nature which is the offspring of Satan. God, not the devil, was His Father.

Therefore, He was divinity in humanity, not the satanic in human flesh. He was conceived as we are reborn and never needed to be delivered from iniquity by the process of spiritual rebirth.

This means that not even for a fleeting moment was the sin presence in Him. Consequently, He did not suffer an instant's impairment of His mental faculties. Thus, He was born as we should be born and subsequently grew in wisdom and stature as every child should do.

This does not mean that every child will actually reach the same incredible level of achievement that Christ attained. There are hereditary factors which have a bearing on the case as well. Children do not share a common aptitude. They are all born with different possibilities. The purpose of protecting them from the impairment effected by sin, is to enable them to attain to the highest levels in the fields for which they are specifically adapted.

There are those who would argue that Christ possessed an advantage over us in that His divine nature entered into His humanity at the actual point of conception and not at any subsequent moment, whereas, in the cases of our children, the new birth follows conception. It is feared by some that this would provide some time no matter how brief, in which the unborn would suffer impairment to which Christ was not subject.

But there is no need for such concern, for we can be certain that the Lord has made full provision to cover this. Rest by faith in the knowledge that, if we are diligent in ensuring our children's deliverance from Satan's seed at the earliest possible moment, that they will escape all that Jesus escaped.

No one knows for certain how soon after conception sin is able to commence its destructive work on the new life, nor is there any need for parents to be pre-occupied with attempting to establish the precise moment. The objective is to introduce the unborn to the new life as soon as possible after conception and trust the Lord to take care of the details. The lives of those Bible characters who experienced an early rebirth, testify to the truth and power of that which God has revealed.

If parents were to measure the capacities of their newly born infants against those possessed by the Saviour, they would be horrified at how far their little ones fall short. But, when they evaluate them alongside the countless other babes who have likewise never been born again from the earliest possible moment, they see no cause for concern.

Of course it is difficult to gauge a new-born's potential because, at this stage in its growth, it has very limited power to communicate and thus reveal its capacities. It is as the child grows that the real differences can be measured. As has been previously considered in the last chapter, the mind of Christ had developed so amazingly that He was able, at the age of twelve, to reveal a far greater understanding of the Scriptures than could men who had spent their lifetimes in the study of the sacred

writings. He revealed a depth of understanding, a keenness of perception, a breadth of wisdom, and intellectual and spiritual capacities that they had never previously witnessed, and which they had never thought to be possible.

It is therefore very clear that the child must be saved from the indwelling presence of sin from the earliest possible moment. Parents need to understand that every day lost is another day during which sin has extended its destructive work, and the child has been disadvantaged by the depletion of its vital powers.

Up till the present, we see in ourselves and in our children individuals who were not delivered from sin's destroying power at the earliest possible moment, and this explains why we are no better mentally in many cases than the men and women who make no profession of Christianity. But this is changing as the ignorance which left us and our children deprived, is being exchanged for the knowledge of these things and the practical application of the principles involved. There are infants now being conceived on whose part enlightened parents are petitioning in faith for their deliverance from the destroyer. Those prayers are being answered. The results will be evident in a growing number of dedicated children who are escaping the impairment with which most of us are handicapped.

### **The Restorative Power of Divinity in Humanity**

If today, parents were blessed with a truly realistic assessment of the extent of mental impairment suffered by their children, especially before they are born, they would understand with what a terrible handicap their little ones are entering into the world. At the same time, they would really know how advantaged is any child who has not lost even so much as a particle of his intellectual potential. In other words, just to be saved from this fearful loss is a wonderful gain, but the blessing does not stop there. That is just the beginning of the wonderful message the Lord has for parents and their offspring.

The eradication of the sinful nature makes space for the divine. While indwelling sinfulness controls, dominates, and destroys the individual before conversion, no matter how young the person is, the presence of the divine life within has the opposite effect. God's life within the believer, be he infant or adult, is a restorative agency which adds vigor and strength to all the faculties.

It cannot do otherwise, for it is the very life of God in the soul. Just as certainly as sin actively and ruthlessly destroys wherever it is found, God's righteousness within is a recreative force which can do nothing else but maintain a living, positive, ever advancing growth. There is no limit to the heights of excellence to which a child blessed with these assets may attain.

Most certainly, the infant Jesus was totally protected from any loss of vitality in His faculties, while, at the same time He was blessed with the mighty recreative power of God's life within Him. When this is understood, it will be seen that it is no wonder that He was always the head and not the tail, ever above and never beneath. His achievements demonstrate what every child may attain to if he has the advantage of this double blessing from his earliest moments.

Every parent and every Christian educator must strive to understand the tremendous potential for development which is resident in the divine life. If this were appreciated as it should be, parents would be much more urgent in ensuring that their children were certainly blessed with these priceless advantages.

The divine life within Christ and every believer is light as it is written: "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." *John* 1:4.

The message of this verse is as clear as it is powerful. "The life was the light." *Therefore, wherever the life of God is to be found, all is light.* Everything is bright and clear under divine illumination.

Without light, no one can learn. Imagine attending a school in which there was no light under which to see the teacher, read the textbooks, conduct the experiments, and write the papers. If you were required to prepare for the examinations under these conditions, you would have no hope of achieving a passing grade as would the student who had all the light that he needed.

When Christ was upon the earth the *life* of God was in Him. Therefore the *light* of God was in Him. Every subject which engaged His attention was viewed by Him in the glorious light which shone from His Father's indwelling life. It was impossible for Him under these conditions not to make rapid progress every day.

Consider too that there is a marvelous compatibility between God's truth and God's life in the soul. The one naturally attracts the other, and they are very comfortable in each other's company. Thus the student in whom the life of God resides, is not handicapped by a natural tendency to reject truth.

Those doctors who are involved in human organ transplants have discovered that the body naturally tends to reject the new organ. They attempt to combat this by using powerful drugs which have unfortunate side effects, do not provide a permanent solution, and achieve nothing more than a delay in the patient's death.

In like manner, the mind of the unconverted naturally tends to reject the light sent from heaven. There is no compatibility. Each is foreign to the other and each strives to reject the other. Parents resort to different devices in order to overcome this, but such measures only achieve a temporary delay in the final rejection of truth. Thus it is clear that the student who, against this hopeless incompatibility, has to struggle to

develop the highest levels of excellence, will find that he falls far short of the ideal.

Christ did not experience this struggle. Instead, there reigned in his heart a beautiful harmony between, and natural attraction for, divine truth and light. He drew truth into Himself as a sponge absorbs liquid. So it will be with every child whose mind has not been impaired, and who is blessed with the life and light of God within.

No attempt has been made here to exhaust this wonderful subject. Each parent is encouraged to research the material further and to learn by experience what it means to be blessed with these advantages. Then, as this wonderful truth dawns with telling spiritual and mental force, every effort will be exerted to ensure that the little ones of today are not lacking in these vital educational factors. Their acquisition was essential to Christ's education, and they are equally necessary for ours.

### **The Divine Teacher**

The knowledge of God, the perfection of His glorious character, and the wonders of the plan of salvation, can be known only by revelation. Human beings cannot search these things out. We must have a teacher.

Likewise, as a child, Christ, divested of the infinite knowledge He had during His eternal pre-existence, needed to have the best instructor available in order to ensure that He was led to the heights of knowledge necessary for the successful accomplishment of His mission. It was for this reason that He was very selective in His choice of a teacher.

Normally, this decision is made by the parents with little if any reference made to the child's preferences, he being deemed too young to make a responsible choice. Actually, in the cases of those children who are educated in a public or church school, the parents themselves find that they do not have any real choice. There is often but one school, staffed with its government or church appointed teachers, in reasonable traveling distance from their home, and to this institution their children are sent to learn under whoever happens to be there. Those who can afford it are able to send their children to distant boarding schools. Even though this practice provides greater selectivity as to who will teach the children, the practice of separating the little ones from the home school is not a good one. The very rich are able to employ private tutors who come right into the home and educate the children there. This is a system to be preferred if the right instructor can be found, that is, one who has become informed and qualified by virtue of his connection with Him who is infinite in knowledge and wisdom.

In Christ's day, each village had its rabbinical school to which every child was expected to present himself daily. If he was fortunate enough to have a good teacher, he would have the opportunity to do better than a similarly endowed youngster with a poorly qualified teacher.





In Christ's day, every child was expected to attend the village schools in which the rabbis were the teachers, but Jesus never went as a pupil to these institutions. Instead, through the wonderful book of nature, and the written word, God taught Him the mysteries of divine truth. In so doing the Master Teacher imparted more than mere information to His Son; He also endowed Him with a marvelous regenerative strengthening of His mental and physical powers.

This is wonderfully encouraging when it is realized that every child may gain knowledge and be vitalized as Jesus was.

The Saviour, who needed a thorough and comprehensive education to fit Him for His life-work, was limited to two options. One was the village school in which He would have been taught by the local rabbi; the other was to look to God alone as His Instructor. It was impossible for Him to have been taught of God through the rabbis as should have been the system. It was God's plan that parents and teachers were to be His aids and co-workers in the education of the children, but when, in Christ's time, these educators had lost their grip on reality, and were teaching faulty and misleading sophistries, they had disqualified themselves for their important position. His mother was not so seriously decadent as the rabbis, and was able to serve God as an educator of her Son in the initial stages of His acquirement of knowledge. However, she suffered from the national misconceptions in regard to the Messiah's mission, and consequently esteemed as holy men those who published these ideas. So, as time passed, she became concerned because her Son showed not the least respect for the teachings of the religious leaders.

"Mary often remonstrated with Jesus, and urged Him to conform to the usages of the rabbis. But He could not be persuaded to change His habits of contemplating the works of God and seeking to alleviate the suffering of men or even of dumb animals. When the priests and teachers required Mary's aid in controlling Jesus, she was greatly troubled; but peace came to her heart as He presented the statements of Scripture upholding His practices." *The Desire of Ages*, 90.

It is most fortunate for Jesus and for us that the Saviour did not attend the local schools of the rabbis, for, far from fitting Him for His mission, they would have robbed Him of any possibility of achieving it.

"The child Jesus did not receive instruction in the synagogue schools. . . . As He advanced from childhood to youth, He did not seek the schools of the rabbis. He needed not the education to be obtained from such sources; for God was His instructor." *The Desire of Ages*, 70.

Christ's education under God's personal tuition gave Him an incredible advantage over the other children. This is not to infer that Jesus enjoyed preferential treatment, for the same infinite Master of all knowledge and sciences would have been just as available to them if they met, as Jesus did, the entrance qualifications for admission to the divine tutorship. The first qualification is spiritual rebirth; the second is daily attendance in class.<sup>1</sup> Had they done this, they would have had the same opportunities that Jesus had to progress in every branch of essential learning.

Jehovah as an educator is so much superior to the wisest man in the history of the human race, that He should be the only one considered.

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 23 entitled "The Competent Educator", page 330.

"In the presence of such a Teacher, of such opportunity for divine education, what worse than folly is it to seek an education apart from Him—to seek to be wise apart from Wisdom; to be true while rejecting Truth; to seek illumination apart from the Light, and existence without the Life; to turn from the Fountain of living waters, and hew out broken cisterns, that can hold no water." *Education*, 83.

Every item of information imparted by God to Christ together with every principle enunciated, was purest truth. There was no destructive mixture of right and wrong, light and darkness, righteousness and iniquity to confuse, bewilder, weaken the intellect, weary the mind, and bore the learner. Delighted with every fresh disclosure of harmonious revelations, Christ was stimulated to aspire to greater and still greater heights of understanding. He was constantly "... trying to understand the reason of things." *The Desire of Ages*, 70. Study was His delight. He was motivated to learn, needed no urging or threatenings, and remembered what was shown to Him. He was the kind of student that every teacher would be delighted to have, and one that the Jewish professors in Jerusalem desired to bring under their jurisdiction.

"In this thoughtful Galilean boy they discerned great promise. They desired to gain Him as a student, that He might become a teacher in Israel. They wanted to have charge of His education, feeling that a mind so original must be brought under their molding." *The Desire of Ages*, 80.

Those well-meaning but misguided men could appreciate the excellent results achieved by Christ's heavenly Father, but the educational principles and procedures employed by the Infinite One were totally foreign to them. They could never have taken over and continued the work which God had done in His Son.

To appreciate something of the advantages actually existing in the divine system of education, imagine learning under bright lights in comparison with groping for understanding in the darkness. This may seem too strong a distinction, but let it not be forgotten that men "... seek illumination apart from the Light . . . ." *Education*, 83. That is, they try to discover truth with the lights switched off. What a hopeless undertaking this is.

So great is the self-imposed blindness which results that they actually despise and reject true education, esteeming it unfit to prepare the student for a place in society. Yet, one must not altogether blame them for this, because God has been given so little opportunity to manifest the glorious superiority of His ways. Israel was called to follow Jehovah's leadings and establish His system of education. Thus they were to reveal to the entire world the perfection, power, efficiency, and sheer beauty of the educational principles later employed in the education of Jesus. But, while professing to be a peculiar people, they turned from their holy

calling and replaced God as their Teacher with satanic darkness and oppression. Far from being a nation of intellectual and spiritual giants, they stunted their minds and hearts till they presented a most unattractive picture to the world. Instead of recommending the truth to all mankind, they made it to be unlovely and unwelcome.

In God's education of Christ, all this was corrected. Men then and since have had presented before them the real picture of what divine education can do. It has been conclusively demonstrated for time and eternity that no one can progress and achieve as those who truly have God for their Teacher.

This is an inexhaustible subject on which many books could be written. Suffice it to say here that, by virtue of His being personally tutored by God, Jesus had a tremendous advantage over those who attended other schools. He could never have attained to the heights that He did without His heavenly Father's schooling.

### **The Regenerating Holy Scriptures**

A seriously inadequate evaluation of the Scriptures is to regard them merely as being a textbook of information and instruction. They are, it is true, a veritable storehouse of essential information, and are a handbook of instruction for all those who are seeking for maximum efficiency both in this age and that which is to come, but they are not merely that. There is another role which is filled by the sacred writings which must be understood by every believer, and of which the utmost advantage must be taken if optimum efficiency is to be achieved at every advancing stage of physical, mental, and spiritual growth.

It is this: In the written word is the actual power of God. That mighty, sustaining, regenerating force is literally there just as surely as physical energy and vitality are contained in the bread eaten at our tables. Believers need to understand this so that, when they are studying the Word of God, they will in faith seek more than information and instruction. They will be partaking of the actual power of the Creator.

"The same power that Christ exercised when He walked visibly among men is in His word. It was by His word that Jesus healed disease and cast out demons; by His word He stilled the sea and raised the dead, and the people bore witness that His word was with power. He spoke the word of God, as He had spoken to all the prophets and teachers of the Old Testament. The whole Bible is *a* manifestation of Christ.

"The Scriptures are to be received as God's word to us, not written merely, but spoken. When the afflicted ones came to Christ, He beheld not only those who asked for help, but all who throughout the ages should come to Him in like need and with like faith. When He said to the paralytic, 'Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee;' when He said to the woman of Capernaum, 'Daughter, be of good comfort: thy

faith hath made thee whole; go in peace,' He spoke to other afflicted, sin-burdened ones who should seek His help. *Matthew 9:2; Luke 8:48.*

"So with all the promises of God's word. In them He is speaking to us individually, speaking as directly as if we could listen to His voice. It is in these promises that Christ communicates to us His grace and power. They are leaves from that tree which is 'for the healing of the nations.' *Revelation 22:2.* Received, assimilated, they are to be the strength of the character, the inspiration and sustenance of the life. Nothing else can have such healing power. Nothing besides can impart the courage and faith which give vital energy to the whole being." *The Ministry of Healing*, 122.

This is a powerful revelation of the awesome might contained in the written word of God. To understand the fullness of the forces contained in them requires the student to behold God at work in the forming of this earth and all that is in it. Then, He simply exercised the power in His spoken word and solar systems and galaxies appeared. He pronounced His will into empty space and it was filled with life and productivity.

That is power!

When the student becomes acquainted with that power both by the study of it and the experience of its working in his life, he will know the awesome might that is literally in the recorded pronouncements of the Almighty. Then he will comprehend that it is not merely *through* these promises that God communicates His grace and power, but it is in them that He does it. They are in themselves leaves from the tree of life. Therefore, when the believer in true faith partakes of a divine pronouncement or commitment, he is actually assimilating into his very being the living vitality and energy of the Creator Himself. Obviously, anyone who does this in addition to being free from mental impairment, blessed with the indwelling divine life, and having God for his Teacher, has a tremendous capacity for learning beyond that experienced by those who are excluded from these facilities.

Once parents are assured that their little one is in fact born again, they should lead the child in the study of the Scriptures, not merely for information and instruction, but as the actual bread of life. Feeding on the nourishment contained in the Bible will produce incredible strength of mind and spirit. Physical vitality will also be increased. Jesus, even as a child, was a constant student of the written word, and His life testifies to the power that is communicated from the promises of God and the principles contained in the sacred writings.

"In childhood, youth, and manhood, Jesus studied the Scriptures. As a little child He was daily at His mother's knee taught from the scrolls of the prophets. In His youth the early morning and the evening twilight often found Him alone on the mountainside or among the trees of the forest, spending a quiet hour in prayer and the study of God's word.

During His ministry His intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures testifies to His diligence in their study. And since He gained knowledge as we may gain it, His wonderful power, both mental and spiritual, is a testimony to the value of the Bible as a means of education." *Education*, 185.

Thus the life of Christ demonstrates and proves that when a child, in whom is the spirit of obedience, studies the Scriptures, he is receiving much more than information—valuable and necessary as that is. There is also being imparted to him a stream of life and power through the creative might in that word. This results in a development of the mental capacities which can never be experienced by the godless. Consequently, the world would never have produced any minds to compare with those God's people would have possessed if Christian parents had understood the true principles of child training and applied them from their children's earliest moments.

Four individuals whose lives witness to this truth are Daniel and his three companions. The Babylonians were the most highly educated race of people in the world known to them, and Nebuchadnezzar was determined that his intellectuals would outclass the members of every other race and religion on earth. His was to be the super race, the unreachable, and the unsurpassable.

But not one of his people had been blessed with deliverance from the old spiritual nature, had escaped the consequent impairment of his mental faculties, had been blessed with God as his Teacher, nor had the cultivating, strengthening, ennobling influence of the Scriptures from his earliest or any subsequent moments.

Consequently, they proved no match for Daniel and his friends who had these advantages, as it is written: "Daniel and his companions enjoyed the benefits of correct training and education in early life . . . ." *Child Guidance*, 167.

While this brief statement does not explicitly and specifically say that Daniel was blessed with the advantages previously discussed, it is certainly implied, for how otherwise could he have been correctly trained? No child can possibly gain knowledge as Jesus did, or be *correctly* trained as Daniel was, without the removal of the old spiritual nature, its replacement with the divine nature, his connection with God as his Teacher, followed by diligent training with the Bible as the main text book.

The confrontation between Daniel and Babylon's intellectual might was a contest between true and false education. The outcome was conclusive. The righteous four were found to be ten times better than the best Babylon could produce.

Such an achievement was possible only because the Scriptures, when received by those within whom is the spirit of obedience, are a mighty

regenerating power that increases the mental capacities to an almost unbelievable extent. This truth needs to be thoroughly appreciated by all parents who desire their offspring to develop powerful minds and strong characters. When a baby from its earliest moments receives all these blessings, its mental and spiritual development will be nothing short of astonishing. It will be a wonder and an amazement to its beholders. To the parents, it will be a never failing source of delight.

Let none overlook the critical truth that it is the combination of all the factors acquired through the new birth *and* the diligent study of God's word which produces minds like those possessed by Christ and the noble four in Babylon. Never forget that the most intense research into the Scriptures without the individual being born again will never produce a mind like Jesus had. It is the *combination* that is the secret of intellectual power. This is why parents who have been very diligent in their insistence that their offspring spend time every day in the study of the Bible, have not seen their young people develop the mental might that Jesus, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah possessed. Their children were not, at the same time, born again and blessed with the spirit of obedience.

Some may ask at this point how a child can study the Scriptures from its earliest moments, that is, before it is even born? Even after it is born, the child displays no capacity for understanding even the simplest truths contained in holy writ, *so* how could it possibly study God's word before it is born?

Obviously, the newly born and the as yet unborn cannot study as an adult does with the capacity to read and comprehend what is written. Those learning procedures are much too advanced for the very young to handle, but this does not mean that there is no way by which they can learn God's saving truths. There is a very simple and effective way of doing it.

While the child is still in the womb, let the mother and the father spend as much time in the study of the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy as possible. Read the sacred words aloud to the unborn. To some this may seem a pointless exercise, but it will not be such to those who understand something of the remarkable powers of prenatal influence. The infant will not understand the facts and the reasoning, but, as the truths are absorbed by the mother, a familiarity with God's life and power is established and a connection with the Almighty Source is made, and every experience, emotion, and blessing gained by the mother is shared by the child and known by it as if it had passed over the ground itself. As life from above flows into the little one, every vital organ, the brain, the heart, and the nerves are revitalized. After the child is born, let the program be continued by both the parents participating in the audible study of the Scriptures in the child's presence and hearing.

A beautiful blessing is that Christ's Spirit within will develop a character and disposition free from pride and self-confidence. The life will be graced with the beautiful attributes of humility, love, patience, and unselfish service, even as it was in Christ when He was a child, a youth, and a man. To the world, the possession of power is always attended by the presence of pride, while humility is found only with the weak, but in the Christian life this is not so. Humility and power do go together, for two reasons. Firstly, the disposition to become lifted up was removed with his old nature, and secondly, the Christian is ever conscious that he has nothing of which to boast, for everything he possesses has come from a Source other than himself.

Of course, the possibility for a Christian to become proud is not entirely eliminated. The fall of the sinless Lucifer testifies to this. But, if the child is blessed with the spirit of obedience and is properly trained, it is possible for him to be in possession of great power and still retain his humility. The lives of God's great men as well as of Christ, prove this. Moses was a very powerful man, yet he is described as being the meekest of men. Daniel too was placed in a position of great influence and authority, but it never unbalanced him. He retained his faultless righteousness to the end.

None of these men were exceptional in comparison with what all God's children might have been. Not they, but the rest, were the abnormal ones. Every Christian child today can experience the same wonderful development of his mental and spiritual powers so that he is the head and not the tail; above only and never beneath.

Let it be stressed though, that Bible training alone will not achieve this development. Not until the spirit of disobedience has been removed from the child can the study of the Scriptures produce the promised results. Then the awesome power in the word pours living vitality into the mind and soul, and the individual races ahead of all who are not blessed with these advantages. The achievements of the Hebrew youth in Babylon, when they emerged ten times better than their competitors, will be repeated.

"The whole Bible is a revelation of the glory of God in Christ. Received, believed, obeyed, it is the great instrumentality in the transformation of character. It is the grand stimulus, the constraining force, that quickens the physical, mental, and spiritual powers, and directs the life into right channels.

"The reason why the youth, and even those of mature years, are so easily led into temptation and sin, is that they do not study the word of God and meditate upon it as they should. The lack of firm, decided will power, which is manifest in life and character, results from neglect of the sacred instruction of God's word. They do not by earnest effort direct the mind to that which would inspire pure, holy thought and divert it from



that which is impure and untrue. There are few who choose the better part, who sit at the feet of Jesus, as did Mary, to learn of the divine Teacher. Few treasure His words in the heart and practice them in the life.

"The truths of the Bible, received, will uplift mind and soul. If the word of God were appreciated as it should be, both young and old would possess an inward rectitude, a strength of principle, that would enable them to resist temptation." *The Ministry of Healing*, 458, 459.

Christ did more than study the Scriptures in the normal sense of the word. When He unrolled the scrolls, He entered into communion with God. A connection between humanity and divinity was established which ensured that the life of God through His word actually flowed into the Saviour. Jesus saw to it that this happened every day and, when it did, He experienced the revitalization of all His faculties—physical, mental, and spiritual.

"The Saviour's life on earth was a life of communion with nature and with God. In this communion He revealed for us the secret of a life of power." *The Ministry of Healing*, 51

"In Christ the cry of humanity reached the Father of infinite pity. As a man He supplicated the throne of God till His humanity was charged with a heavenly current that should connect humanity with divinity. Through continual communion He received life from God, that He might impart life to the world. His experience is to be ours." *The Desire of Ages*, 363.

Much more could be written on this point, but this is sufficient to establish the fact that, if a child has been delivered from the old nature, and is blessed with the implantation of Christ's divine life within, and has God for his Teacher, Scriptural study then becomes a mighty force which revitalizes the physical, mental, and spiritual powers. The infant who has these influences established in him from conception, will be far in advance of other children and, soon, even of adults who have never enjoyed these blessings. Parents need to be thoroughly aware of these facts so that they can firstly establish these forces in their own lives and then, in turn, ensure that they are in their child's life as well.



# A Sure Thing

## Chapter 8

Thus far, consideration has been given to the life of Christ during His infancy, childhood, and youth as God's positive declaration to us of what He intends that every infant, child, and youth is to attain. This elevates the level of spirit and behavior which can be regarded as acceptable, to heights not even considered possible in the past, and at which the faith of many parents staggers.

When the beautiful, flawless, and powerful life of Christ even as an infant is studied, it seems that such purity and perfection is utterly beyond the reach of our little ones. This doubt is reinforced as we see them displaying the evil propensities of their unconverted hearts. We tend to be victims of the notion that until a certain age level is reached, the youth cannot really experience conversion.

It is critically important that this attitude be exchanged for one of living faith in the message the Lord has sent us in the witness of His Son. Far from being discouraged by the achievements of Christ even from His infancy, we are to see in that beautiful life the absolute assurance that God has made every provision that the Pattern can and in fact must be copied both by parents and their children. No one is to see Christ's life and character as being beyond the reach of the young today, for "He endured every trial to which we are subject. And He exercised in His own behalf no power that is not freely offered to us. As man, He met temptation, and overcame in the strength given Him from God. He says, 'I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart.' *Psalms* 40:8. As He went about doing good, and healing all who were afflicted by Satan, He made plain to men the character of God's law and the nature of His service. His life testifies that it is possible for us also to obey the law of God." *The Desire of Ages*, 24.

On the numerous occasions when this and like statements have been quoted, it is usual for both the speaker and the listeners to stop short of applying this promise to the children. Generally speaking, it has never even occurred to either the preacher or his audience that children, from their very earliest moments, can be truly born again and be blessed with the disposition to obey. It has never been thought that our little children can be as perfectly sinless as the child Jesus was. But, the entire point of Christ's perfect childhood is to reassure us that our children have before them the opportunity to be blessed with the perfection of Christ's character. As a child, Christ suffered every temptation that children have to face, and overcame in the same way that every child can likewise overcome. As surely as He could do it, our children can too. The following statement certifies that Christ, as a child, is just as much the example and assurance for children as He is for the adults.

"Jesus is the perfect pattern, and it is the duty and privilege of every child and youth to copy the pattern. Let children bear in mind that the child Jesus had taken upon Himself human nature, and was in the likeness of sinful flesh, and was tempted of Satan as *all children are tempted*. He was able to resist the temptation of Satan through His dependence upon the divine power of His heavenly Father, as He was subject to His will, and obedient to all His commands. He kept His Father's statutes, precepts, and laws. He was continually seeking counsel of God, and was obedient to His will." *Sons and Daughters of God*, 128.

But, in order to achieve what Christ did, the child must be on the same footing as Christ was. The victorious Saviour could never have lived a perfectly righteous life if He had been cursed with the spirit of disobedience. That would have been impossible. No amount of Bible study, hours spent in prayer, training, and discipline, would have enabled Him to be what He was and to behave as He did, without His being blessed with the spirit of obedience from His earliest moments as an unborn child. The same is true of our children. In order to copy the perfect pattern to the best possible advantage, they too must have the spirit of obedience from their earliest possible moments.

This is not to say that those who have not been blessed with the spirit of obedience from their conceptions, cannot be born again and live a victorious life. The truth that is being emphasized here is that no child can live the Christ-life without being delivered from sin's dominion and filled with the spirit of obedience, and, the earlier in life this experience is gained, the less sin will have impaired the faculties, and the nearer that soul will come to matching the Pattern. The later in life the deliverance comes, the greater the damage done by the indwelling destroyer, sin, and the more limited the heights to which the soul can aspire in this life. Let none however be discouraged by these facts. Let all be encouraged by the truth that no matter how late in life one finds the Saviour, there is

before him the opportunity to markedly grow in grace. Just because you are left with one talent after having lost nine, there is no profit or wisdom in burying it in the ground. Membership in God's family means a living connection and demands continual growth. The Lord expects that each believer will make the greatest possible advancement under the circumstances in which he finds himself.

Some may argue that Christ in His conception had an infinite advantage over us in our conception so much so that it would be impossible for any child or adult to live as He did. They point to the fact that He was conceived with a divine nature dwelling in His human nature, whereas we have an evil, overruling sin-master in control of our humanity. Therefore, they claim, Christ had a disposition to obey, while we are cursed with a powerful propensity to disobey.

It is true that this difference does exist between Christ and us *at the point of conception*, and if this situation were to remain unchanged, the conclusions drawn above would be all too grimly true. But, let the Everlasting Father be praised, every provision has been made to change this situation in every human being as soon as conception has been achieved. When consecrated, enlightened parents take the necessary steps in true faith to deliver their newly conceived offspring, then that child is placed with Christ on vantage ground. Just as Christ was the divine dwelling in the human, so it will be with the children of the true believer who takes the necessary steps to ensure that it is so.

The glorious result will be that the infant will be able to develop its unimpaired powers without the destructive presence of sin, but with the revitalizing energy of God flowing into and through him to strengthen and empower every faculty of his being. As such children grow toward adulthood, what mighty powers for good they will be! With such wonderful prospects before them, what a powerful and thrilling incentive parents have to ensure that their children are blessed with these advantages.

To really appreciate the truth that Christ did not have any advantage over us, it needs to be known that it was not as a God that Jesus faced temptation. He did not overcome by His own omnipotent power as the eternal One. Every power which He exercised while on earth was acquired and developed through faith and communion with the Almighty.

"But He chose to give back the scepter into the Father's hands, and to step down from the throne of the universe, that He might bring light to the benighted, and life to the perishing." *The Desire of Ages*, 22, 23.

Giving the scepter into the Father's hands meant much more than simply stepping down from a position. It also involved relinquishing the powers which attended that position. The Saviour as fully ceased to be omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient, as any other child who was

ever born to fallen, sinful, mortal flesh and blood. Like them, He was not all-powerful, everywhere at once, and all-knowing.

Christ's total emptying Himself of all the powers He had possessed and exercised when He was the omnipotent King of kings and Lord of lords, is most easily seen in the area of omniscience. When Christ was born, He was not in possession of all knowledge as He would have been had He not emptied Himself to stand on this earth as we have to stand. As a babe, He knew only what any other babe knows—nothing!

Before He came to this earth, the entire history of His earthly mission was open to Him. He knew every detail in advance, but when He departed from heaven, all that was left behind. In fact, when He was taken to His dedication, He is described as "this unconscious babe . . . ." *The Desire of Ages*, 52.

Christ could never have been tempted as we are if He knew everything beforehand. Of course, by the sure word of prophecy He had a knowledge of the major events yet to transpire, but when it came to details, these were as hidden from Him as they are from us. Day by day the Father unfolded His plans to the Saviour and daily He followed where the Father led.

"But the Son of God was surrendered to the Father's will, and dependent upon His power. So utterly was Christ emptied of self that He made no plans for Himself. He accepted God's plans for Him, and day by day the Father unfolded His plans. So should we depend upon God, that our lives may be the simple outworking of His will." *The Desire of Ages*, 208.

There are statements made by Christ which confirm that He did not always have the advantage of knowing in detail what the future held. He confessed for instance, that He knew neither the day nor the hour of His own second advent. He said, "But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." *Mark* 13:32.

Then there was the occasion when He was speaking to His disciples about His oneness with the Father: " 'If ye had known Me,' Christ said, 'ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him.' But not yet did the disciples understand. 'Lord, show us the Father,' exclaimed Philip, 'and it sufficeth us.'"

"Amazed at his dullness of comprehension, Christ asked with pained surprise, 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?' Is it possible that you do not see the Father in the works He does through Me?" *The Desire of Age*, 663.

Christ would not have been painfully surprised if He had known beforehand that Philip would say what he did. To Christ, His disciple's request was quite unexpected.

It is also true that, as it is in the experience of any prophet, there were times as well when Jesus did know in advance what would be said

or done. An example of this was when He sent His disciples to borrow the ass on which He was to ride into Jerusalem. He was able to assure His disciples that the ass would be loaned. He said, "And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, The Lord has need of them," and immediately he will send them." *Matthew 21:3*.

"As He foretold, the plea, The Lord hath need of them,' was readily granted." *The Desire of Ages*, 570.

This foreknowledge was not of Himself. Rather, as with every other prophet, He was aware of these things only as the Holy Spirit revealed them.

Jesus gained knowledge as we may do, through diligent and consistent study in which God's Holy Spirit opened His mind to comprehend the import of what He was learning. Therefore, all the knowledge which He had and the skill He developed were acquired, not inherent.

The same is true of the mighty power which became His own as He grew in grace and in favor with God and man. Every particle of it was acquired. Of Himself He could do nothing. He firstly had to receive it from above and then use it in ministry to others. In this respect there was no difference between Him and us.

An indispensable key in the raising of children is the eradication of one spirit and its replacement by the other. Until this is achieved, Satan is their father and therefore their teacher. Irrespective of how faithfully their human parents and Sabbath school teachers instruct them in Bible truths, take them to church each week, and discipline them, God is not their teacher. They have not been born again. Therefore, they are still members of Satan's family, and, unless regenerated, will identify with him in the end.

If parents would only *realize* this, they would not put their trust in religious exercises to change their children without making certain that they had the inner sanctification first. They would not rest until they knew first by faith and then saw the evidences that the spirit of disobedience had been replaced with the new nature, which manifests itself in the spirit of obedience.

While it takes very thorough work and the full and precise performance of the required procedures to make certain that the children are born again and properly trained, yet, if the work is faithfully done, the promised results are absolutely certain. God has promised to save the children, and He will not fail to keep that promise because He never breaks His word and because He desires with infinite intensity to deliver our little ones. He waits longingly for parents to be enlightened to understand what God will do, and be so filled with living faith that He will have their fullest cooperation in His work of saving our little ones.

Parents should begin this work by becoming thoroughly familiar with the specific promises the Lord has made in behalf of child salvation. As the divine assurances are found, believe them simply because God has spoken them. There is mighty power in this kind of faith. It brings the promised results.

Let consideration now be given to some of these promises.

"Train up a child in the way he should go,

"And when he is old he will not depart from it." *Proverbs 22:6.*

This statement contains a command and a promise. The command is: "Train up a child in the way he should go;" and the promise made on that condition is: "And when he is old he will not depart from it."

God never requires His people to do that which is an impossibility. Therefore, as surely as He directs parents to train up their children in the way they should go, it is possible for parents to do this. No one will ever successfully plead in the judgment that God was asking too much of them when He directed them to train their children in His ways.

Of course, in an age of great spiritual darkness when God's ways are hidden from the world, the Lord understands that the people do not know how to train up the child in the way he should go. The blame for the loss of the children under these circumstances rests not on the parents so much as on those who have kept the light away from them.

Today, however, we are living in a time of great spiritual light and understanding. God's ways are known to us. We are learning how to train up the children in the way they should go and the children will be saved.

Every command that God makes is also His personal guarantee that He will provide every facility necessary to achieve the command, for we know that "all His biddings are enablings". *Christ's Object Lessons*, 333. Whatever the Lord directs us to do is accompanied by the promise, whether stated explicitly or not, that He will provide all that is necessary to achieve the command.

Those who believe this principle will have no difficulty in recognizing the promises implicit in the command to raise up their children in the way they are to go. Knowing that it would be impossible to do this while the little ones retained the spirit of disobedience, and knowing that no human being has the power to solve this critical problem, they have the assurance that, in response to the mighty prayer of faith and the institution of correct procedures, God will take away this dreadful hindrance and supply in its place the spirit of obedience. Furthermore, they know that subsequent to this vital first step, the Saviour will provide the wisdom and power to train the children correctly—an effort which would be largely wasted if the transformation of nature had not firstly been achieved.



**There are few if any things more dangerous than trying to take the prey from a wild beast such as a leopard, a lion, or a tiger. This is a seemingly impossible task, though not for God. Because of man's fall, our beautiful children are the lawful captives of the fiercest of all beasts of prey, the devil, but the Almighty has the power to deliver them totally from this terrible destroyer.**

This particular promise is a very powerful and specific statement which does not suggest the possibility of success, but guarantees it. It does not say that if the children are trained in the way they should go, then some of them or maybe even most of them might eventually walk in those ways. No such uncertainty is expressed. Rather, in clear, straightforward, positive language the Lord declares that, if the specified conditions are met in the training of the children, then, after growing up, they will not depart from God's ways. Read this glorious promise over and over again until its living power has been absorbed right into the very life. Once you have done this, you will be delivered from any doubt about your children's being saved. You will know that they will be. It is as sure as the promise. It was God who made it, and it cannot fail.

This is not the only Scripture that will be the guide and strength of the believing parent. Here is another of great power and certainty.

"Shall the prey be taken from the mighty,

"Or the captives of the righteous be delivered?



"But thus says the Lord:

" 'Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away,

" 'And the prey of the terrible be delivered;

" 'For I will contend with him who contends with you,

" 'And I will save your children.' " *Isaiah* 49:24, 25.

Who is this one so mighty that a question is raised as to whether his captives can be taken from him?

There is but one answer to this question! It is Satan who works to destroy all of God's creation.

This question should never arise. It does only because men have for so long known only the despotism of sin and its author, while they have remained totally ignorant of God's saving power. Therefore, they can see nothing in the future but continued servitude to this mighty one. So, when the assurance comes to them that they and their children can be saved, they naturally respond by asking, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty?" Is deliverance really possible?

God Himself answers the question in ringing tones:

"Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible be delivered. . . . and I will save your children."

Once again, this is not a hesitant, uncertain sound. The Sovereign of the universe, the all-powerful Creator of the heavens and the earth, the Master of an infinite creation, does not declare what He will do in language of doubtful possibilities. He does not say that, hopefully, the prey will be rescued, and the children possibly saved. He said that they *will be delivered*, and that He *will save the children*.

And why is this so? How can the mightiest One of all speak with such certainty that there will be success in this work? It is because He will do the work Himself. Take very careful note of His words: "For / will contend with him who contends with you, and / will save your children."

One of the gravest mistakes made by those who are truly and earnestly seeking to gain eternal life for themselves and their children, is to contend with him who contends with them. Satan constantly aims to draw us out to do battle with him, for he knows that we are no match for his tremendous power. For almost six thousand years he has succeeded in luring God's people away from the shelter the Almighty has afforded them, to deal them one miserable defeat after another. Now, he is a very experienced, skillful, and mighty warrior against whom we do not have the necessary power to successfully do battle. But then we do not have to. God does not promise to give us strength to contend with the devil. He says, "I will contend with him."

Now that is wonderful news. It is a truth which, once learned and practiced, will guarantee that the Christian's life is a series of uninterrupted victories. It was when Jehoshaphat acted on this principle

that he was granted the most significant victory over his enemies that was ever granted him. The lesson is for all time.

"It happened after this that the people of Moab with the people of Ammon, and others with them besides the Ammonites, came to battle against Jehoshaphat." 2 *Chronicles* 20:1.

When the news was brought to the king, he feared the threat but did not set himself in battle array to contend with these nations through whom Satan sought to contend with him and Judah. Instead, he delivered the entire threat into God's hands and waited for His solution. The answer was swift in coming. God commissioned the prophet, Jahaziel, to advise the king and people that there was no need to be worried, ". . . for the battle is not yours, but God's". 2 *Chronicles* 20:15.

He was then assured, " 'You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord is with you." 2 *Chronicles* 20:17.

The next day, as instructed, they went forth to the battlefield, not to fight, for the Lord had done that already, but to witness the victory already gained. So it was that when they arrived, they found that their enemies had all slaughtered each other until none were left alive. Then the nations around about feared the Lord who could do such marvelous things for His people. Neither Satan nor his followers have any desire to contend with God, but only with His people. When the Lord's children let Him do His rightful work of contending with the enemy, Satan and his followers suffer a disastrous defeat every time. Nothing is more certain.

Jehoshaphat's experience was not a special case. Instead, it is the way in which God will always work if only we will let Him do His work in His own way. The battle against sin and Satan is never ours. It is always God's. Then never let it become ours instead of God's. Always remember the full title of the book we call *The Great Controversy*. The complete title is, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*. It is not and can never be *The Great Controversy Between Us and Satan*!

Thus the true Christian never goes out to fight Satan or to get the victory over him. First, he gets the victory, which comes as a gift from Jesus Christ, then he goes out to meet an already defeated devil and his followers. As Christ contemplated the triumph He was to gain over the devil, He realized what a wonderful legacy of certain victory He was passing on to His children, as it is written:

"Henceforward Christ's followers were to look upon Satan as a conquered foe. Upon the cross, Jesus was to gain the victory for them; that victory He desired them to accept as their own. 'Behold,' He said, 'I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.'

"The omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit is the defense of every contrite soul. Not one that in penitence and faith has claimed His protection will Christ permit to pass under the enemy's power. The Saviour is by the side of His tempted and tried ones. With Him there can be no such thing as failure, loss, impossibility, or defeat; we can do all things through Him who strengthens us. When temptations and trials come, do not wait to adjust all the difficulties, but look to Jesus, your Helper." *The Desire of Ages*, 490, 491.

So, the Christian, no matter what his age might be, does not go out to get the victory over Satan. First, through communion with the Eternal Source of infinite power, he receives the victory, *then* he goes out to meet the adversary. All parents can face life's struggles in this way and, when they do, they will know no such thing as failure, loss, impossibility, or defeat. The same principles and promises hold good for the children too. Parents are to lead their children every morning into the presence of the Redeemer who will give them fresh supplies of grace for the day. Having consecrated their little ones to the Master, parents can rest in the assurance that the Mighty One will contend with the enemy and save the children from him.

God has specifically promised to save our children, to achieve which He has and needs only one infallible means, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the power of God to save from sin, as it is written:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." *Romans* 1:16.

There is great danger that this point will slip by without its vital significance being seen. God says that He will *save* the children, and it is by the gospel that He will do it. Therefore, the entire work of child salvation is nothing other than the gospel ministry, and every application of it is a gospel procedure. This means in turn that every person who takes on the work and responsibility of parenthood, thereby assumes the role of a gospel minister. It then follows that such a person should never undertake this awesome responsibility without being qualified to do so. Parents-to-be must know with certainty what the sin problem is, the way in which the Lord will solve it by removing the old nature and replacing it with the new life of Christ, and that He will do this for the children when that time comes even as they, the parents, have already experienced it themselves. When these conditions are met, God can work with such born again, dedicated, and enlightened parents to effect the saving of the children.

Any reader who is still seeking these qualifications and desires practical information on how to achieve them is referred to the following publications as companion volumes to this book and all available from Destiny Press. They are *From Bondage to Freedom*, *Acceptable*

*Confession, Living Righteously, The Living and the Dead, and Revival and Reformation.* Because the basic gospel message has already been spelled out in these books, we will not repeat the information here.

Those parents who have already studied the messages in these books and in consequence have experienced the transforming power of the gospel before they read this volume, will be at a decided advantage. They will be the ones who can best grasp the promise that the Lord will save their children. They will know that this is God's assurance that the gospel will provide deliverance from sin as much for the little ones as it does for the adults. In fact, the earlier the solution is applied, the better the results will be.

Every parent who grasps these promises will be able to say in the wonderful day of final homecoming: "Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me!

"We are for signs and wonders in Israel

"From the Lord of hosts,

"Who dwells in Mount Zion." *Isaiah* 8:18.

To grasp something of the significance of this statement, an understanding must be gained of what, in Bible terms, a sign and a wonder in Israel actually is. This is beautifully explained in the following paragraph.

"When the message of truth is presented in our day, there are many who, like the Jews, cry, Show us a sign. Work us a miracle. Christ wrought no miracle at the demand of the Pharisees. He wrought no miracle in the wilderness in answer to Satan's insinuations. He does not impart to us power to vindicate ourselves or to satisfy the demands of unbelief and pride. But the gospel is not without a sign of its divine origin. Is it not a miracle that we can break from the bondage of Satan? Enmity against Satan is not natural to the human heart; it is implanted by the grace of God. When one who has been controlled by a stubborn, wayward will is set free, and yields himself wholeheartedly to the drawing of God's heavenly agencies, a miracle is wrought; so also when a man who has been under strong delusion comes to understand moral truth. Every time a soul is converted, and learns to love God and keep His commandments, the promise of God is fulfilled, 'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.' *Ezekiel* 36:26. The change in human hearts, the transformation of human characters, is a miracle that reveals an ever-living Saviour, working to rescue souls. A consistent life in Christ is a great miracle. In the preaching of the word of God, the sign that should be manifest now and always is the presence of the Holy Spirit, to make the word a regenerating power to those that hear. This is God's witness before the world to the divine mission of His Son." *The Desire of Ages*, 407.

In this paragraph, only one sign is named as evidence that the word of God has been truly preached—it is that the Holy Spirit has been present to make the word a regenerating power to those who hear. Without the ministry of the Holy Spirit, God's word has no power to do anything, but with that omnipotent Presence, the word has the ability to actually *create a new*, divine life of perfect righteousness in the heart of the suppliant. Consider this truth well that its vital significance not be lost upon you. Learn to look for the one sign which proves that the word has been truly preached—the establishment in the hearer, be he child or adult, of the regenerated life of perfect righteousness.

It is very necessary that this discipline be established, for there are quite a number of misleading signs which attend the preaching of the false gospels—the impressive manifestation of great power, wonderful feelings of rapture, the seemingly true conversions, the establishment of outward rectitude, and the generation of intense missionary zeal. These are the kinds of witnesses which individuals find so impressive, attractive, and convincing, and it is true that some of them do also attend the preaching of the true gospel, but their presence never negates the truth that only when the Holy Spirit is present to make the truth a regenerating power is the true sign being manifested. It is a sign which can only be truly known by those who really experience it. To all others it is a mystery beyond comprehension.

The same beautiful truth is expressed in *Isaiah 55:13*:

"Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree,  
And instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree;  
And it shall be to the Lord for a name,  
For an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

The thorn and the brier here referred to are symbolic of the evil nature which is replaced by the new nature symbolically referred to in this verse as the cypress and the myrtle. This is a figurative representation of the conversion experience; the work of the Holy Spirit as a regenerating power to those that hear. This is the sign that the Lord has given. Whenever a man is converted as a result of this transforming power, the divine sign is established.

When parents can stand before the Lord and say both now and in the day of final homecoming, "Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel," they are testifying to the fact that the children have experienced the same conversion as they have. Both bear the sign of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

There has been too great a tendency for parents to defer any hope of seeing genuine conversions taking place in their children until they reach an age of personal accountability. But, this is a sad mistake. Instead, it needs to be understood that, at a surprisingly early age, a child can



**There is nothing more certain than that, if a child is raised by the procedures and according to the principles God has laid down, he will most certainly remain faithful to God and His righteousness all the days of his life. He will never depart from the faith of Jesus. It is with the greatest confidence that every enlightened Christian parent can grasp this promise and believe in it.**

understand the sin problem, can comprehend what is being offered to him in the plan of salvation, can reach out and grasp the saving grace of God, and can live a life of purity and obedience.

Parents though, must not wait even for the dawning of intelligence before taking steps to ensure their child's being born again. Long ere the infant can understand and decide for itself, it is the parents' privilege and responsibility to make this decision for it. In this way, from the babe's earliest moments, it will be a sign and a wonder that shall never be cut off.

It must not be forgotten that every divine gospel promise made to adults is equally applicable and effective in the lives of the little ones if these promises are grasped and applied by faith.

"God's promise is given as much to children and youth as to those of more mature age. Whenever God has given a promise, let the children and youth turn it into a petition, and beg the Lord to do those things for them in their experience, that He did for Jesus, His only begotten Son, when in human necessity He looked to God, asking for the things which He needed. Every blessing the Father has provided for those of more mature experience, has been provided for children and youth through Jesus Christ." *Sons and Daughters of God*, 128.

These words contain God's marvelous assurance that conversion can be as completely and thoroughly experienced by the children as it can be by adults. Just think of it! "Every blessing the Father has provided for those of more mature experience, has been provided for children and youth through Jesus Christ." *Sons and Daughters of God*, 128.

Let fathers and mothers who have themselves been delivered through the saving provisions of the gospel, recall the great Scriptures by which they were most blessed as those promises effectively worked in them to solve their sin problem and endow them with the sweet graces of Christ's holy character. Then, let them grasp by faith the happy assurance that God will do the same things in their children as have been done in themselves. To those who can believe, claim, and apply this wonderful promise, the gospel will indeed become the power of God to transform their children. Oh! What happy and united families will result, and what a fruitful harvest for the kingdom! How different and blessed home governments will become!

Every infant, child, and youth can and is to be as Jesus was when He passed through each of these stages. In order for this to happen, they must be as free from the spirit of disobedience, as filled with the character of God, and as skillfully trained by their parents and by the Holy Spirit, as He was.

God has made every provision that all this will be so. He has promised to contend with the evil one; to save the children through His

power, the gospel; to make every promise work in them as surely as in their parents; and to make them to be signs and wonders in Israel forever. What greater guarantee for successful child training could parents ask for than this?

For those parents who, in living faith, believe the assurances God has made, understand the principles involved, and diligently apply the procedures laid out in the Scriptures, the salvation of their children is a certainty. What could make parents happier than that!





# You Can Choose for Your Children

## Chapter 9

Because Christians are aware that no one can choose to be saved for another, it is generally believed that a child cannot experience salvation until he is old enough to understand its science, and is able to make his own intelligent choice in regard to it. This is why infant baptism is not practised in the true Christian church. The following statements are samples of many which might be quoted to support the truth that no one can be saved on the basis of another's decision.

"The work of purification is an individual work. No one can do this work for another." *The SDA Bible Commentary* 7:918.

"They should make it an individual work to draw near to God. No one can be saved by proxy, but every man and woman must work out their own salvation with fear and trembling." *Testimonies* 4:610.

"Though these three men Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness," says the Lord God.

"If I cause wild beasts to pass through the land, and they empty it, and make it so desolate that no man may pass through because of the beasts,

"even though these three men were in it, as I live," says the Lord God, 'they would deliver neither sons nor daughters; only they would be delivered, and the land would be desolate.

"Or if I bring a sword on that land, and say, "Sword, go through the land," and I cut off man and beast from it,

"even though these three men were in it, as I live," says the Lord God, 'they would deliver neither sons nor daughters, but only they themselves would be delivered.

" 'Or if I send a pestilence into that land and pour out My fury on it in blood, and cut off from it man and beast,

" 'even though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live,' says the Lord God, 'they would deliver neither son nor daughter; they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness.' " *Ezekiel* 14:14-20.

"Let the youth and the little children be taught to choose for themselves that royal robe woven in heaven's loom, the 'fine linen, clean and white' which all the holy ones of earth will wear." *The Adventist Home*, 536.

These words are absolutely true when applied within their correct context, though they would certainly tend to lead one to the conclusion that no parents can make the decision to accept God's salvation for their children. However, very fortunately, there is another balancing factor involved. When this is considered, it will be seen that the above statements and texts apply to those who have come to the age when they can make a choice for themselves. Before that time, because the mind of the parent is God's appointed decision-making force in the child's life, the father and mother can and must dedicate the child to God and pledge his obedience to God's laws and principles. The same Almighty and utterly consistent God who declared in the words quoted above that no one can choose salvation for another, at the same time commands parents to make vital decisions on behalf of those children who are too young to make the decisions for themselves.

A specific example of this was the divinely ordained requirement to circumcise every male child when but eight days old as a *pledge of that child's obedience to the law*, and to dedicate all the first born children at the age of forty days to lifelong service in God's cause. At first glance these ceremonies may not appear to be anything more than rituals, but the real fact is that these services were highly significant.

Consider circumcision. Specifically, it was the actual signature to the covenant of righteousness and obedience. He who understood what he was doing and intelligently entered into the rite of circumcision was making a very solemn pledge of obedience based on his personal decision to do so. The physical rite was required from the days of Abraham till Calvary, while its spiritual counterpart has always been requisite for successfully receiving the blessings of salvation.

To Abram and Sarai, God had made the specific promise that they would be the parents of a certain son through whose line the Redeemer of the world would be born. There was nothing that those two wonderful people wanted more than the fulfillment of that promise. They longed for the arrival of that son, and for the successful building of the kingdom of God. They were totally dedicated to the divine purpose and were prepared to make any sacrifice necessary to achieve these objectives. All this was highly commendable and gave them great favor in God's eyes.

But, many years passed without the birth of the promised child simply because Abram and Sarai had not developed the faith necessary for the promise to be realized. Finally, in their great concern for the prosperity of the Lord's work, and in the face of their mounting fear that if something was not done to ensure the birth of the son, it would be forever too late, they devised the plan whereby through Hagar, Abram could have a son, whom they believed would be *the* son.

As they put this plan into effect, they fully believed that they were doing what was best for God, the kingdom, and themselves, and were confident that it was all being done in righteousness. The intensity of their devotion to God's cause, their great longing to see souls saved, and the manifest spirit of sacrifice which possessed them, gave a beautiful sheep's attire to the wolf beneath. Thus the real nature of what they were doing was hidden from their sight. What they thought was obedience and righteousness was really disobedience and unrighteousness, and the fact that they could not see things as they were did not alter the iniquity of it for an instant. Nor did their excellent motives and loving spirit transform their iniquity into righteousness.

Specifically, they broke every one of the ten commandments. By falling into the same error so often committed by God's sincere and loving people ". . . of taking into their own hands the work that God had promised to do", *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 247, they had usurped God's position. Further, because only God has the power to fulfill His promises, in taking that work out of His hands, they had exalted themselves to God's level. Unwittingly, they had fallen into the trap of making themselves God in the place of God, a specific violation of the first commandment.

They had taken God's place as the head of their church, but their behavior in usurping His position meant they had taken it in vain and most certainly had denied the Sabbath principle which admits of only one Problem-solver, the Lord Jehovah. Ishmael then became their graven image set up in the place of true worship.

Their supposed justification for bringing forth Ishmael was that God was not doing what He had promised. This was bearing false witness against Him, for it charged Him with being unfaithful to His word, and therefore of being a deceiver, a liar. Thus they joined forces with another husband, Satan, and by so doing, engaged in spiritual adultery which is separation from God. Alienation from God is severance from life. Those who take such a step break the command, "You shall not murder." *Exodus* 20:13. Covetousness was manifested in their desire to usurp God's position so that the problem could be solved. If the Lord would not do what He had promised to do, then they felt that they would have to do it for Him. Covetousness always leads to stealing the position that belongs to God alone. Thus the unenlightened child of God dishonors his

heavenly Father as well as his earthly parents. Every commandment has been specifically broken.

The birth of Isaac could only come to pass if Abram and Sarai firstly came to see the real character of their efforts to bring forth the promised heir through Hagar. Once this conviction had fastened upon them, they had to reject that unconsecrated way in deep and abiding repentance. This had to be followed by their entering into a most solemn covenant with God that they would serve Him forever after in true and not supposed righteousness. As the signature to that covenant, circumcision was introduced and required.

No one could be truly circumcised unless he understood the full implications of that to which he was committing himself. Circumcision was the solemn and binding promise to renounce every form of kingdom building which in any way follows the procedures of Abram and Sarai in bringing forth Ishmael. And that is but the first step. Then, with equal solemnity and dedicated, enlightened purpose, the participant declares that He will serve the Lord according to His ways and procedures. He will ever trust the Almighty to do what He has promised to do and which He alone has the power to do. He will live in the strictest accordance with the Sabbath rest principles.<sup>1</sup>

Thus it becomes apparent that circumcision was a very responsible step to take and one to which the Lord holds accountable every soul who has thus dedicated himself to God. It is the kind of commitment that can be taken only by an intelligent person who has carefully studied the terms of the contract and has reached the age of responsibility. It was not the kind of decision that one would expect Jehovah to require of a child.

Yet, God specified that babes were to be circumcised at eight days. One might tend to dismiss the performance of the rite at this age as being a mere ceremony, but this cannot be done. Circumcision at that tender age was the baby's signing of the covenant as verily as if he had received the ordinance as an intelligent adult. That this is so is verified by the following account of Christ's circumcision:

"About forty days after the birth of Christ, Joseph and Mary took Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord, and to offer sacrifice. This was according to the Jewish law, and as man's substitute Christ must conform to the law in every particular. He had already been subjected to the rite of circumcision, as a pledge of His obedience to the law." *The Desire of Ages*, 50.

Christ's circumcision was a *pledge* of His obedience to the law. That day, the solemn covenant was signed, the binding commitment was made, and the dedicated assurance was given, that He would consistently and faithfully serve God in true righteousness. There is no

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<sup>1</sup>See *Entering into God's Sabbath Rest*, by F. T. Wright, available from Destiny Press.



The baby Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day as a pledge of His obedience to the law of God. He was certainly too young to make the decision Himself. God required that His parents make the decision for Him. In fact, every Jewish parent was required to make the same decision for their children. Likewise today, the Almighty requires every Christian parent to make those decisions for their children which will insure their dedication to lifelong obedience. This must be done when the little ones are still too young to make the decisions themselves.

question that *the pledge* was made that day. Jesus' circumcision was no mere ritual, no empty fulfillment of a ceremonial obligation. It was total commitment in fact, and to it He was and forever will be unswervingly faithful.

The pledge was made that day, *but it was not Christ the babe who made it*. Like every other infant at that tender age, He was incapable of comprehending the step He was taking. Then, if He could not and did not make it for Himself, who made it for Him? Obviously, it was His parents who did it *under God's command*. They were the ones who, on His behalf, carried out the requirement, and it was just as meaningful and as binding as if He had been old enough to understand and make these decisions Himself.

Jesus Christ is our example in all things. Therefore, if it was in God's order for His parents to make a decision for Him so vital that it committed Him to a pledge of obedience to God forever, then *God* expects every parent today to make vital decisions in regard to their children's personal salvation. What He expects parents to do He will empower them to do, for, "all His biddings are enablings". *Christ's Object Lessons*, 333.

So, be assured that when a truly converted, enlightened, faith-filled father and mother confess the presence in their unborn child of the spirit of disobedience, and claim for their little one God's promises of deliverance and the subsequent implantation of Christ's divine seed in which is the very spirit of obedience, *the Almighty will do it*. The unborn will enter into the world as Jesus did, a divine-human being.

The story of Christ's circumcision and the significance of the pledge made there is but one witness to the wonderful fact that on parents rests the opportunity to choose salvation for children too young to make the choice themselves. This matter is so critical to the successful salvation of children that one would positively expect to find additional witnesses confirming this truth. One would anticipate that there would be statements made about other babes who were blessed as Jesus was on the basis of decisions made by the parents.

Two such examples are John the Baptist and the prophet Jeremiah. Of the desert prophet it is written: ". . . He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." *Luke* 1:15.

No one can be filled with the Holy Spirit until he has been delivered from the old sinful nature, commonly called the sin-master, the old man, or the spirit of disobedience. The infilling of the Holy Spirit is therefore the evidence that that person is a born-again Christian in fact. No other conclusion then can be drawn in respect to John the Baptist other than that, from his mother's womb, he was a new creature in Christ Jesus. In other words, John was converted before he could choose this for himself.

The same holds true for Jeremiah of whom God said: "... Before you were born, I sanctified you . . . ." *Jeremiah* 1:5.

To be sanctified means to be made holy, a process describing the conversion experience. By this means the old, unholy nature is removed, and the holy life of Christ replaces it. The same conclusion must be drawn for Jeremiah as was drawn for John the Baptist—he was converted before he could choose this for himself.

There are those who dismiss the early conversion of these men as special cases in which the Lord bestowed extraordinary favors in order to achieve outstanding results. But, God does not work that way. He does not have a chosen elite upon whom He showers endowments not available to the rest of mankind. That with which those two men were blessed is freely available to every other child of Adam as well. It all depends on whether the parents understand their privileges and responsibilities as is made evident in this statement:

"Let mothers come to Jesus with their perplexities. They will find grace sufficient to aid them in the management of their children. The gates are open for every mother who would lay her burdens at the Saviour's feet. He who said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not,' still invites the mothers to lead up their little ones to be blessed by Him. Even the babe in its mother's arms may dwell as under the shadow of the Almighty through the faith of the praying mother. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth. If we will live in communion with God, we too may expect the divine Spirit to mold our little ones, even from their earliest moments." *The Desire of Ages*, 512.

No distinction is made in this paragraph between the blessing of early conversion bestowed on John the Baptist and what our children may enjoy. On the contrary, John the Baptist's experience is quoted to verify the truth that the same blessing is available to every child provided the parents fulfill the specified requirements. The condition is that: "If we will live in communion with God," the promise is that the Holy Spirit will mold our little ones, "even from their *earliest* moments."

Specifically, what is our *earliest* moment of existence? It is when our conception takes place! Here is the divinely given promise that the Holy Spirit will fashion the spiritual, moral, and mental faculties from that time forward as He did with John the Baptist.

The point has been made that both Jeremiah and John the Baptist experienced conversion too young for either of them to have been able to make the necessary choice themselves. This is obvious enough seeing that both were as yet unborn at the time. But, it is a law that no human being no matter what the age level, can be blessed with salvation unless a decision to accept it is made by the human being responsible for that individual—the parents, in the case of children too young to make it for themselves; or the person himself otherwise. God cannot and does not make the decision. He invites us to, but leaves the acceptance entirely with us.

Therefore, if positive steps had to be taken by some intelligent, enlightened, and consecrated human beings before the births of Jeremiah and John the Baptist to ensure that they were converted or sanctified from the womb, who were those individuals? To this question there can be but one answer—their parents, Hilkiah and his wife in the case of Jeremiah, and Zacharias and Elizabeth in the case of John the Baptist. There is in fact no one else who can do it in behalf of another except the parents. If the parents are dead, or if the child has been adopted, then we would expect that the one who has become responsible for the child could make this vital decision for the very young.

Do not overlook the fact that it is not enough to pledge your child's obedience to the law of God. It must be understood that the child can never produce the righteousness of Christ unless the life of Jesus has been implanted in him. Therefore, the parents' very first objective is to ensure that the little one has experienced that true transformation of nature which is the new birth.

It was because Christ had in Him the divine nature that His pledge to obey was a very real and satisfying one, but it must not be forgotten that God had commanded every Israelite boy to undergo the rite of circumcision as the pledge of his obedience to God's law. The Lord never requires the impossible. Therefore, in response to the believer's faith, He supplies all that is necessary for the execution of what He commands. He commanded every Israelite child to pledge obedience. Such behavior was

impossible without the spirit of obedience. Therefore, in the command to pledge allegiance to God's laws and principles, was Jehovah's assurance that the necessary qualifications of deliverance from the old man and the installation of the new, would be supplied. Remember that "all His biddings are enablings". *Christ's Object Lessons*, 333.

In the light of this requirement, it is plain that God expects parents to claim salvation on their children's behalf before the little ones have the capacity to make commitments for themselves.

But, Christian parents who naturally desire nothing so much as salvation for their children, will not regard making this choice for their children as a requirement so much as a wonderful privilege. To know that their prayer of faith can bring spiritual deliverance to their little ones is a most heartening experience. It can only inspire with faith and gratitude, and lead believers to a more dedicated service to God. It is wonderful news and glorious will be the results when the principles are correctly applied.

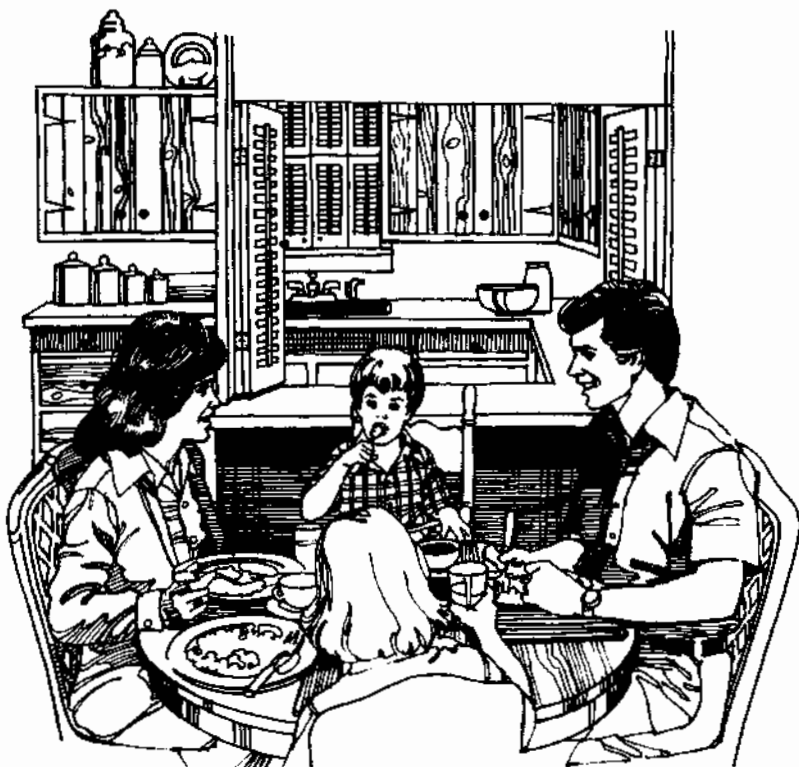
The most privileged children in human history are those few who were blessed with enlightened and dedicated parents who understood these principles and applied them to their unborn infants in their earliest moments. In this category are listed Jeremiah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, Azariah, and John the Baptist. These are examples of what all the rest of us might have had and consequently become.

Now that I have come to understand the truth on child salvation, and the tremendous opportunities and advantages with which those who are born again from conception are blessed, I wish with all my soul and the deepest and most intense longings that my father and mother had been enlightened on these truths and had chosen salvation for me at my earliest moments. I notice that no sin is recorded in Scripture against any of the worthies listed above about whom we are sure that they were born again from their earliest moments. How I wish that was the record of my life.

But this is not all that I wish. I look back on my ignorance as a young father and long that I had known these principles and understood my opportunities when my children were conceived. How gladly I would have interceded for them until I knew that each in turn was in fact delivered from the old man, in which is the spirit of disobedience, and blessed with the new man, in which is the spirit of obedience. I have wept when I think of the opportunities which are now gone forever, but then I am filled with joy when I think of the opportunities open to young parents today.

Why anyone should ever challenge the right of parents to accept salvation on behalf of their children is a mystery in view of the common parental practice of making a broad range of decisions for their children. Fathers and mothers determine under what religious persuasion their





There are no parents on the face of the earth who do not make numerous and, at times, quite vital decisions for their children, a fact which is accepted without question by humanity in general. Christian parents decide that their children shall eat healthfully, that they shall join in family worship, and that they shall attend the Sabbath School and church services. The children are not even consulted to see if they wish to follow this way of life, but are expected to obey without objection. It is obvious then that the Lord's requirement that parents should choose the new birth for their children at the earliest moment possible, is a matter which should be faithfully attended to without causing any question or objection.

children shall be trained, what schools they shall attend, clothes they shall wear, food they shall eat, friends they shall socialize with, and general habits they shall develop. No one raises any questions about parents making these decisions. In fact, any parent who does not, would be regarded as seriously neglecting his or her responsibilities. So, since all these critical decisions are made by parents on behalf of children too young to make them for themselves, then they ought to be particular to make the most important choice of all—the choosing of salvation.

As the child progressively advances physically, mentally, socially, and

spiritually, he gradually develops the capacity to make his own decisions. If born again from his earliest moments and correctly trained, he will make choices in harmony with those made for him by his parents. Thus the options chosen by the growing youngster confirm and consolidate the original consecration made by his elders. Of course, he can choose eventually to reject the way of life, but in view of the Lord's promise, this will not happen. There is a very positive note about the assurance, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." *Proverbs 22:6*.

Some protest that it is unfair to the child to bias his life in a certain direction even if that is the way of life eternal. Instead, he should be left free to choose for himself when he reaches the age when he can intelligently make such a decision.

There is no merit in this proposition for it is impossible for any child to grow to the age of reason on neutral ground with no formative influences working upon him. At conception, the spirit of his father the devil is in him. This gives Satan the right to be his educator even from his earliest moments, and you can be certain that the great destroyer will make the most of his opportunities to develop in the growing child the spirit of disobedience, rebellion, selfishness, perversity, and every other evil trait of character. The result is that, by the time he comes to the age of accountability, he has lost all taste for and interest in the ways of righteousness. His interests will lie in the world, its ways, and its pleasures, and, in most cases, it is worse than useless to attempt to capture his attention with matters of eternal consequence. Therefore, if the child is to have any real chance for salvation, he must be claimed for the Lord at the earliest possible moment. Otherwise the possibility of his being saved is very slim as is demonstrated by how few throughout history have responded to and remained true to the gospel. To let him grow up to the age when he can make a decision for himself is virtually condemning him to eternal death.

It needs to be understood that no parent can avoid making a decision for the child when he is still in the womb and cannot make one for himself. Whether you accept or reject the message on child salvation, you will make a choice either to bring the blessing of salvation to your little one, or to leave him, the dependent, trusting child, in bondage to the sin master, a child of Satan, and a student in his school. If it is wrong to decide, without the child's consent, that he be free from sin, then it is also wrong to decide, without his consent, that he remain in bondage to sin. You cannot avoid the responsibility. Even making no decision is a decision—you have decided not to decide!

If the parents do take positive and successful steps to bring deliverance to the child, they have made the correct decision. But they must and will make one or the other. It is unfortunate that parents are

not aware of what their options really are and the consequences attending each choice. It is no wonder that the devil has done all he could to keep the subject of child salvation hidden for so long and is still working to keep as many from knowing it as possible.

There are serious implications to the claim that it is unfair to the child to make, before he is even born, the decision on his behalf whereby his spiritual transformation is effected. This calls into question God's fairness and justice in creating Adam and Eve as perfect human beings with no bias toward, nor interest in evil whatsoever. It is to suggest that He should have left them in a void with no loyalty to the one or the other, but with the capacity to evaluate the relative merits and demerits of the two systems, and to accept which ever option was the more appealing to them.

No matter what these objectors may say, the Lord has made provision so that, by living faith and correct procedures, every parent can secure the child's conversion from its earliest moments. When such a possibility is offered, how foolish it would be not to avail one's self of it! Moreover, it is the duty of every mother and father to give their offspring the very best advantages in their warfare with the powers of darkness. "Even before the birth of the child, the preparation should begin that will enable it to fight successfully the battle against evil." *The Ministry of Healing*, 371.

To know that the Lord has made full provision for our children to be rescued from the cruel power of the evil one, and to be saved from his false education, is the most wonderful tidings that could ever be for parents. Let us then leap for joy and gratitude at the wonderful things the Lord is making known to us. Let those whose children are not yet beyond their care and responsibility, act quickly to make the most of these glorious provisions.



# Infant Baptism

## Chapter 10

Baptism is the first of two ceremonies introduced into the church in the early days of the New Testament era, the second being the Lord's Supper.

According to the Scriptures, the first recorded minister to practice baptism was the desert prophet, John, the forerunner of Christ. But, there is evidence that it was already an established practice among the Jews when John appeared.

"Baptism as a religious rite originated in pre-Christian times. It was practiced by the Jews as a means of receiving proselytes to Judaism, as is attested by various Jewish writings. It is significant that the Jewish leaders did not question John concerning the validity of the rite of baptism, but only his authority to administer it (see *John* 1:19-28). Baptism was also practiced by the Essenes in connection with their religious rites. In *Khirbet Qumran*, which was probably the center of the Essenes, several tanks with steps leading into them have been discovered. . . . These may have been used for baptismal rites, which apparently involved immersion, as did Jewish proselyte baptism." *The SDA Bible Dictionary*, 113.

"From such sources as the Dead sea scrolls it is evident that at the time of Jesus Judaism was in possession of various baptismal rites, none of which, however, had replaced circumcision as the rite of initiation into the community. Christian contact with these rites came through the work of John the Baptist, who, according to the New Testament, not only heralded the coming of Jesus Christ, but baptized Him as well. John apparently confined his baptizing to the Jordan river and made the rite an integral part of his call for repentance and for a break with the sinful past." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1963 Edition, 3:138.

There is no Scriptural record of John's being divinely commissioned to introduce baptism into the Christian faith, but, we can be positively assured that God's messenger did not take upon himself the responsibility for making so important a decision. Therefore, it was under inspiration and thus by divine direction that John commenced baptizing those who were truly repentant in consequence of his fearless preaching of the gospel. Jesus certainly set His seal to the ordinance both by coming to John for baptism, and by commissioning His disciples to go into all the world teaching the gospel and baptizing those who have been transformed by its creative power.

"Then Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

" 'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

" 'teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Amen." *Matthew 28:18-20.*

Baptism and the Lord's Supper replaced the seemingly endless list of ceremonies, rites, and ordinances which were associated with the Old Testament sanctuary service, thus making life considerably simpler for the New Testament believer. However, this does not remove the danger of a very vital and meaningful ordinance being reduced to an empty and worthless ritual.

The Jewish people never proved themselves able to sustain genuine faith and true religious practices for very long, and, invariably, whenever they lost their hold on God, they could no longer see that to which the rituals and sacrifices pointed, but came to believe that these rites possessed saving virtue in themselves. This sad development is not confined to the Jews, but emerges every time God's people, whoever they are or wherever they may be, lose their way spiritually. This means that there are at least two meanings to baptism—the real one given it by God, and the false which is imparted to it by an apostate people.

Therefore, to understand the question of baptism as it relates to infants, the true meaning of this service must be clearly understood by parents and all believers alike.

The study necessary to reveal these truths could well begin with what God through John the Baptist sought to teach the people when the service was introduced in his time. John, under the Holy Spirit's enlightenment, recognized that baptism was a symbolic service illustrating the individual's deliverance from sin, and his initiation into the righteous life of Christ.

"John proclaimed the coming of the Messiah, and called the people to repentance. As a symbol of cleansing from sin, he baptized them in the waters of the Jordan. Thus by a significant object lesson he declared that

those who claimed to be the chosen people of God were defiled by sin, and that without purification of heart and life they could have no part in the Messiah's kingdom." *The Desire of Ages*, 104.

It was a significant object lesson badly needed by that generation who were looking for a kingdom which had not been promised and for which righteous characteristics were not required. Such a people needed to have emphasized to them that the Messiah's kingdom was open only to those from whom sin had been removed and in whom the righteousness of Christ had been established.

There were some who caught the light and their baptism was a true statement of cleansing and restoration to divine favor. But there were others who sought baptism because they thought that there was an intrinsic virtue in the service itself, whereas the actual immersion in water does nothing at all to or for the person. Instead, it is a statement, a witness, a testimony of what the mighty agency of the Holy Spirit has already accomplished. But there was a class who entirely missed seeing these truths.

"Many of the scribes and Pharisees came confessing their sins, and asking for baptism. They had exalted themselves as better than other men, and had led the people to entertain a high opinion of their piety; now the guilty secrets of their lives were unveiled. But John was impressed by the Holy Spirit that many of these men had no real conviction of sin. They were timeservers. As friends of the prophet, they hoped to find favor with the coming Prince. And by receiving baptism at the hands of this popular young teacher, they thought to strengthen their influence with the people." *The Desire of Ages*, 105.

Baptism is a significant object lesson. Its message is lost however, if the form adopted is other than total immersion. The alternatives of course are sprinkling as practiced in the Roman Catholic Church and some Protestant churches, and pouring, but neither of these forms are a true interpretation of the word, "baptize".

"That immersion was the mode employed in New Testament times is clear from the meaning of the Greek term, from Bible descriptions of the performance of the ceremony, and from the spiritual applications made in the Bible respecting the rite. The term baptizo was used anciently to describe the immersing of cloth in dye, and of the submerging of a vessel in order to fill it with water. Its most obvious meaning when applied to Christian baptism is 'to immerse.' Bible references to baptisms show plainly that immersion was the method used. John the Baptist baptized 'in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there' (John 3:23). There would be no reason to require a place where there was 'much water' if sprinkling or pouring were the method used. The description of the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch states that Philip and the eunuch 'went down both into the water,' and came 'up out of the

water' (*Acts* 8:38, 39), action that most certainly indicates more than sprinkling or pouring. In the spiritual application made by Paul, the figure used by the apostle becomes clear only as baptism by immersion is understood." *The SDA Bible Dictionary*, 113.

What then is the significant object lesson that so positively requires actual immersion under the water's surface, followed by the arising of the buried one?

The role of the water in baptism is not as a washing agent. However, this does not discount the use of water in the Scriptures to illustrate cleansing from sin. When water was used to symbolize the erasing of sin from the penitent, washing, not immersion, was the object lesson. David, understanding this symbolism, prayed, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." *Psalms* 51:2, 7.

In baptism, there is no washing action involved. Instead, *burial and resurrection* are symbolized as is strongly emphasized by Paul:

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

"Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

"For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,

"knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin." *Romans* 6:1-6.

Nowhere in the Bible is true baptism so clearly explained as it is in this passage. It confirms the testimony of John the Baptist who sought to show that baptism marked the end of a life of sin and the beginnings of a righteous life. So, Paul strongly confirms that those who have died to sin have renounced the old life and will no longer continue in their evil ways. It is critically important that none miss the vital truth that this transition is achieved, not simply by making a decision to cease from iniquity—the *Romans* 7 man tried that course without any success whatsoever—but by the death of the old man, and the putting on of the new. He testifies that deliverance comes, not by trying, but by crucifixion and resurrection.

Later, he was to emphasize the same truth to the Galatian believers in these words:

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for Me." *Galatians* 2:20.

It is obvious that Paul did not testify that he had died in the physical sense, for he was still very much alive when he wrote both *Romans* and *Galatians*, yet he spoke of having been baptized into Christ's death and of having been crucified with Him as being a very real death and resurrection, not just a mere figure of speech. He stresses this thought by iteration and reiteration, because he understood very well that there is no other escape route from the bondage of sin into the freedom of righteousness.

It is because unrighteousness is what it is that there is no other cure for it. And what is it? It is a dark, malignant, foreign force which occupies the body temple and takes control of the entire man. It is a despot which can never be made to obey the law or to work in harmony with God, and, therefore, is the enemy of righteousness.

An accurate knowledge of the way in which this evil force operates is based on the truth that the human body is a temple capable of being occupied either by the forces of righteousness or of evil.

"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? *1 Corinthians* 6:19.

A temple is designed to be occupied, not left vacant and unused. God intended that the human body temple be forever blessed with the abiding presence of the divine Spirit as is confirmed in these words:

"In the cleansing of the temple, Jesus was announcing His mission as the Messiah, and entering upon His work. That temple, erected for the abode of the divine Presence, was designed to be an object lesson for Israel and for the world. From eternal ages it was God's purpose that every created being, from the bright and holy seraph to man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator." *The Desire of Ages*, 161.

Thus, when God created Adam and Eve and placed them in beautiful Eden, their bodies were temples filled with the divine presence exactly as God planned they should. That presence was not the actual Person of God as is taught in pantheism, but it was His spirit, His life, and His character.

Then came the evil one, the tempter, who persuaded them to transfer their allegiance to him instead. When they did this, the spirit, life, and character of God departed from them and left them empty. Into this vacuum, the devil implanted his evil seed and, by the process of reproduction, his iniquitous nature became the occupant of their body temples.<sup>1</sup> The immediate and permanent result was that the spirit of obedience was replaced by the spirit of disobedience, which controlled their lives so that, even though in their minds they wished at times to do right, they could only bring forth evil.

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<sup>1</sup> To understand the laws of spiritual reproduction, study *The Living and the Dead*, by F. T. Wright, available from Destiny Press.



This force that dwelt in them and ruled over them, was a living power which could not be defeated by humanity. It is called in Scripture by several names, "the old man", "the stony heart", "the law of sin and death", "the carnal mind", and "the first born". It is the sin master who rules over the individual and so controls him that he has no choice but to sin. Some try to gain the victory by exerting all the power of the will, but experience only frustration, defeat, and continued bondage. They struggle and struggle, but can never testify to victory. This miserable existence is portrayed very graphically in *Romans 7*.

This evil force is so totally sinful in its very nature that it cannot by anyone, no, not even by God Himself, be changed into righteousness. No amount of persuasion, careful training, or culture will serve to solve this problem. While righteousness can be perverted into evil, the reverse process is an impossibility just as health giving, life sustaining sweet grapes can be turned into the deadly destroyer, fermented wine, but the wine cannot be made back into grapes again.

Some may argue that there is nothing that God cannot do and, in a certain sense, this is true. He has the physical power to do anything, but the righteousness of His character prevents Him from doing certain things. For instance, any mother has the physical power to destroy her own child, but, if she is a normal, loving mother, she would be unable to do it.

Likewise, it is not in God to force anyone to obey. He can accept only a willing obedience. So, inasmuch as the carnal mind will never render a willing obedience, there is nothing the Lord can do with it but leave it to its fate—death.

The choice is left with us as to when that death shall take place. The sentence has already been passed, for, when Christ died on the cross, He took the old man to the cross where it was crucified with Him. But that death only becomes effective in us when we by faith and experience submit ourselves to that death. So, we can decide to die now while there is still an opportunity to receive a replacement life which endures for eternity, or we can refuse to die now and be forced to die when it will be forever too late to grace the soul temple with the beautiful, righteous, immortal life of Christ.

It follows then that no conversion is a true and effective one unless this evil nature within us is crucified to death, and its place is taken by the life of Christ. Thus, in the case of the unconverted, the evil offspring of Satan dwells in the soul temple, or, in the case of the truly converted, the reproduction of Christ abides in it, but never both at the same time.<sup>2</sup>

When a person has experienced this marvelous transformation through death and resurrection, he is required to testify to it by being

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<sup>2</sup>See *The Three Temples*, by F. T. Wright, available from Destiny Press.

baptized. His burial beneath the water is a testimony on his part that his old man has literally been put to death, and therefore, has no more power over him. As he comes up out of the water again, he is testifying that a new life has been formed within him through the germination of the seed of Christ. In short, baptism is the declaration before the members of the church on earth and in heaven that the believer is born again, that the spirit of disobedience has been replaced by the spirit of obedience. Baptism should be sought by the believer as soon as possible after the miracle of true conversion takes place.

When child salvation is correctly understood and applied by God-fearing parents, this blessedness of true conversion is received very soon after conception has taken place. It would seem logical to expect that the child should be baptized as soon as possible after it is born. This would mean the introduction of infant baptism into the church of God in these last days.

Arrival at this conclusion is natural, seems reasonable, and there appears to be a good case for infant baptism for those little ones to whom has been brought the beautiful gift of the new heart and life. But, before making so important and far-reaching a decision, careful consideration must be given to all the factors involved.

Firstly, let our usage of the expression, "infant baptism", be clearly defined. This is essential, for these words are used in the Roman Catholic Church and certain Protestant denominations to describe the practice of sprinkling newly born babies with water. Actually, the Roman Catholic Church in theory recognizes three methods of baptism, immersion, pouring, and sprinkling, though, in actual practice, sprinkling is the commonly employed form.

States one of their recognized authorities: "Baptism may be validly administered in any of three different ways, namely, by immersion, or plunging the person into the water; by *infusion*, or pouring the water, and by aspersion, or sprinkling." *The Faith of Millions*, page 153, by John A. O'Brien, published by Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., Huntington, Indiana, USA., 1974.

The reason given by Roman Catholic writers for their not following the Bible example of immersion is that it is not the most convenient method. "The simple fact is," John A. O'Brien claims, "that Christ nowhere specified the precise manner in which water was to be applied, but left that detail, as He has left many others, to the discretion of His Church. While acknowledging the validity of baptism administered in any of these three ways, the Church now follows the uniform custom of infusion because she finds it the most convenient and practical method." *The Faith of Millions*, 154.

The reason for their insistence that the rite be performed on infants, is their belief that: "Baptism washes away the stain of original sin and also

any actual sins that may be present and makes the person a child of God and an heir to heaven. Original sin is the shadow or state of sin in which we are born as a result of the transgression of our first parents. 'Wherefore,' says St. Paul, 'as by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death, and so death passed unto all men, in whom all have sinned.' *Romans 5:12.*" *The Faith of Millions*, 152.

Baptism itself does not work this miracle. Rather, it is a statement of what has already been achieved by the Holy Spirit's ministry. If the individual is baptized without the miracle having taken place, the baptism is a false witness.

So then, when the expression, "infant baptism", is used in this book, *Child Salvation*, it refers to the proposition that a baby be totally immersed in water as a witness that he has been previously delivered from his sinful inheritance, and endowed with the righteousness of Christ. The question now remains as to whether the true people of God should baptize their infants once they are satisfied that the little ones qualify.

While there seems to be quite a case for the establishment of infant baptism, there are compelling reasons why it is not God's will to establish this procedure in His church.

The first consideration is that there is no Bible instruction or example directing us to baptize our converted babies. Every person whose baptism is recorded in the Bible was an adult at the time. This is to be expected in most cases, for the candidates were not converted until adulthood and therefore did not qualify before that time. Examples of these are the souls who were baptized by John, and the Ethiopian baptized by Philip.

If there was anyone who was qualified to receive baptism as an infant, it was the Saviour Himself. He was so perfectly fit spiritually that He did not need to be baptized at all. The old man was never in Him so that He never needed to be baptized as a witness that, by death, He had thrown off the old and received the new. Instead, He always had the new. But He passed through the waters as an example of the path we are to tread.

"Jesus did not receive baptism as a confession of guilt on His own account. He identified Himself with sinners, taking the steps that we are to take, and doing the work that we must do." *The Desire of Ages*, 111.

Now, if it is proper to baptize infants on the basis of their being spiritually fit, then as the example of this, Christ should have been baptized as an infant. Instead, He waited till He was thirty years of age. Some might argue that baptism had not been introduced into the true church of God when He was but an infant, but this is not really true. The Jews were still God's people and Jesus as a babe was circumcised under their law and dedicated in their temple. As quoted above, baptism was an established practice among the Jews and God could have easily arranged

for Christ the babe to have been immersed in water as an example of infant baptism if that was required.

So then, we are left today with no clear "Thus saith the Lord", to authorize the introduction of infant baptism among God's true children. Furthermore, the example left us by Christ Himself calls for the converted little ones to wait till they are mature enough to know for themselves with positive certainty the real and binding nature of the witness they are giving.

Another reason for delaying baptism until a person has reached an age when he is able to intelligently and successfully make and maintain his own decisions, is that there is another aspect to baptism not mentioned so far in this chapter. It is that baptism is literally the actual marriage ceremony between Christ and the believer. This ceremony consists of two aspects. The first is the burial and resurrection which is the testimony of fitness to marry Christ, for only those who have been crucified with Him and have arisen with Him to newness of life, have the qualification for marriage to Him.

But, as vital as a declaration of fitness is, it does not fully satisfy the requirements of marriage. The second aspect is the inclusion of a solemn, responsible, and carefully considered commitment to be joined to Christ and none other for eternity. This is done when the individual who has been rightly trained from his conception, on the basis of decisions made for him by his parents, finally by and for himself approves of and confirms all the decisions made for him when he was too young to make them for himself.

So, this means that, in addition to certifying that a person is truly born again and alive in Christ, everyone involved in a believer's proposed baptism should be satisfied that the candidate has reached the level of maturity where he can make a trustworthy decision entirely on his own. Thus, no matter how converted a child or youth might be in himself, he should wait till the capacity for personal commitment has been reached.

So, there is a clear case against infant or child baptism in the true church of God. It would be well then not to urge anyone to hasten into baptism. Let the Holy Spirit prepare each believer and let him know when the time is right.



# Diligent Effort Required

## Chapter 11

So far in this study, attention has been directed to the attainable ideal, especially as revealed in the life of Christ as an infant, child, boy, youth, and man. Commencing where every babe may also begin, and possessing no advantages not freely available to every son and daughter of humanity, He demonstrated the heights to which all can aspire. What glorious prospects this opens before parents as they undertake the most important and rewarding task ever committed to men and women! From what has been presented so far, believers in Christ Jesus should be inspired with new hope, and fired with dedicated purpose to play their part in transforming these wonderful possibilities into actual realities.

Now, earnest consideration must be given to the procedures which have to be diligently and consistently applied, and the conditions which must be established and maintained in order to certify that the objectives will be realized. Be assured that success will not be known by those who do not put forth the utmost effort to understand the principles involved, and who fail to practice them with concentrated diligence. It is true that, as in all areas of Christian endeavor, the part played by the believer is relatively minor compared to God's share, but it is critical nonetheless, leaving no room for relaxation on the Christian's part. He must study, pray, trust, and work with the utmost diligence if he is to see the results which the Lord has planned for him and his lovely children.

It is: "Through the grace of God and *their own diligent effort*" that "they must be conquerors in the battle with evil." *The Great Controversy*, 425.

Many fear to apply their own diligent effort because they wish to utterly avoid entering into a fatal work's program. This problem is solved by learning what God expects the believer to do, and, in turn, what are those things which the Lord alone can and will do. Most folk who seek to save themselves by their own works engage in the effort to bring forth

righteousness by suppressing the evil dispositions of the old nature, instead of surrendering it to destruction and then laying hold of Christ's righteous life to take its place and bring forth the good fruit which cannot otherwise be produced.

But, even when this balanced work follows a corrected understanding, the child of God is still slow to appreciate what diligent effort really is. Human nature tends to drift along in the vague hope that all will work out satisfactorily in the end. It never seems to dawn on the consciousness that success comes only to those who actually put every power of body, mind, and spirit to the stretch. Paul saw this need to educate the Corinthians in his day until they were awakened to their full responsibilities. The counsels given to those people are just as applicable today and are to be heeded by all those who would really make their life-work a success, and their calling and election sure.

"In the hope of impressing vividly upon the minds of the Corinthian believers the importance of firm self-control, strict temperance, and unflagging zeal in the service of Christ, Paul in his letter to them made a striking comparison between the Christian warfare and the celebrated foot races held at stated intervals near Corinth. Of all the games instituted among the Greeks and the Romans, the foot races were the most ancient and the most highly esteemed. They were witnessed by kings, nobles, and statesmen. Young men of rank and wealth took part in them and shrank from no effort or discipline necessary to obtain the prize.

"The contests were governed by strict regulations, from which there was no appeal. Those who desired their names entered as competitors for the prize had first to undergo a severe preparatory training. Harmful indulgence of appetite, or any other gratification that would lower mental or physical vigor, was strictly forbidden. For one to have any hope of success in these trials of strength and speed, the muscles must be strong and supple, and the nerves well under control. Every movement must be certain, every step swift and unswerving; the physical powers must reach the highest mark.

"As the contestants in the race made their appearance before the waiting multitude, their names were heralded, and the rules of the race were distinctly stated. Then they all started together, the fixed attention of the spectators inspiring them with a determination to win. The judges were seated near the goal, that they might watch the race from its beginning to its close and give the prize to the true victor. If a man reached the goal first by taking an unlawful advantage, he was not awarded the prize.

"In these contests great risks were run. Some never recovered from the terrible physical strain. It was not unusual for men to fall on the course, bleeding at the mouth and nose, and sometimes a contestant would drop dead when about to seize the prize. But the possibility of

lifelong injury or of death was not looked upon as too great a risk to run for the sake of the honor awarded the successful contestant.

"As the winner reached the goal, the applause of the vast multitude of onlookers rent the air and awoke the echoes of the surrounding hills and mountains. In full view of the spectators, the judge presented him with the emblems of victory—a laurel crown and a palm branch to carry in his right hand. His praise was sung throughout the land; his parents received their share of honor; and even the city in which he lived was held in high esteem for having produced so great an athlete.

"In referring to these races as a figure of the Christian warfare, Paul emphasized the preparation necessary to the success of the contestants in the race—the preliminary discipline, the abstemious diet, the necessity for temperance. 'Every man that striveth for the mastery,' he declared, 'is temperate in all things.' The runners put aside every indulgence that would tend to weaken the physical powers, and by severe and continuous discipline trained their muscles to strength and endurance, that when the day of the contest should arrive, they might put the heaviest tax upon their powers. How much more important that the Christian, whose eternal interests are at stake, bring appetite and passion under subjection to reason and the will of God! Never must he allow his attention to be diverted by amusements, luxuries, or ease. All his habits and passions must be brought under the strictest discipline. Reason, enlightened by the teachings of God's word and guided by His Spirit, must hold the reins of control.

"And after this has been done, the Christian must put forth the utmost exertion in order to gain the victory. In the Corinthian games the last few strides of the contestants in the race were made with agonizing effort to keep up undiminished speed. So the Christian, as he nears the goal, will press onward with even more zeal and determination than at the first of his course.

"Paul presents the contrast between the chaplet of fading laurel received by the victor in the foot races, and the crown of immortal glory that will be given to him who runs with triumph the Christian race. They do it,' he declares, 'to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.' To win a perishable prize, the Grecian runners spared themselves no toil or discipline. We are striving for a prize infinitely more valuable, even the crown of everlasting life. How much more careful should be our striving, how much more willing our sacrifice and self-denial!" *The Acts of the Apostles*, 309-312.

These men were spurred by a spirit of rivalry and competition. Winning, and the honor which came with it, were all that mattered to them. But, with the Christian, the motivation is not selfish, but selfless. He is not in quest of personal glory, desires not that he shall *exceed* the achievements of his fellows, but longs instead that they with him will all

attain to the same goals. Therefore, the element of rivalry and the spirit of competition are not the lessons to be drawn from the ancient games. What we are to learn from them is the intensity of effort which was put forth, the single-mindedness of the athletes, and their spirit of sacrifice for the cause of winning.

Those men eliminated every element which either mitigated against, or even failed to make any significant contribution toward their success. This is what Christians must do if they will one day be crowned with eternal honor and glory. The same applies to those parents who are determined that the child salvation message will deliver their precious little ones from the grasp of the evil one and will build into them the highest excellences of physical, mental, and spiritual achievement.

The message on child salvation cannot fail if rightly applied. In this book, the correct principles are laid out for all to understand and faithfully obey, but this will effect nothing if the parents regard their work so lightly as to relegate it to a position of minor concern. If you really want to save the children, this must be the work to which your first and best attention has to be given. Do not rest satisfied until you are certain that your charges have been truly born again. Never stop praying and studying. Learn more and more each day from the Master Teacher. Learn how to become mighty in prayer, while grasping to yourself the marvelous promises of God in which is the actual power of the omnipotent Creator.

Parents will never be able to really know for certain that their efforts have produced the desired results until the age of decision is reached. When the growing members of the family enter into the teenage period of their lives and begin to assert themselves, it will then be seen whether the parents' work for them has been successful or not.

This is not to say however, that there are no indications before that time, for there will be evidences revealing that the work is successful or otherwise. If the parents find that the little ones manifest a preference for God's word above all other literature; if they see that they have a natural spirit of obedience; if they find that they manifest unselfishness, especially in relation to other children; if they discern a spirit of obedience; and are aware that they have a patience that nothing can disturb; then they have evidences that their charges are born again, and that they are growing in wisdom and stature according to the divine specifications.

When they are comforted by these evidences, let them be careful not to relax their vigilance, but with faith and confidence press on toward the final victory. There must be no stopping place, no complacency, no door left open for Satan to enter.

Let parents understand that there does not exist a more important occupation, a greater responsibility, a higher calling, a more vital gospel ministry, or more essential work for God and mankind, than parenthood. There is no emperor of vast domains, sovereign of a powerful empire,





Child salvation is not a simple task easily handled by novices. To be successful, parents need to approach this awesome responsibility realizing that only total dedication, intense study, and mighty power in prayer will bring them the desired success. They must realize that they must work tirelessly and with the utmost diligence to achieve the divine standards and expectations. Take nothing for granted, but be certain that the child is in fact born again, possesses the spirit of obedience, and is growing in grace day by day.

king of a far spreading realm, or president of a great democracy, whose position is of greater consequence or importance than that occupied by parents.

The great men of the past and the present who are credited with shaping history and who are lauded for their achievements, are not the ones to whom such glory is attributable. They are what they are, be it good or bad, by virtue of what their parents made them. The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. Earthly potentates are nothing without the power of the masses to support them and carry out their ambitious schemes. Whether those men of might can manipulate society or not depends on the character of the individuals making up that society. A

truly righteous nation will never obey a wicked ruler, nor will an evil race serve a just leader. Every nation has its own unique character which is the product of the generations that preceded and molded it.

"What the parents are, that, to a great extent, the children will be. The physical conditions of the parents, their dispositions and appetites, their mental and moral tendencies, are, to a greater or less degree, reproduced in their children.

"The nobler the aims, the higher the mental and spiritual endowments, and the better developed the physical powers of the parents, the better will be the life equipment they give their children. In cultivating that which is best in themselves, parents are exerting an influence to mold society and to uplift future generations.

"Fathers and mothers need to understand their responsibility." *The Ministry of Healing*, 371.

Parents who do understand their responsibility will make the task of saving and training their offspring their first and highest occupation. Everything else will be secondary to this charge. For most parents, especially fathers, this will call for a realignment of priorities. The man of the house cannot escape the requirement to provide a living for his family, but instead of that being his prime interest, he will see it only as a means to achieving his real goals in life—children fit for time and eternity. His mind will be forever preoccupied with considerations of how he can most successfully accomplish this work, not on how to ensure that his business ventures will return a large profit.

Encouragement for parents to succeed is provided in Bible histories of great statesmen, prophets, teachers, and leaders—men who not only turned their own generation in the right direction, but whose influence for good is still influencing God's true people.

"Sacred history presents many illustrations of the results of true education. It presents many noble examples of men whose characters were formed under divine direction, men whose lives were a blessing to their fellow men and who stood in the world as representatives of God. Among these are Joseph and Daniel, Moses, Elisha, and Paul—the greatest statesmen, the wisest legislator, one of the most faithful of reformers, and, except Him who spoke as never man spake, the most illustrious teacher that this world has known." *Education*, 51.

Joseph and Daniel, the world's two greatest statesmen, were removed from their homes at an early age and were thrust into a totally unchristian environment in which they were subjected to the severest of temptations. What enabled them to preserve their integrity?

It was what their parents had built into them through the proper discharge of their sacred responsibilities. These young men were first initiated into a true new birth experience, and then thoroughly trained in the principles of righteousness.

There is positive proof that Joseph had been blessed with the new birth at an early age long before he was sold into slavery. But, before examining the evidences confirming that Joseph was indeed born again, we must be certain that all who read these words understand that to be born again is much more than the forming of changed beliefs, loyalties, and habits of life. While all these will be involved, they can be present without the person becoming a true child of God through the process of spiritual rebirth. For instance, if a Roman Catholic were to change to Communism, he would surely have different beliefs, other loyalties than before, and a greatly altered habit pattern or way of life, but he certainly would not be born again in the spiritual sense. The very fact that he had become a Communist proves that, for Communism is an enemy of Christianity.

No one has been reborn until the creative power of God has eradicated from within him the old nature which is the outgrowth of Satan's evil seed, and has received the seed of Christ in return. No modification or improvement of the old life will pass for this. There has to be the commencement of a new life altogether within the person.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." *2 Corinthians* 5:17.

"Jesus continued: That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' By nature the heart is evil, and 'who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.' Job 14:4. No human invention can find a remedy for the sinning soul. The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' 'Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.' *Romans* 8:7; *Matthew* 15:19. The fountain of the heart must be purified before the streams can become pure. He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility. There is no safety for one who has merely a legal religion, a form of godliness. The Christian's life 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." *The Desire of Ages*, 172.

The description given by Inspiration of the religious experience and character of Joseph shows that he was in fact a new creation. Old things had passed away, and all things had become new. Of him while still but a lad in his father's tents it is written:

"There was one, however, of a widely different character,—the elder son of Rachel, Joseph, whose rare personal beauty seemed but to reflect an inward beauty of mind and heart. Pure, active, and joyous, the lad gave evidence also of moral earnestness and firmness. He listened to his

father's instructions, and loved to obey God. The qualities that afterward distinguished him in Egypt—gentleness, fidelity, and truthfulness—were already manifest in his daily life." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 209.

This paragraph begins with a contrast being made between Joseph and his brothers. The description given of them in the previous paragraphs shows that they lacked the inner transformation which attends the eradication of the old life and the implantation of the new. It is written of them that they "... had grown up contentious and impatient of control, and the father's life was darkened with anxiety and grief." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 209.

Born again children do not darken their parents' lives with anxiety and grief, for theirs is a submissive and selfless spirit. Joseph was unlike them. His was "... of a widely different character . . . ." He possessed "... an *inward* beauty of mind and heart", gave "... evidence also of moral earnestness and firmness", and he "... loved to obey God". Thus it is evident that he had the fruits of the Holy Spirit, and was filled with the beautiful spirit of obedience. There can be no doubt about his being a new creation in Christ Jesus, for the evidence demonstrates that in him was Christ, the hope of glory.

It is imperative that continual stress be laid on the truth that both the new birth and effective training must be combined to ensure that the child does grow up in the way he should go. Either one without the other cannot bring true success especially if the new birth is the missing element. In that case even the very best of training will be like bestowing the finest care on a thorn bush in the hope of producing good fruit. On the other hand, achieving the new birth without follow-up training, is the same as planting a good grape vine and then leaving it unattended and uncared for to battle choking weeds, branch out in a tangled mess on the ground, be unprotected from searing drought, and be deprived of vital nutrients.

The fact that Joseph became one of the two greatest statesmen of all time, declares that he was given by his godly father, Jacob, a very effective training to complement his initiation into the family of Christ. Unfortunately, his mother, Rachel, died when Joseph was very young, but not before she left a permanent influence for good on his infant mind.

Regarding the training that he gladly received from his father it is written:

"He listened to his father's instructions, and loved to obey God." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 209.

"In his childhood, Joseph had been taught the love and fear of God. Often in his father's tent, under the Syrian stars, he had been told the story of the night vision at Bethel, of the ladder from heaven to earth, and the descending and ascending angels, and of Him who from the throne above revealed Himself to Jacob. He had been told the story of

the conflict beside the Jabbok, when, renouncing cherished sins, Jacob stood conqueror, and received the title of a prince with God.

"A shepherd boy, tending his father's flocks, Joseph's pure and simple life had favored the development of both physical and mental power. By communion with God through nature and the study of the great truths handed down as a sacred trust from father to son, he had gained strength of mind and firmness of principle." *Education*, 52.

The end result of this combination of being born again at a very early age and proper parental training, was a man of tremendous moral and spiritual stamina, a leader who showed himself able to stand unmoved by the fiercest temptations both in hours of adversity and prosperity.

"In the bitter life of a stranger and a slave, amidst the sights and sounds of vice and the allurements of heathen worship, a worship surrounded with all the attractions of wealth and culture and the pomp of royalty, Joseph was steadfast. He had learned the lesson of obedience to duty. Faithfulness in every station, from the most lowly to the most exalted, trained every power for highest service." *Education*, 52, 53.

Joseph made a tremendous contribution to the advancement of God's cause. The world would have been an immeasurably poorer place but for his ministry. The heights to which he attained, the exalted position of responsibility and power to which he was elevated, the remarkable influence for good that he wielded, and the glorious service he rendered to God, to Israel, and to Egypt, assures us that his name will be remembered forever.

Let it never be forgotten that he was what he was and achieved what he did because of what his parents made him. He was not the product of a good fortune that assembled just the right combination of genes, but was the natural result of correct principles diligently and skillfully applied. Any set of parents who give their offspring what Joseph's parents gave him, will see the same results being achieved. What a thrilling prospect for young married men and women today.

"The same mighty truths that were revealed through these men, God desires to reveal through the youth and the children of today. The history of Joseph and Daniel is an illustration of what He will do for those who yield themselves to Him and with the whole heart seek to accomplish His purpose." *Education*, 57.

These magnificent men became what they were because their parents did not squander their opportunities through indifference, ignorance, neglect, or preoccupation with other interests. There is the time and the opportunity to do things for the infant when he *is* first conceived that can never be done so effectively at a later date. During the pre-natal period, foundations are being laid for good or for evil that will do much to determine the entire future of the unborn child. Let those days of

opportunity pass and the loss can never be wholly recovered. Parents must *realize* this so that they do not let a single day's opportunity pass by unused.

At the same time, care must be taken to ensure that anxiety and stress do not build up for fear that we are failing to do the best that is expected of us. Learn what must be done, be earnest, diligent, and responsible in doing it, and then utterly and completely rest in the Lord. There is no other way.

Daniel, the other of the two greatest statesmen in human history, is another illustration of what God expects parents to build into their children. "... Joseph and Daniel proved themselves true to the principles of their early training, true to Him whose representatives they were. These men, both in Egypt and in Babylon, the whole nation honored; and in them a heathen people, and all the nations with which they were connected, beheld an illustration of the goodness and beneficence of God, an illustration of the love of Christ." *Education*, 56, 57.

Daniel is an example of particular interest to those of us who live in these last days of earth's history, for the same conditions and requirements are now being repeated. Daniel lived at a time when Israel had sunken into deep apostasy and Babylon had arisen to world domination.

Rapidly today, the development of the same conditions is approaching full completion. The professed churches of God have sunken into deep apostasy, while the papacy is increasing in power and favor every day. Already, efforts are being put forth in some countries, by combined Catholic and Protestant organizations, to enforce the abolition of Sunday sport. While the masses are not yet ready to accept this, the time will come when they will.

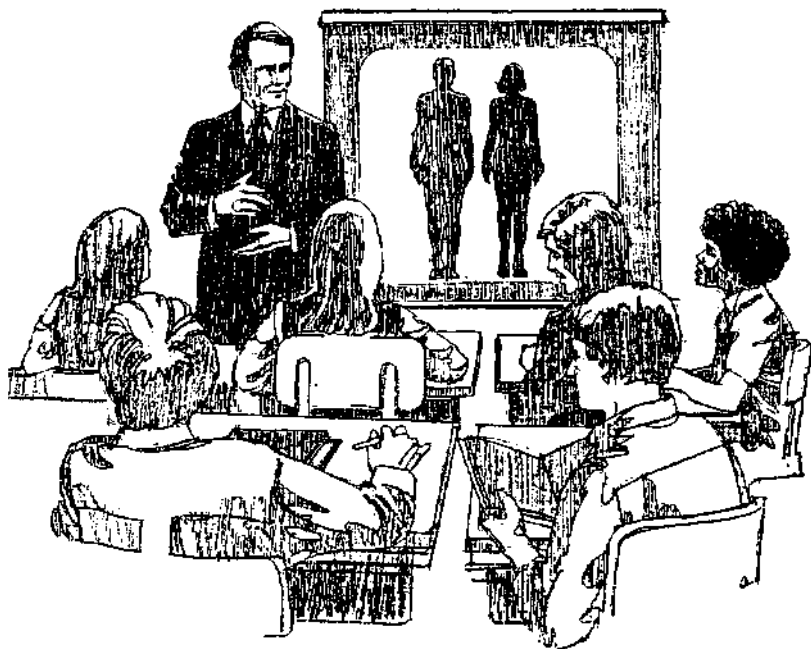
But, when Israel of old departed totally from the truth, the Lord had a tiny remnant of youthful people who would "... not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls" were "true and honest, men who" did "not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience" was "as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who" stood "for the right though the heavens fall." *Education*, 57.

Daniel and his three companions as Joseph was before them, were just those kind of men. Nothing less than what they were was needed in that critical hour to halt the Babylonian king in his inexorable march to absolute rulership of the world. So great had been his success that all the world was under his dominion except the Lord's true church, which, in his court, numbered but four youthful souls. There were other faithful believers in the city and kingdom, but they were in no position to do battle with the king.

The confrontations between the mighty king and the youthful four would appear to any observer who did not understand the awesome power of God in consecrated Christians, to be so totally in favor of the king that there was no hope of the children of God achieving anything. But, it was not so. In every battle that was fought between God's servants and Nebuchadnezzar, the Lord was the victor. God's way was shown to be the only way in every instance.

The first issue involved the nature of the food and drink to be consumed and the supposedly added merit in its being offered to idols. Under God's blessing, it was demonstrated that wholesome food provided far better nourishment for body and brain than did the diet of the Babylonians.

So confident was the king in his educational system and in what he believed to be the superior intellectual powers of his people, that, in the examinations at the end of three years, he expected a much lower score



As in Nebuchadnezzar's time, the world of today has its great system of education which, men confidently assert, is superior to God's ways. But, to that proud monarch, there was given a view of the real power of true Christian education which was so convincing that he openly admitted the superiority of God's ways. In these last days, through the children of parents who understand and practice the child salvation principles, the world is again to see and be convinced by the power of true Christian education.

for the Jewish youth than for the Chaldeans. But, to his astonishment, four of the Hebrews were found to be ten times better than any other scholars no matter where in the world they came from.

Then followed the dream in which the king saw the multi-metaled image. What an issue that grew to be! The king, despite the earlier victories awarded the Hebrews, would not admit their superiority, but turned to his own so-called wise men for the dream and its interpretation. Their confessed inability to serve him in his great hour of need exposed the fearful deficiencies in the vaunted Babylonian system. Then, Daniel and his three friends were able to demonstrate that, in God's perfect system, there are no limitations. The God of heaven does dwell with His people, is in communication with them, and reveals his secrets to them.

The outcome of this trial of strength was so convincingly in favor of Jehovah that Nebuchadnezzar was constrained to bow down and give an unqualified acknowledgment of his Creator's infinite superiority. It was an incredible outcome.

But the mighty Nebuchadnezzar who had the wealth and power of the world at his disposal, was not one to surrender the struggle easily. Although he had acknowledged that Jehovah alone had the power he had fancied was resident in the Babylonian system, in his pride he found this hard to accept. As a statement of his total rejection of what he had earlier confessed, he ordered the construction of the golden image. By using only one metal in the idol, he was declaring that Babylon would never pass away, that there was no force in heaven or on earth that could deliver anyone out of his power.

Again he was forced to confess how wrong he was and later became a truly converted Christian.

"King Nebuchadnezzar, before whom Daniel so often honored the name of God, was finally thoroughly converted, and learned to 'praise and extol and honour the King of heaven.'" *The SDA Bible Commentary* 4:1170.

What a glorious achievement that was! Matching it today would require a small band of young men in whom was formed Christ the hope of glory, to enter the Vatican and effect the genuine conversion of the present Pope of Rome. Such youth would have to be as highly qualified, and as filled with the wisdom and power of God as Daniel and his companions were. That would be possible if the young men involved had been born again from their earliest moments and had been trained according to God's ways and wisdom thereafter.

There is not a great deal of information given us in regard to the family from which Daniel came and the education he received from his parents. I have not even been able to find the names of his father and mother. However, enough has been told to make it clear that he was both born again from a very early age and blessed with the best of



Christian education. In other words, he was what his parents made him. When he was conceived and during the eighteen years between his birth and his being taken into captivity, they had no idea of the tremendously significant role he was to play in Babylon where he was to achieve what the whole nation of the Jews had been commissioned to do. Yet, they gave him the best that they had.

There is good reason to believe that the message on child salvation was understood and taught by the prophet Jeremiah. To this remarkable prophet, the Lord testified, "... before you were born I sanctified you . . . ." *Jeremiah* 1:5.

To be sanctified is to be made holy. This is only possible if the person is delivered from the old nature which is unholy or unsanctified, and filled with the life of Jesus which is holy or sanctified. Thus Jeremiah, like John the Baptist after him, was blessed with the new birth from his earliest moments.

This prophet began his ministry "... in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign." *Jeremiah* 1:2. He continued his work till the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah.

Twenty-one years separated the beginning of Jeremiah's ministry from the third year of Jehoiakim's reign, the year that Daniel was carried captive to Babylon. "Daniel was but eighteen years old when brought into a heathen court in service to the king of Babylon . . . ." *Testimonies* 4:570. Therefore, Jeremiah began his ministry three years before Daniel was born.

Jeremiah's work combined two ministries. One was the conveyance of stern messages of warning and reproof to the apostate king, priests, and rulers. The other was the preaching of the gospel to the scattered remnant who loved the truth in righteousness. It is with the second that we will concern ourselves today because it was by this means that Daniel and his three friends received the qualifications to wage war successfully with the Babylonian monarch. Of that ministry it is written:

"Like sweetest music these promises of deliverance fell upon the ears of those who were steadfast in their worship of Jehovah. In the homes of the high and the lowly, where the counsels of a covenant-keeping God were still held in reverence, the words of the prophet were repeated again and again. Even the children were mightily stirred, and upon their young and receptive minds lasting impressions were made." *Prophets and Kings*, 427.

One would expect that the names of four of those children were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. The last three are better known by their Babylonian names but these were not given to them until they

reached the city of their captivity. The assumption that these four were very responsive listeners to Jeremiah's messages is confirmed in the paragraph which follows the one quoted above.

"It was their conscientious observance of the commands of Holy Scripture, that in the days of Jeremiah's ministry brought to Daniel and his fellows opportunities to exalt the true God before the nations of earth. The instruction these Hebrew children had received in the homes of their parents, made them strong in faith and constant in their service of the living God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth." *Prophets and Kings*, 428.

The instruction that Daniel and his fellows received in their Judean homes did not come from Jeremiah alone. Having known by experience the living power present in an individual who has been sanctified before he was born, he could, and we can feel certain did teach the principles of child salvation to the parents. As they grasped and were inspired by this marvelous message, they were able to give their little ones the start in life that every child should have, and, in turn, followed this with dedicated and skillful training.

"Daniel and his companions had been faithfully instructed in the principles of the word of God. They had learned to sacrifice the earthly to the spiritual, to seek the highest good. And they reaped the reward. Their habits of temperance and their sense of responsibility as representatives of God called to noblest development the powers of body, mind, and soul. At the end of their training, in their examination with other candidates for the honors of the kingdom, there was 'found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.' *Daniel* 1:19." *Education*, 55.

Let it never be forgotten however, that each of those men were what their parents made them. There were "none like" them because none of the others had been sanctified before he was born, nor had subsequently received the training that these youths had received. Without being born again it was impossible for them to be rightly trained anyway.

Every young person today who contemplates marriage, or has already married, should be deeply grateful to the Lord that He has sent us such wonderful light on how to raise children of the quality and caliber of Joseph and Daniel. We are facing the soon coming day when once again Babylon will rule the world. All will bow down and serve the potentate of all potentates, except for the valiant band who know their God and will stand erect and fearless in the presence of every and any earthly power.

We have considered only a few of the mighty Bible characters whose achievements are the results of what their parents made them. There is not the space to study more of them here, but every Christian today,

especially if he or she is a young parent or one yet to be, must spend much time in deep and extensive study of these lives and of the parents behind the scenes who made them what they were.

Great will be the inspiration, faith, and courage that such a study will afford. Mothers and fathers will see as never before what they can give their children. They will *realize* in very truth that there is no other profession to compare in importance with parenthood, and will thus be led to sacrifice every other interest that would detract from this one supreme responsibility. Being president or prince may bring fame, power, and riches, but what are these compared to seeing your children possessed of sound physical constitutions, tremendous intellectual power even to ten times that possessed by their worldly counterparts, moral stamina, inward righteousness, joy in the truth, the lovely spirit of obedience, and a place in the kingdom.

Parents, if you accomplish nothing more in life than these achievements, for what more could you ask? There is no other profession to equal parenthood. Make the most of it!



# You Must Be Born Again

## Chapter 12

Parenthood, properly discharged, is not an occupation for the unskilled. It is a task which requires a high level of competence and should not be undertaken by those who are not truly qualified for the work. In fact, if the average person were to realize all that is involved and required, together with the terrible consequences of failure, there would be manifest on that person's part a marked hesitancy to undertake the awesome responsibility.

On the other hand, when he captures *a* glimpse of the incredible rewards of success, and the tremendous support, efficiency, and guidance promised by the divine Leader, he will be inspired to undertake the work. There are few if any things more wonderful than having a family of truly consecrated children with sound physical constitutions, powerful intellects, living spiritual experiences, deep, abiding love for God, their parents, and their fellow men, and well-balanced personalities.

"Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is His reward.

"Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth.

"Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate." *Psalms* 127:3-5.

What prospective parents need before they embark on a career in marriage, is a realistic and comprehensive appraisal of what they are about to undertake. This will lead them to devote a much greater proportion of their time to thorough preparation for the task awaiting them. They will then enter upon their responsibilities as husband and

wife, father and mother, with an intelligence and dedication worthy of this high calling.

It is a tragedy that anyone who wishes can enter into marriage and parenthood without being required to possess any degree of competence whatsoever. Society is blind to the need for young people to be taught the purpose of marriage, and the skills required to fit them to have and raise children. The result is that the young people undertake responsibilities for which they are unfitted, a sad situation which leads eventually to every kind of family fragmentation.

Rightfully, those who aspire to other important vocations in life such as doctors, architects, civil engineers, airline pilots, and train drivers, are required to meet exacting standards of efficiency before they are trusted to occupy these positions. So it should be with those who aspire to the raising of children, an occupation which is immeasurably more important than any other.

Child training begins with parent training. The ideal but non-existent situation would be met if every individual back to the original parents had been born again from the point immediately after conception, and faithfully and correctly trained thereafter. Had this been so, the human race would have become truly incredible and the work of God would have been finished long, long ago.

But this is not the case. Therefore, there is no one in the world today who can claim an ideal set of conditions for his role as a parent. Therefore, all must make the most of the situation in which they find themselves. If they are so blessed that the message on child salvation came soon enough for them to understand how to procure the new birth for their children as soon as they were conceived, then let them rejoice, for they have about the best advantage possible at the moment. But no one today has generations of forbears behind him who were born again from shortly after their conceptions. In fact, who would even be able to claim an unbroken line of forbears who experienced God's salvation at any age? Perhaps there were individuals but certainly not an unbroken succession.

Today, many who have accepted the message on child salvation, but are already married and have children of various ages, may feel discouraged because the message came too late for them to secure their children's new birth shortly after their conceptions. They will naturally lament the impairment caused by the indwelling presence of sin. They *realize* that their children will not be able to reach the glorious heights they might have, and they feel forced to be satisfied with less than the best.

Let none however, weep over opportunities lost, but rather rejoice that the light has come before it was too late for everybody. The message is to be applied to children already born, and while there will be added

difficulties to overcome, the results will still be superior to those offered by the old system employing force. Every child can now be effectively saved from the indwelling power of the sin-master and initiated into God's family.

The study of the preparation of the parents and the procedures to be followed by them in the saving and training of their children, will occupy the next several chapters. We will first of all follow through a relatively ideal situation beginning with the unmarried who, although their parents were not born again Christians, have heard and accepted the message on child salvation, and have dedicated themselves to the plan of ensuring that their little ones experience the new birth immediately after conception and are rightly trained thereafter. Consideration will be given to what they must do to prepare themselves for their work as parents, and the course to be followed in making certain that their babes are born again and thereafter rightly trained.

This complete, we will address ourselves to the special problems that arise in the cases of those who undertook marriage without being informed of these principles. This section will cover such questions as: How do you implement child salvation in a mixed marriage? and: To what extent must a child already born participate in the decision to be delivered from sin and filled with Christ's life and spirit?

So, we begin with the cases of those who have not yet married, but anticipate that the time will come when they will form such a contract for life. Being at least professed Christians, they wish to have a home in which the children are members of the heavenly family and reflect God's character of love. They wish to have an unbroken household in the kingdom.

The first principle to be recognized is that they must be in themselves all that they wish their children to be. "If parents desire their children to be right and do right, they must be right themselves in theory and in practice." *Child Guidance*, 217. This is a truth which some folk are slow to accept, a fact which was impressed on my mind at a parents' and teacher's meeting at Kumeroa in New Zealand when, many years ago, my children were attending a one-teacher school.

The teacher was a dedicated man who took his work very seriously, and made it known that he was concerned with much more than the literary education of the children under his care. His interest in their welfare embraced their character development as well. Believing that parents and teachers would be strengthened in their endeavors by working together in harmony, he arranged for them to gather at the school from time to time.

One evening, the question of how to handle the problem of a bad tempered child was discussed. Various individuals offered their opinions and quite an active interchange of ideas followed, all of which focused on



It is vitally important that every parent knows for certain that he or she and each of the children are truly born again. It is very easy to be deceived in this matter. Because people solemnly observe the ceremonies of the church, and achieve an outward conformity of correct behavior, they gather confidence that they are in fact children of God. But, unless their old nature has been crucified to death, and the life of Christ has been literally implanted in its place, then they are not children of God. Let none rest until they are sure that they and their children are truly born again.

reforming the child. No one suggested that the parents themselves could not expect the youngsters to be patient and loving unless they, the elders, had gained this victory first. After listening for a time, I suggested that the parents should firstly be in themselves what they desired and expected their child to be, for, if they could not display a sweet and patient disposition under pressure and provocation, how could they require this in their little ones?

I expected the folk to welcome my observation as a logical and reasonable proposition, but there was not one who did. Rather, my words were greeted with indignation. One woman heatedly exclaimed, "What! How could you expect me to be calm and sweet tempered when these little pests are continually irritating me? That is too much to ask!"

This poor soul did not understand the gospel and so had never experienced its saving power. She had never known the victory over evil temper, and had never been blessed with the *peace* which surpasses knowledge. Had she done so, she would have gladly concurred with the proposition that the parents will not succeed in the work of character building in their children unless this problem is solved in themselves first.

Therefore, before a man and a woman marry, their first step must be to examine their lives to determine whether they do or do not have within themselves the qualities they wish to see in their children. This searching scrutiny must be so thorough that it will reveal for certain whether they are or are not truly born again. If a person is not born again, there is no hope of his being a truly successful parent, for this qualification is absolutely essential. Therefore, the first question which must be addressed by the prospective parent is: "Am I in fact born again?"

This is where great care must be taken, for so many believe that they have achieved this status when in fact they have not. Even leading theologians can be deceived as to their true condition before God. If you were to ask any minister of religion from any church organization if he believed he was born again, he would most likely affirm that he was. Yet, in most cases, an examination of that preacher's teachings would show that he did not even understand what the new birth involves.

An outstanding example of a man in this category was Nicodemus, the ruler who sought Jesus in the dead of night. He was most surprised when Christ told him more than once that he had to be born again before he could even see the kingdom of God, let alone be a part of it. Nicodemus was a religious leader who supposedly understood the Scriptures and was blessed with the kind of spiritual experience into which he was professedly leading the people under his care. But, like so many people from every age, he used false standards of measurement in arriving at his judgment of himself.



This happens because there are some indications of a person's being born again which can be present without his having really experienced this transformation. For instance, a person who has received the new life will find great changes taking place in his habits and tastes. But then, to a certain extent, so can a person who has adopted any new theology, so much so that they convince themselves they have been born again. Satan is a master counterfeiter who knows how to simulate the real thing so as to mislead those who otherwise might escape his snare.

Consider the situation faced by the average church member. The persuasive arguments of the evangelists supported by the church pastors lead him to accept membership in the organization. He then believes that he has the hope of eternal life, and looks and prays for the speedy return of Christ. He has largely renounced the world and its attractions and, when he compares his new life-style with what it was and with what his former associates still follow, he sees that he has made "great progress". He views with satisfaction his faithful attendance at church, his liberal financial support of her programs, his regular study of the Scriptures, and his dedicated missionary work, and rests in the assurance that all this would not be possible if he was not born again.

But, the truth is that, while all these features attend the man who is born again, they are not proof that he is, for all these developments can be achieved without a person's having received the new life from above. Once a person has been mentally persuaded that a certain way of life will bring eternal rewards and the escape from everlasting destruction, hope and fear prove to be mighty influences capable of drastically altering that person's habit patterns.

This phenomenon is not limited to religious influences, but is found wherever a person is subject to fear, or is offered highly desirable rewards for his efforts. The highly competitive world of the sportsman gives excellent examples of this principle. While his companions laze on the beach eating and drinking without regard for the effect on their health and well being, and generally follow indulgent habits, the athlete spends his time in rigorous training, while dispensing with every indulgence detrimental to his health. Likewise, dedicated musicians strip from their lives many pleasurable activities because these would detract from their reaching the highest pinnacles of success.

The new birth is something far beyond that which hope and fear can establish in the life, however significant these changes might be, for nothing less than the exercise of creative power can initiate the new birth experience. When the believer experiences this miracle of all miracles, he will then know that the changes which have been wrought in his way of life are the product of the exchange of his life itself. The old sinful nature which Christ compared to the thorn bush has been rooted out by God's omnipotent power and replaced by the seed of Christ Himself.

" '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. Through the power of Christ, men and women have broken the chains of sinful habit. They have renounced selfishness. The profane have become reverent, the drunken sober, the profligate pure. Souls that have borne the likeness of Satan have become transformed into the image of God. This change is in itself the miracle of miracles. A change wrought by the Word, it is one of the deepest mysteries of the Word. We cannot understand it; we can only believe, as declared by the Scriptures, it is 'Christ in you, the hope of glory.' " *The Acts of the Apostles*, 476.

All prospective parents together with those who are already engaged in this occupation, must know that they have passed from death to life. They must be certain that their behavior patterns spring from the presence of a new divine nature within and have not merely been generated by hope and fear. This is imperative, for no one can be an effective and successful parent unless that one has been truly born again. This qualification is so essential that its need cannot be over-stressed. For this reason, Jesus twice said to Nicodemus, ". . . You must be born again." *John* 3:7.

The very first work to be done by parents for their children immediately after conception is to introduce them to the new birth. The sooner this is accomplished the better, for every moment lost is time for sin to impair the mind of the unborn. But, parents cannot lead their little ones into any experience they have never had themselves. If they lack the knowledge, the faith, and the will to enter in, they are destitute of the qualities necessary to guide their children in.

It is positively distressing to see how casual most religious souls are about whether or not they have been born again. I have witnessed considerable numbers of people flocking to hear presentations of such beautiful themes as "God Does not Destroy", "Entering into God's Sabbath Rest", "The Seven Angels", and so on, giving the impression that they were true children of God. They even listened with close attention to specific studies on being delivered from sin's despotic rulership, and being blessed with the victorious life of Christ within. To all this they gave hearty assent, but, failing to recognize their own personal need for deliverance and restoration, they did not closely examine themselves to see if, in actual fact, they were the children of God.

They "... have been content with a superficial work. They do not know God. They have not studied His character; they have not held communion with Him; therefore they do not know how to trust, how to look and live." Christ's *Object Lessons*, 411.

This statement was not written to enable us to judge and criticize the experience of anyone else. Rather, it is designed to alert us to the peril of complacency which stalks everyone who is seeking a place in God's final

work and in the kingdom. If you find, on giving yourself over to the Holy Spirit's searching scrutiny, that you fit this description, then know that you are a foolish virgin whose destitution and danger is revealed in the shallow-rooted shoots which spring with such speed and promise from the stony ground, but wilt and die so quickly when the heat of the sun hits them.

This weakness does not manifest itself while favorable conditions continue, but becomes painfully evident when adverse situations develop. Then, many of those who appeared to be genuine believers fall away and reveal by their bitterness and wrath that they never were blessed with Christ's life nor were imbued with His attributes.

How then can one know with certainty that the blessing of the new birth has in fact been bestowed? How can one be sure that he is a good-ground hearer? This is a question which is often asked, but is not always so easily answered.

New birth is the climax to a series of developments which begin with an awareness that all is not well with the soul. The study of God's written Word has led to a knowledge of righteous principles, a deep conviction of sin, a thorough repentance of indwelling sinfulness, a confession of iniquity, and the solemn promise that henceforth, sin shall be laid aside and righteousness established in its place.

One does not have to be out in the world as a practicing sinner to experience this awakening to great personal need. More likely, the person will be an established church member behind whom are many, many years of devoted service to the church. During all that time the individual has been in the Laodicean condition and quite satisfied that he was rich and increased with goods when in fact he was wretched, poor, blind, and naked. For years the Holy Spirit had worked to penetrate the darkness in which he was enshrouded until at last the awakening came.

But, even though the sequence of knowledge, conviction, repentance, confession, and dedication have been established, it is usual for the one striving for deliverance to remain in ignorance of the correct procedure for victory. It is not yet realized that there has to be an eradication of the old sinful nature and its replacement with the divine. So, in his ignorance, the one reaching after righteousness does not seek victory through these measures. Instead, he pursues the time-honored but futile method of attempting to force good deeds from an evil nature and, quite naturally, he experiences no better success than he would if he tried to produce apples from a thorn bush. He is trying in fact to achieve the right thing in the wrong way, but it takes time to discover this. His first reaction is to suppose that he is not exerting enough effort, and therefore must try harder and pray more before he will *realize* true victory over his besetments.

But this only leads to further frustration. As often as he tries, he fails. He finds that what he knows he should do, and desperately desires to achieve, he cannot do. He is passing through the experience described in *Romans 7*, the sad recital of a man who tries and fails over and over, ever testifying: "For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practise; but what I hate, that I do." *Romans 7:15*.

This is a most frustrating experience, but it is essential to all except those who are born again from the earliest moment possible. The regenerated infant escapes it because it has never been subjected to the devil's philosophy that man has the capacity to solve all his own problems. It is true that man has a certain capacity and place for problem-solving, but not when it comes to dealing with the sin problem.<sup>1</sup> This can be dealt with only by an all-powerful Saviour.

However, not even He can resolve the difficulty until it is totally surrendered to Him. He cannot eliminate the problem while in any way or to any degree at all, we are seeking the solution by our own efforts. It was not until the man at the pool of Bethesda had abandoned all hope of healing by the popular but useless method of being the first to plunge into the water, that Jesus came to him and set him on his feet a perfectly restored soul, both physically and spiritually. It was by repeated failure that he became convinced that there was no salvation to be gained by diving into the water at Bethesda. So, likewise, the experience described in *Romans 7* serves to convince the individual eventually that there is no deliverance through the procedures employed by those who have not yet learned the utter inability of man to save himself. It is a hard way to have to learn, but better than not learning at all. When, in sheer desperation he comes to this place, he is ready to turn his salvation completely over to the Saviour. Then Jesus can do His work swiftly and successfully.

One question that must be asked by the individual who is seeking to ascertain if his new birth has in fact arrived, is whether he has actually been through a very real *Romans 7* struggle. If not, then it is virtually certain that the experience which now passes for a true walk with God is a false one. The more bitter and prolonged the *Romans 7* struggle is, the more wonderful the victory when it comes. Because of the varying dispositions, backgrounds, education, and ages of different individuals, there will be varied intensities of the *Romans 7* struggle. This is of course to be expected as no two individuals are identical.

Theoretically, a person could avoid the agony of this struggle. It would mean that in some other way he would have to arrive at the same absolute conviction of the utter helplessness of man to achieve righteousness from a stony heart. He would have to understand that not even God can or will do this, for His immutable law, which determines

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<sup>1</sup> See *Entering into God's Sabbath Rest*, Chapter 9, by F. T. Wright.

that every living organism can only produce fruit after its own kind, cannot be broken.

What then is the alternative method by which these convictions can be established in the individual? It is quite simply by believing the fact of it as written in the Scriptures. Repeatedly, the Lord has told us that an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit, that we cannot of ourselves attain to righteousness, and that Christ alone is the Saviour. But, in the cases of those who have walked so long in darkness, and who do not yet have the heavenly eyesalve of keen spiritual discernment, it is one thing to read these truths, or be told them, and quite another to really understand them. Instead, it seems that we all have to learn the hard way as described in *Romans 7*.

Not all who pass through this terrible struggle emerge as victors. There are those who settle down to accept this as the best that can be expected, and, even though the evidence to the contrary is conclusive, they argue that this is normal Christian experience.

This it can never be, for *Romans 7* describes a person who is continually defeated, whereas a true Christian experience is victory over sin. "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." *1 Corinthians 15:57*. "Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame." *1 Corinthians 15:34*.

There is one thing of which all can be very sure. If, in this age of wonderful light, you believe in your heart and argue to others that *Romans 7* describes a true Christian experience, then you have never been born again.

The many powerful Scriptural arguments which prove this point are presented in our companion volume, *From Bondage to Freedom*, 21-28. If you wish, you can obtain a copy from Destiny Press.

Once the seeker for truth has been convicted that he cannot serve the Lord by trying to do righteousness without the heart being renewed, the way has been cleared for this transformation to be effected. The great need now is for faith to be strengthened to the point where the individual can literally lay hold upon the promises of God, and thus enlist the creative power of God to form the divine likeness in the heart.

It is as the believer seeks the faith which will provide him with release from sin's bondage, that the divinely-appointed moment comes and the new birth takes place. No man can choose the hour when the miracle is to occur, for this is determined by the Saviour who is able to ascertain just when faith has developed to the necessary intensity, and when all the other conditions have been met.

Then the seeker for truth will find that a moment arrives when he is brought face to face with a true revelation of his great sinfulness. He will then see himself as a hopelessly lost soul, one against whom the gates of

heaven are forever shut. All the evidences which previously assured him of membership in the family of God—church enrollment, love of Bible study, separation from the world, missionary endeavors, and so forth—now have no weight at all. He sees them for what they are—works programs which in themselves have no power to save.

It is the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit which effects this revelation to the trembling, despairing soul. This is not a happy stage on the journey to the new birth, so much so that the majority of those who are thus convicted refuse to accept these revelations of themselves. They deny that the picture is true, and point to all their good works to support their contention that they are not unrighteousness through and through as the Spirit of God declares them to be.

It is a fatal mistake to mount this kind of resistance, for, once the Holy Spirit is grieved, He is never able again to bring conviction to that soul. In actual fact, the seeker for salvation should welcome this ministry of death on the part of the Holy Spirit. To see our sins as God sees them is a very great blessing, for no one can truly repent of sin and be cleansed of it without first seeing it for what it really is.

The truly honest soul will not argue with the Holy Spirit. Instead, he will willingly accept these frightening convictions even though to do so at this stage is like signing his own death warrant. He will humbly acknowledge that he deserves to die and will submissively bow to his fate.

If he in true, unaffected sincerity adopts this attitude, the Lord will work wonderfully for him. Suddenly, the glorious, power-charged promises of God will appear as if written for him and him alone. Never before will they have appeared in such strength and certainty; never before so real and positive.

He will then find himself confessing not merely what he has done, but what he is. Having made this searching confession in which he delivers the old sinful nature up to the Lord, he then lays hold upon the life of God to fill his entire being and this becomes the spring of all his actions thereafter. As he does this, God makes effective what he has committed to Him in prayer. The iniquity is removed and a new life begins in its place. The believer is born again.

At this point, the only evidence the believer has is his living, undeniable faith in God's Word. It is essential that everyone understands this, for there is no greater mistake that can be made right here than to start looking at one's self to see if anything has happened; to discover if a *wonderful feeling* has come over the whole being. All too often, people find themselves asking the question after they have committed their case to God, "I wonder if it will really work for me?" Such is an expression of unbelief which guarantees that it will not work for this person. The person who has been led step by step by the Holy Spirit will be lifted above

unbelief. He will not be interested in looking for physical evidences just yet. In fact, when they come, they will catch him by surprise as he discovers what a different person he has become.

In the meantime, he will rejoice in the *release* he knows he has received, knowing that the physical evidences will be manifest in their time. For the present, he does not need them. God's word is enough. He has heard God speak through that Word, and he knows that that Word is literally truth and life. His experience at this point is identical with the man who came from Capernaum to Cana to request of Christ the healing of his son. When the mighty Saviour from sickness and sin pronounced the words, "Go your way; your son lives," the father did not have any visible evidence that the Great Physician's words had taken effect. That was available only in distant Capernaum where it was witnessed by family and servants. They were amazed by what they saw, but the father did not need to see. He had the word of Christ, and that was enough. He knew that his son had been restored with greater certainty than if he had been present in the sickroom to see for himself. Permeating his entire being was a consciousness and settled conviction that his son was restored to health.

Once a person is blessed with this kind of faith experience, and grasps the message from heaven that sin in his heart has been eradicated and the life of God has taken its place, he must never permit himself to doubt that truth no matter how convincingly the devil might argue otherwise. It is by faith that we know we are reborn, and it is by faith that we are to maintain the connection. "By *faith* you became Christ's, and by faith you are to grow up in Him . . . ." *Steps to Christ*, 70.

A study of Christ's temptation in the wilderness demonstrates how effectively the enemy can make us feel as if God has denied our sonship with Him. At the Jordan, God had audibly acknowledged Christ as His Son. Forty days later, the devil was pointing to the Saviour's situation and feelings as incontrovertible evidence that Jesus had ceased to be God's Son. These were lying charges over which Christ gained the victory by faith. Even though there was no visible evidence to support His status as God's Son, He clung to His Father's word and refused to doubt it. God had declared Him to be His Son and that was enough.

Likewise, when you are born again, the Father's voice declares you to be His son. You will not hear an audible voice, but you will hear the assurance within yourself as clearly as if you could hear God speak to your physical senses. Satan understands that he must break your faith in that Word if he is to gain the victory over you and separate you from the Lord. Therefore, you must maintain faith in God's Word to you that you are born again and therefore are His very own child. This will be most difficult at times even to the point where you might let doubt and

uncertainty take command. Even so, you have not lost your sonship with God, but only your faith in it. Be warned though, that persistent unbelief will eventually effect a permanent separation from God.

Once the new birth has taken place, the visible indications will follow as they must, for you have now embarked on a new life altogether.

"Those who become new creatures in Christ Jesus will bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.' *Galatians* 5:22, 23. They will no longer fashion themselves according to the former lusts, but by the faith of the Son of God they will follow in His steps, reflect His character, and purify themselves even as He is pure. The things they once hated they now love, and the things they once loved they hate. The proud and self-assertive become meek and lowly in heart. The vain and supercilious become serious and unobtrusive. The drunken become sober, and the profligate pure. The vain customs and fashions of the world are laid aside. Christians will seek not the 'outward adorning,' but 'the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.' *1 Peter* 3:3, 4." *Steps to Christ*, 58, 59.

"Obedience is the test of discipleship. It is the keeping of the commandments that proves the sincerity of our professions of love. When the doctrine we accept kills sin in the heart, purifies the soul from defilement, bears fruit unto holiness, we may know that it is the truth of God. When benevolence, kindness, tenderheartedness, sympathy, are manifest in our lives; when the joy of right doing is in our hearts; when we exalt Christ, and not self, we may know that our faith is of the right order. 'Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.' *1 John* 2:3." *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 146, 147.

The contrast between the life before and after the new birth is greatest in the cases of those who have been living an irreligious, worldly life. Church members who have lived up to the standards as best they can, may find very little actual change in their general pattern of living. Their conversion will therefore be less dramatic, less visible.

What will be found is that whereas previously the effort to do right had to be made against one's own spirit and nature, now righteousness is the expression of the new nature as it is written, "All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses." *The Desire of Ages*, 668.

"A healthy man, who is able to attend to the vocations of life and who goes forth day after day to his labor with buoyant spirits and with a healthy current of blood flowing through his veins, does not call the





Parents may bring their little ones to Jesus in the arms of living faith even before they are born, and know that the Saviour will gladly receive them and save them from their sinful natures, and fill them with His own precious life.

attention of every one he meets to his soundness of body. Health and vigor are the natural conditions of his life, and therefore he is scarcely conscious that he is in the enjoyment of so rich a boon.

"Thus it is with the truly righteous man. He is unconscious of his goodness and piety. Religious principle has become the spring of his life and conduct, and it is just as natural for him to bear the fruits of the Spirit as for the fig tree to bear figs or for the rosebush to yield roses. His nature is so thoroughly imbued with love for God and his fellow men that he works the works of Christ with a willing heart." *The Sanctified Life*, 12, 13.

Such are the steps from death to life. He who has been truly born again will be able to look back and trace his own progression from his first knowledge of God's will, to his awareness of his own lack of obedience to that will, his conviction of sin, subsequent repentance and confession, and his determination to obey the Lord in every particular.

He will remember too the frustration which followed as he desperately tried to achieve these ideals through his own misguided efforts. But, even though the results were so discouraging, there was something that held him from surrendering the struggle. He fought on, ever realizing more and more his own personal helplessness and need of a Saviour.

Then at last the light broke on his darkened mind. The seeker after salvation saw himself as the Lord does, confessed his totally lost condition, and then grasped the promises of God as if they had been written just for him.

Then came release from the domination of sin, and the beginning of a new life altogether. Now he finds that he obeys, not against his own nature, but as the natural expression of it.

A splendid example of this transition from condemnation and death to salvation and life is provided in the conversion of John Wesley.

This man was raised by a very religious father and mother without being taught the gospel of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, he remained a member of the church, trained for the Anglican ministry, and was a sincere seeker for God's favor. He knew the will of God and worked ceaselessly to achieve obedience to it, but without success or satisfaction.

"Wesley and his associates were led to see that true religion is seated in the heart, and that God's law extends to the thoughts as well as to the words and actions. Convinced of the necessity of holiness of heart, as well as correctness of outward deportment, they set out in earnest upon a new life. By the most diligent and prayerful efforts they endeavored to subdue the evils of the natural heart. They lived a life of self-denial, charity, and humiliation, observing with great rigor and exactness every measure which they thought could be helpful to them in obtaining what they most desired—that holiness which could secure the favor of God.

*But they did not obtain the object which they sought. In vain were their endeavors to free themselves from the condemnation of sin or to break its power.* It was the same struggle which Luther had experienced in his cell at Erfurt. It was the same question which had tortured his soul—"How should man be just before God?" *Job 9:2.*" *The Great Controversy*, 254.

This was John Wesley's and his brother's *Romans 7* experience. Their failure to find what they sought was the inevitable consequence of endeavoring to achieve the right result through wrong procedures. Instead of looking to God to eradicate and replace their evil natures, "By the most diligent and prayerful efforts they endeavored to *subdue* the evils of the natural heart." *The Great Controversy*, 254.

This sad, frustrating struggle was to continue for years. He took it with him, as did also his brother Charles, when they were sent by ship to labor as ministers in Georgia, North America. Aboard were a company of Moravian missionaries whose undisturbed peace during a raging storm was in marked contrast to the fear which possessed John and Charles Wesley.

The mission to Georgia was a failure as might be expected seeing that the brothers had not yet received the gospel. Those were sorrowful, frustrating years for John Wesley, but he refused to abandon his quest for the peace of God. The length and intensity of his struggle was to make the deliverance more wonderful and memorable. When the transition finally came, he really knew that, at last, he was born again.

"On his return to England, Wesley, under the instruction of a Moravian preacher, arrived at a clearer understanding of Bible faith. He was convinced that he must renounce all dependence upon his own works for salvation and must trust wholly to 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' At a meeting of the Moravian society in London a statement was read from Luther, describing the change which the Spirit of God works in the heart of the believer. As Wesley listened, faith was kindled in his soul. 'I felt my heart strangely warmed,' he says. 'I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation: and an assurance was given me, that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved me from the law of sin and death.'—Whitehead, *Life of the Rev. John Wesley*, page 52.

"Through long years of wearisome and comfortless striving—years of rigorous self-denial, of reproach and humiliation—Wesley had steadfastly adhered to his one purpose of seeking God. Now he had found Him; and he found that the grace which he had toiled to win by prayers and fasts, by alms-deeds and self-abnegation, was a gift, 'without money and without price.'

"Once established in the faith of Christ, his whole soul burned with the desire to spread everywhere a knowledge of the glorious gospel of God's free grace. 'I look upon all the world as my parish,' he said; 'in

whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation.'—Whitehead, *Life of the Rev. John Wesley*, page 74.

"He continued his strict and self-denying life, not now as the *ground*, but the *result* of faith; not the *root*, but the *fruit* of holiness. The grace of God in Christ is the foundation of the Christian's hope, and that grace will be manifested in obedience. Wesley's life was devoted to the preaching of the great truths which he had received—justification through faith in the atoning blood of Christ, and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, bringing forth fruit in a life conformed to the example of Christ." *The Great Controversy*, 255, 256.

Another valuable witness to the steps from bondage to freedom, through which the Holy Spirit leads us, is supplied in the experience of Ellen Harmon. It is recorded in Testimonies 1:14-21. There is no doubt about her experience being a genuine new birth, for all the elements were there in their correct order.

Without question, more than sufficient information is given in the Scriptures for all to be able to examine themselves to determine whether or not the new birth has in fact been achieved. If it has not, then the parents or those yet to be parents must make their gaining of this blessing the one all consuming quest of their lives. Be as determined to succeed as was John Wesley. Do not rest satisfied until you can testify without the slightest doubt, "I am a new creature in Christ Jesus. I have been born again."

Remember, if you are not born again, it will be impossible for you to bring salvation to your children. Therefore, regard this facility as a prime necessity. Do not even attempt to raise children without it, for you will only experience certain failure.



# Practical Considerations

## Chapter 13

Parenthood is designed of God to prepare souls for acceptable service both for this life and the life to come. It is the most important work ever committed to mortals. Therefore, "The circle of family and neighborhood duties is the very first field of effort for those who would work for the uplifting of their fellow men. There is no more important field of effort than that committed to the founders and guardians of the home. No work entrusted to human beings involves *greater or more* far-reaching results than does the work of fathers and mothers.

"It is by the youth and children of today that the future of society is to be determined, and what these youth and children shall be depends upon the home. To the lack of right home training may be traced the larger share of the disease and misery and crime that curse humanity. If the home life were pure and true, if the children who went forth from its care were prepared to meet life's responsibilities and dangers, what a change would be seen in the world!" *The Ministry of Healing*, 351.

These are impressive words and the student of this wonderful subject is admonished to study the entire chapter in *The Ministry of Healing* from which they are taken. This counsel, thoroughly considered and faithfully received, will inspire and solemnize those individuals who are truly dedicated to the beautiful but awesome task of rearing "... families whose members, crowned with honor, should be recognized as members of the family above." *The Ministry of Healing*, 356.

Successful training of the children begins with the successful training of the parents. The starting point of this work is the new birth. Let it be forever settled in the minds of all those who are contemplating marriage and parenthood, that they do not have the least hope of success in reaching the true goals in child training if they have not been born again. This is why, without exception, each young person should lay all other considerations aside and concentrate every resource and facility at his

command on entering into heaven's family by new birth. If this is not done, the life will be worse than wasted.

Then, once this transformation has been effected, the work of acquiring all the other necessary qualifications can begin in earnest. If undertaken as it should be, this will be found to be a comprehensive task embracing all the time remaining before the marriage, and even continuing after it.

The fact is that the preparation of parents begins when they are conceived, for it is during their prenatal period that the most significant and enduring learning takes place. It is then that the foundations are laid for good or bad parenthood as the case may be. Fortunate indeed are those few parents down through history who were blessed with such a beginning to life.

In the majority of cases where the parents were not themselves born again and did not understand how to impart this blessing to their little ones, the correct training for parenthood did not commence, if it ever did, until those parents became regenerate and learned the principles of child salvation.

The effectiveness of this work will be in direct proportion to the effort expended on it. If the matter is pushed into the background while time is devoted to enjoying life in the pursuit of amusements and pleasures, or given to the struggle to realize the highest ambitions and grandest aspirations, then it can be reliably forecast that any who follow such misdirected courses will certainly fail of achieving the divine ideals. What a tragedy that will be!

On the other hand, if the young people can be really led to see how critical their work as future parents is to be, and how much their success depends on very thorough training, they would be moved to make this the all-important work of their lives. While this would certainly lead them to turn away from life's unsatisfying amusements, it would not preclude reaching after scholastic attainments. However, all interests and pursuits would be important only as they related to the task standing first in order of priorities—the salvation of the children.

It is a sad fact that all too many fathers in particular are heavily preoccupied with their business commitments at the expense of the time and interest which should be devoted to their little ones. They therefore leave the mother to carry a larger share of the responsibility than God intended. While it is true that the mother does have more time with the children than does a working husband, in His wisdom, God ordained that the task of raising their offspring should be very much a team effort. Only when the father and mother work together in true coordination with each performing his and her divinely appointed roles, can the work be truly successful.

Of course, some will plead that we live in times of uncommon economic stress which renders it impossible for working fathers and mothers to give the time and attention to the little ones that true education requires. No one will deny the existence of these terrible pressures, or that they make it difficult to fulfill parental responsibilities. What must be faced is the fact that, if people elect to follow, or are chained by circumstances to a life style so dominated by economic stress that it is quite impossible to take care of children properly, then, so long as these conditions continue, they should not undertake parenthood.

In short, do not permit yourself to be a parent unless you can fill the role to God's satisfaction. Then, after careful thought and earnest prayer, should you decide to become a parent, you must devote yourself to the most intensive preparation for the task. Make this the all important consideration in your life.

Let it be emphasized that the Lord does not necessarily call every believer to become a parent. There might be some who can better serve the Lord in another capacity. Upon each child of God rests the responsibility of so understanding and applying the Sabbath rest principles that he or she will be filling the place Jehovah has appointed them, whether parenthood or otherwise.

Preparation for parenthood can be divided into two main fields—the practical and the spiritual. We will firstly give consideration to the practical training necessary to provide a reasonable fitness to cope with this side of home making.

"Before assuming the responsibilities involved in marriage, young men and young women should have such an experience in practical life as will prepare them for its duties and its burdens." *The Ministry of Healing*, 358.

Anyone who has been involved in marriage certainly knows that there are duties to perform and burdens to bear. In the case of each individual child, these tasks are most demanding when the infant first enters the world, but become somewhat lighter as the child develops its capacities to share in the home government. Each additional member of the family adds significantly to the work load.

It follows then that the person who has never learned to work and love it, has not acquired fitness for marriage. In God's kingdom nothing worthwhile is accomplished without industrious effort, and the more diligently one works according to right ideas and correct procedures, the greater the accomplishments and the more satisfying the rewards.

Let it be emphasized that one can work exceedingly hard and yet gain but little because the Sabbath rest principles are not being applied. Ancient Israel needed to learn this lesson when they returned to rebuild the city and the sanctuary after the Babylonian captivity. They had become discouraged and unbelieving, and, instead of working under the

divine direction, had turned to their own devisings. They worked very hard at building up their own material prosperity, but they found that they made no gains at all. The Lord in His great love and mercy advised them through His messenger just where their problem lay.

"Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Consider your ways!'

" 'You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes.' " *Haggai* 1:5, 6.

They had yet to learn the lesson spoken long before: "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it . . . ." *Psalms* 127:1.

"For over a year the temple was neglected and well-nigh forsaken. The people dwelt in their homes and strove to attain temporal prosperity, but their situation was deplorable. Work as they might they did not prosper." *Prophets and Kings*, 573.

So, let it be stressed that every candidate for marriage must love work while, at the same time, understanding how to channel the effort according to the divine principles. Then, the more earnestly and intelligently the task is undertaken, the greater the guarantees of success. This is the kind of advice given by the Lord through His messenger to a young woman who, although unfit for the responsibility, was contemplating marriage.

"You have peculiarities of character which need to be sternly disciplined and resolutely controlled before you can with any safety enter the marriage relation. Therefore marriage should be put from your mind until you overcome the defects in your character, for you would not make a happy wife. You have neglected to educate yourself for systematic household labor. You have not seen the necessity of acquiring habits of industry. The habit of enjoying useful labor, once formed, will never be lost. You are then prepared to be placed in any circumstance in life, and you will be fitted for the position. You will learn to love activity. If you enjoy useful labor, your mind will be occupied with your employment, and you will not find time to indulge in dreamy fancies.

"Knowledge of useful labor will impart to your restless and dissatisfied mind energy, efficiency, and a becoming, modest dignity which will command respect." *Testimonies* 3:336.

Christ as a child certainly set a right example of diligent and earnest labor. "Jesus lived in a peasant's home, and faithfully and cheerfully acted His part in bearing the burdens of the household. He had been the Commander of heaven, and angels had delighted to fulfill His word; now He was a willing servant, a loving, obedient son. He learned a trade, and with His own hands worked in the carpenter's shop with Joseph. In the





simple garb of a common laborer He walked the streets of the little town, going to and returning from His humble work. He did not employ His divine power to lessen His burdens or to lighten His toil.

"As Jesus worked in childhood and youth, mind and body were developed. He did not use His physical powers recklessly, but in such a way as to keep them in health, that He might do the best work in every line. He was not willing to be defective, even in the handling of tools. He was perfect as a workman, as He was perfect in character. By His own example He taught that it is our duty to be industrious, that our work should be performed with exactness and thoroughness, and that such labor is honorable. The exercise that teaches the hands to be useful and trains the young to bear their share of life's burdens gives physical strength, and develops every faculty. All should find something to do that will be beneficial to themselves and helpful to others. God appointed work as a blessing, and only the diligent worker finds the true glory and joy of life. The approval of God rests with loving assurance upon children and youth who cheerfully take their part in the duties of the household, sharing the burdens of father and mother. Such children will go out from the home to be useful members of society.

"Throughout His life on earth, Jesus was an earnest and constant worker. He expected much; therefore He attempted much. After He had entered on His ministry, He said, 'I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.' *John 9:4*. Jesus did not shirk care and responsibility, as do many who profess to be His followers. It is because they seek to evade this discipline that so many are weak and inefficient. They may possess precious and amiable traits, but they are nerveless and almost useless when difficulties are to be met or obstacles surmounted. The positiveness and energy, the solidity and strength of character, manifested in Christ are to be developed in us, through the same discipline that He endured. And the grace that He received is for us." *The Desire of Ages*, 72, 73.

Jesus gained wonderful physical, mental, and spiritual development from his labors as a carpenter, a trade which was not His life-work. Once He began His ministry, He left the bench forever, but this did not mean that the years spent working with Joseph were wasted. On the contrary, they were essential to His acquiring capacities without which His earthly mission would have been a failure. They were in fact a training for the ministry.

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** One of the most important preparations for marriage is to learn to love work and to take an honest pride in producing quality workmanship. Jesus is our example in this. He was ever a diligent and earnest worker who extracted the utmost productivity from the hours of every day.

So, when a young man and woman, in their preparation for marriage, learn to work and love it as Jesus did, they are developing a capacity to successfully bear the responsibilities of married life. Therefore, they should welcome every God-given opportunity to engage in useful labor even though there is no visible future in it or offer of financial reward or direct relationship between it and their expected life work.

At the same time, the aspirant to marriage should be seeking knowledge and proficiency in those specific skills which must be exercised in order to satisfactorily discharge the duties of a parent. Years before the time comes, young men should be aware that on them will rightfully rest the responsibility of financing the home or, as it is usually expressed, they are to be the breadwinners.

It is most unfortunate that today so many mothers have gone out to work, leaving the care of their children to child care centers, kindergartens, or baby sitters. This is a situation which can never be productive of good, for the children need their mothers every day, it being detrimental for them to be left in the care of a stranger. Young marrieds might find that both partners have to work for a time after the wedding in order to establish themselves financially, but, so long as this continues, they should avoid having children. It is better to wait till the wife can retire from work to give her undivided attention to the home and the forthcoming little ones.

In his preparation for marriage then, a young man should target for the capacity to be a full financial supporter of his wife and children. This will involve careful saving and investment so that, by the time the wedding day arrives, he will have accumulated sufficient money to meet the cost of establishing his home. This means that, if he aims to own his own house, he pays at least a substantial down payment on the building and its furnishings. Natural inclination will generally lead to the desire for a large, expensive house with fine furnishings, but the realization that we are living in a world soon to pass away, and that heaven is the place where we will have our mansions fair, will lead the wife and husband to be content with a simple but adequate dwelling and furnishings.

Not all buy their own house, even though it is a sound investment to do so. Rent is money which goes to someone else and for which the tenant receives only an immediate benefit. Some people object to time payments on housing on the grounds that they incur heavy interest charges. It is true that heavy interest is paid, but it must be realized that weekly payments including interest are not very much more than rent. In some more fortunate cases where a large enough deposit has been paid, the installments may be no more or even a little less than rent. But, in the long run, the renter pays more than the buyer.

Compare the situation then between a person using his money to buy a house, versus the renter. Let us suppose that the renter pays \$400 per

month which is a common enough fee for a house today. He is paying out \$4800 per year. When twenty years have gone by, he will have paid out \$96,000, if the rental rate were to remain constant which it certainly will not. Allowing for the steady rent increases ensured by rising inflation, he will more likely than not pay out something like \$150,000. After twenty years—and how soon the time passes—he leaves. He walks out without a cent of that \$150,000.

On the other hand, the buyer likewise spends about the same amount at least half of which is interest. At the end of twenty years, he is obliged to sell for some reason or another, but he does not walk out with nothing. Unless he unwisely chose a location with poor resale potential, he will recover the original cost of the house, which was probably about \$75,000, plus the inflated value of at least another \$20,000.

In the meantime there have been expenses to meet such as repairs and maintenance, and land taxes, but there has been the comfort and assurance of being in your own dwelling from which you cannot be evicted unless, over a period of time, you default in your payments. Even then, you will not go out with nothing, for the sale of the house will give you back some of your investment after the building society has recouped its money. But, from the financial point of view, after twenty to thirty years when the buyer has finished making payments, the renter continues to make payments for years to come and actually spends more in the long run than the buyer.

Obviously, it would be much better not to pay rent or to borrow, but to be able to finance your own way stage by stage. I am acquainted with a young man who, no more than a year or two after he began working and while still only a teenager with no future wife in sight, selected a building site and set about paying for it. He accomplished this ahead of schedule, while his contemporaries were squandering their money on pleasures and amusements. Next he spent some time gathering funds for the next stage, the erection of his house. It is quite possible that he will save his money very carefully until he establishes an engagement to marry. Then he will arrange for the construction of the dwelling. This young man is to be commended for his far-sighted awareness of his responsibilities. In this area at least, he is making a thorough preparation for his eventual commitment to home duties.

With the utmost diligence, the future husband needs to improve his capacities for enlarging his income to the place where he can finance the business of running a home. However, care must be exercised to ensure that the acquisition of money does not become the pursuit in itself. The primary consideration is service, for this is what the worker is employed to give, and this is all that the true worker is concerned about. To him, financial remuneration is something he receives so that he can continue to serve. In other words, he does not labor to acquire money, but

receives it so that he can go on working. The very spirit of service permeates his entire being and is the source from which he is motivated to perform all his duties. Likewise, his desire for a good income is for the purpose of rendering acceptable service to his future family.

"Not for the wages we receive are we to labor. The motive that prompts us to work for God should have in it nothing akin to self-serving. Unselfish devotion and a spirit of sacrifice have always been and always will be the first requisite of acceptable service. Our Lord and Master designs that not one thread of selfishness shall be woven into His work. Into our efforts we are to bring the tact and skill, the exactitude and wisdom, that the God of perfection required of the builders of the earthly tabernacle; yet in all our labors we are to remember that the greatest talents or the most splendid services are acceptable only when self is laid upon the altar, a living, consuming sacrifice." *Prophets and Kings*, 65.

To be blessed with the very spirit of service is a virtue of exceeding value, an essential requisite for successful marriage, and a quality to be found in all those who will eventually inhabit the kingdom of heaven. Furthermore, it is something so highly prized by the Lord and by employers that he who is governed by it will never be unemployed. He will never have to seek work, for it will ever be looking for him.

This type of person never makes the sad mistakes of the worker who is motivated by self-interest. This class of individual accepts employment on his own terms. He has his own ideas of how the work should be executed and seeks to do everything his own way. This is very exasperating and frustrating to his employer who is caused to suffer loss and delays because of this headstrong attitude. It is the manifestation of the same spirit of self-exaltation which caused the great controversy to start in the first case, resulted in the expulsion of Satan and his followers, and lowered darkness on this once happy world. Just as the devil sought to put himself in God's place, so the worker strives to elevate himself to the position of the manager.

Among true, well educated Christians this spirit never operates. The child of God recognizes the rightful position and authority of those who have accepted and are paying for his services, and he studies himself, his attitudes, and activities to ensure that not even by so much as a hair's breadth, does he usurp the position of those above, level with, or even below him. He understands that it is the employer's place to advise him as to what is to be done, and when, and how, while his task is to really study the man above him to ensure that he does provide what is asked for, in the time limit required, and in the exact way that it is called for.

This calls for total forgetfulness of self, and complete subjection to the one appointed to direct him. It may well be that the worker judges the procedures he is required to follow as being inefficient, while believing that he can greatly improve the management of affairs. It is even possible

that he will show better judgment in one instance or another than the man of experience above him, but this does not rightfully entitle him to introduce his own way of doing things. That is usurpation, the sin which cost Lucifer heaven, and will exclude all those who continue in that way from returning there.

The worker is entitled to humbly make a suggestion where he thinks that an improvement can be made, but he must not under any circumstances introduce his ideas into the system until cleared to do so. If management rejects the idea, then the true worker will accept that and will continue doing the work exactly as is required of him. He will make it abundantly clear that he can be trusted to serve exactly as he is employed to do, and not according to any notions he might have of what he can or cannot give to his paymaster.

The only times when he will refuse to obey instructions would be when doing so would require the breaking of God's law. For instance, if he was employed as a salesman and was asked to misrepresent a product in order to secure sales, he would have to politely advise the employer that he could not do that, and if this meant his dismissal, then so be it.

How often the employer's lament is heard: "If only this person would carefully listen to the instructions given him, and would carry them out exactly as directed, instead of this perpetual conflict arising out of his determination to do things his way!"

It is when both management and labor recognize, understand, and respect the position, rights, and limitations of each other, that industrial harmony can be achieved. The same is true in marriage. To the husband and wife, the Lord has apportioned a position involving work responsibilities special to each. When both the man and the woman bring to their union the true spirit of service, instead of plunging into a contest for supremacy, they establish a home in which harmony, peace, and joy will reign, and which will have the basis for successful child training.

Therefore those individuals, who long before wedlock enter their daily employment with the true spirit of service, are making a very essential preparation for a happy and successful marriage. As they practice these righteous principles day after day, habits and attitudes are built into them which will serve them well when they later unite their lives. The wife must understand just what her husband's responsibilities and authority are, while, at the same time, possessing clear views of her divinely-appointed position and duties. Likewise, the husband must be informed in regard to his wife's rights and work, and must be aware of the loads he has to carry. This is not so that they can each jealously protect themselves or their position, but so that they can avoid usurping the authority which belongs to the other, and at the same time be enabled to work harmoniously together.

This calls for knowledge, discipline, and subjection, qualities displayed by the angels in their participation in heaven's organizational structure. Those wonderful beings truly know and keep their appointed places.

"Angels work harmoniously. Perfect order characterizes all their movements. The more closely we imitate the harmony and order of the angelic host, the more successful will be the efforts of these heavenly agents in our behalf. If we see no necessity for harmonious action, and are disorderly, undisciplined, and disorganized in our course of action, angels, who are thoroughly organized and move in perfect order, cannot work for us successfully. They turn away in grief, for they are not authorized to bless confusion, distraction, and disorganization. All who desire the cooperation of the heavenly messengers must work in unison with them. Those who have the unction from on high will in all their efforts encourage order, discipline, and union of action, and then the angels of God can cooperate with them. But never, never will these heavenly messengers place their endorsement upon irregularity, disorganization, and disorder. All these evils are the result of Satan's efforts to weaken our forces, to destroy our courage, and prevent successful action.

"Satan well knows that success can only attend order and harmonious action. He well knows that everything connected with Heaven is in perfect order, that subjection and perfect discipline mark the movements of the angelic host. It is his studied effort to lead professed Christians just as far from heaven's arrangement as he can; therefore he deceives even the professed people of God and makes them believe that order and discipline are enemies to spirituality, that the only safety for them is to let each pursue his own course, and to remain especially distinct from bodies of Christians who are united and are laboring to establish discipline and harmony of action. All the efforts made to establish order are considered dangerous, a restriction of rightful liberty, and hence are feared as popery. These devoted souls consider it a virtue to boast of their freedom to think and act independently. They will not take any man's say-so. They are amenable to no man. I was shown that it is Satan's special work to lead men to feel that it is God's order for them to strike out for themselves and choose their own course independent of their brethren." *Testimonies to Ministers*, 28, 29.

The angels who learned these lessons remained in heaven, while those who rejected these disciplines were forced to leave. So it is now. Those who learn them develop fitness for marriage and for heaven.

So, the candidate for marriage must develop a love for work, have a true sense of respect for another's position and work, know his own place and duties, and possess the physical strength and vitality necessary to cope with the role and impart a legacy of health to the children. Now, in



It is perfectly in order for a young woman to develop career qualifications and skills, but not at the expense of gaining those abilities which will be needed to manage a home, if she intends to marry. Even if she plans a career in business, teaching, or something else, marriage is always a possibility for which she may opt later. Therefore, this field of education should be neglected by no young woman.

addition to all that, as far as aptitude permits, both the man and the woman should develop skills in the operations that meet the day to day needs of home building.

For instance, the prospective husband should acquaint himself as much as he possibly can with concreting, carpentry, gardening, painting, paper-hanging, and general maintenance. He would do well to learn



something too of the skills involved in preparing meals and general house cleaning, for there could be times when his wife might be indisposed and needs help.

For her part, the prospective wife should study home economics, cooking, house keeping, gardening, baby care, knitting, clothes mending, and such like. Proficiency must be gained in the speedy, economic, and efficient execution of these tasks. In addition, she should learn some skill whereby she could support herself if ever the need arose. "Woman should be trained to some business whereby she can gain a livelihood if necessary." *The Adventist Home*, 91.

There is a tendency to pay but scant attention to gaining these skills today, preference being given to the acquirement of academic achievements. While some vocational training is available, modern society tends to emphasize the need to reach after so-called higher learning at the expense of practical education, a situation very different from the pioneering days. Then, because of the primitive conditions, the work load was heavy for both the mother and the father. The children were then drawn into the work force and thus learned firsthand how to take care of all these chores. When children from these homes grew to marriageable ages, they certainly had acquired a high level of efficiency in home making. Work was no stranger to them.

Those days have largely passed and the conditions which then dominated have little place in our present, highly developed society. Far from regretting their loss, the young aspire to theoretical studies which contain little practical instruction for facing life's responsibilities.

Fortunately, not all are blind to the sad implications of this situation as this story of an Oxford University professor's protest shows:

Some years ago, two hundred students of Oxford University, having finished their training and obtained their degrees, decided to hold a farewell banquet in one of the leading hotels of London. Arrangements were planned on a lavish scale, and in addition to about 800 students, 200 university professors were present by invitation.

The committee in charge of the function decided that there should be no speech-making because they had suffered at College from what they termed a "surfeit of dignified drivel". At the last moment, however, one of the younger members suggested that a certain professor should be asked to say a few words, on the grounds that he had never delivered a speech in his life, and his effort might therefore be reasonably anticipated to contribute to the gaiety of the evening. The professor indicated that he would be glad to say a few words on a subject which he would entitle "The Master Builder".

The occasion arrived, and the president called upon the one and only speaker of the evening. The professor arose to his feet. "Gentlemen," he began. "I have never made a speech in my life, and I do not propose to

begin now. I have something to say, however, and in saying it I shall follow Luther's threefold rule; Stand up straightly, speak out boldly, and sit down quickly!

"We are in one of the famous banqueting halls of the world. Compared with this, Belshazzar's Hall was a lodging on the third-floor back. No such art existed in those days as we see around this room; no such viands graced this board. What was there was elegant for that day, but we live in an age of art, art-craftsmanship and luxury. From the four corners of the earth came the things on this table; from the lowest forms of day labour to the highest forms of art, we see around us samples of at least a hundred forms of human work.

"Take this table-cloth to begin with. It is of exquisite workmanship. It involves weaving (to go no further back), designing, bleaching, and smoothing. It is a damask linen, beautiful and most pleasing to the eye. I want to ask you a question. Is there anyone present who knows from personal experience anything of the labour involved? Have any of you, at any time, ever contributed anything to the manufacture of table linen. I am serious gentlemen; if you have, I should like you to say so." There was no response. "I take it then," he continued, "that the making of such a thing is beyond your ken.

"Let me draw your attention to the samples of pottery in the room. Surely the men and women who make such beautiful objects are artists. What joy it must give a man to hold such a thing as this in his hands—complete—and say, 'I made it.' This also involves much labour—the digging of clay, the carting, fashioning, painting, baking, burning, and finishing. Is there anyone present who knows anything of this form of labour? No one!

"Here are some samples of beautiful and costly cut glass. This also involves much labour and great art. It is a unique industry in itself. I shall not detail the process; we see the result but I should be surprised to find any man among you who had ever approached this industry from any angle."

In this way the professor dealt with the silver, touching upon the subject of mining, and the life of a miner. Nothing escaped his notice. He drew attention to the carpets and rugs, the curtains and drapery, the mural decorations, executed by the greatest living mural painter. He spoke on the rich fresco which adorned the room, displaying an intimate knowledge of the arts and crafts which astounded and fascinated his audience. At length he turned again to the table.

"There are cut flowers here," he said. "Many of you have spent some years in the study of botany, but I doubt if any of you would be prepared to give a complete classification of all we see and enjoy on this table."

There was a disposition among some of the younger members of the audience to laugh but he wiped the smile from every face by saying,

"Perhaps you young men are to be congratulated on the fact that a sense of humour covers a multitude of sins, but I cannot enjoy that which gives me pain. I am a representative university man, seriously asking myself—and you—whether the system which we call 'education' really educates! The silence became marked; some of these young men were thinking.

"Perhaps," he continued, "I should have put you more at your ease if I had told you at the outset that I myself have never experienced the joy of fashioning with my own hands anything that was either useful or beautiful. Here we are then—a body of men upon whom a great university has set its seal. We produce nothing to eat. We could not even lend a hand in the making of anything we see around us—and truth compels me to state that some of the young men I have trained have obviously undertaken a university course with the main objective of escaping participation in just such work as gives, or ought to give, joy to the worker. It has been well said that, if ten Masters of Art were wrecked in mid-ocean, they could not build a pontoon to save their lives! They would be equally helpless in any critical emergency where a practical knowledge of the things around us were imperatively necessary.

"You are certainly not to blame, gentlemen; you are the victims of whatever system we have. I cannot say that I am blameless. I do not believe that a smattering of languages, of history and of mathematics is education. I believe that the system of cramming these things to pass an examination is pernicious; and so—having been asked for the first time in my life to make a speech—I take this opportunity of entering my protest. The function of education is to prepare and equip us for the duties and responsibilities of life—not to turn out industrial and commercial bosses who are little more than timekeepers and cash registers!

"But I do not feel justified in detaining you with these observations alone, and I therefore want to say this in addition. Many of you are destined to become masters of men—you will organise and mobilise their labour. You will oversee it. When you see men around you creating beautiful things with their hands, I want you to remember it was my opinion that actual labour in the arts and crafts and industries is an infinitely nobler contribution to the happiness of humanity than living on the sweat of other men's brows.

"Why should it be considered an unthinkable thing for a blacksmith or a carpenter to need an education? Why should college men consider it degrading to handle tools and make useful and beautiful things? Why should a university perpetuate such a revolt against nature, in which the man who does no useful work at all is considered a gentleman, while he who creates wealth and beautiful things is considered low caste? I want to point out to you that throughout the ages, the highest forms of culture and refinement known to mankind have always been intimately

associated with the use of tools and labour. In order to do so, I must present to you a picture—imaginative, but strictly in accord with the facts of history and of experience."

At this point, the professor pushed back his chair from the table. His face betrayed deep emotion; his voice became wonderfully soft and irresistibly appealing. He raised his hand and made a motion as if he were drawing aside a curtain.

"Gentlemen," he said, "may I introduce to you a young man who was a Master Builder—a Galilean called Jesus of Nazareth?" The silence became profound. These young men had been interested; they were now spellbound. As if he were addressing a real person of flesh and blood he turned aside and said in a tone of reverence:

"Master, may I ask you, as I asked these young men, whether there is anything in this room that You could have made with Your hands, as other men make them?"

He paused for a moment. Then, with slow deliberate step, he walked forward, took the ends of the tablecloth in both hands displaying carving of the great oak table. In that attitude, he looked into the faces of his audience and said:

"Yes." the Master says, "Yes, I could have made that table. I was a carpenter!" And the professor resumed his seat amidst a profound silence that was more eloquent than any applause.

This teacher certainly had a fine sense of values by which to operate. He recognized that a purely theoretical education does not provide one with the ability to cope with any aspect of life, which would include marriage. Homemaking is a very practical work which calls for a broad and comprehensive education.



# Spiritual Qualifications

## Chapter 14

Along with the development of the practical aspects and physical capacities for marriage and parenthood as discussed in the previous chapter, careful attention and dedicated effort must be directed to cultivating the spiritual qualifications required to make a true success of the venture. To these, the beautiful experience of the new birth is both basic and essential, but no one is to be satisfied that this is enough. A very extensive work of reformation must succeed the transformation achieved by a true revival before the individual can qualify as a marriage partner and parent.<sup>1</sup> All prospective candidates for the role of mother or father must ask searching questions about themselves and each other, while exhibiting a determination to work hard to rectify their own deficiencies before the time comes to unite their lives.

Let it be stressed so emphatically that it will never be forgotten that, at no time either before or after marriage, is either contractor to undertake the remodeling of the other partner according to his or her ideas of what the other person should be. Let them not make the mistake of enforcing God's standards upon each other. To attempt such a mission as all but the spiritually enlightened do, is to make a terrible mistake. It is the sure and certain way to generate resentments and the heart-breaking divisions which all too frequently end in divorce.

To avoid this fate, those who contemplate wedlock need to arrive at a set decision that, of the two involved in matrimony, the only one upon whom each will work is himself or herself, and never on the other person. If both the man and the woman will impose this limitation on all

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<sup>1</sup>A thorough study of this vital subject is contained in *Revival and Reformation*, by F. T. Wright.

their associations, and engage in the work of self-improvement according to the divine order and with the utmost diligence, they will escape one of the most deadly perils threatening marriages. To achieve this will require both an intellectual and spiritual conversion. In the reasoning mind, the individual must be fully persuaded that he or she must never infringe upon the rights of the other under any circumstances, while, in the heart, no disposition to do so must be found. Until these conditions are met, the believer must work hard to achieve them, and once gained, great care must be taken to safeguard and cherish these essential virtues.

Arrival at this level of experience does not come easily, for it is naturally built into human nature to attempt the reformation of others, while ignoring the need to correct one's own errors. This unfortunate disposition is most markedly manifest among those who take to extremes what they suppose to be God's work. A striking example of this is provided in the frenzied activities of Thomas Münzer in Luther's time. Of him it is written that: "Thomas Münzer, the most active of the fanatics, was a man of considerable ability, which, rightly directed, would have enabled him to do good; but he had not learned the first principles of true religion. 'He was possessed with a desire of reforming the world, and forgot, as all enthusiasts do, that the reformation should begin with himself.' " *The Great Controversy*, 191.

This does not mean that a person is obliged to form a marriage relationship with one whose habits and practices are objectionable to him or her. On the contrary, study must be given from the very moment the relationship begins to form to see if it has sufficient compatibility to be workable. "It is often the case that persons before marriage have little opportunity to become acquainted with each other's habits and disposition, and, so far as everyday life is concerned, they are virtually strangers when they unite their interests at the altar. Many find, too late, that they are not adapted to each other, and lifelong wretchedness is the result of their union." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 189.

"The world is full of misery and sin today in consequence of ill-assorted marriages. In many cases it takes only a few months for husband and wife to realize that their dispositions can never blend; and the result is that discord prevails in the home, where only the love and harmony of heaven should exist." *Adventist Home*, 83.

The courtship period should therefore be long enough for the persons concerned to become realistically aware of those habits, mannerisms, deficiencies, and traits of character which they find objectionable or companionable in the one with whom they will possibly soon share their lives. This careful examination is not to be undertaken in a spirit of criticism or of judgmentalism, but rather in an objective effort to decide whether or not there is sufficient compatibility to ensure the marriage will be successful.

The question to be decided during the time prior to a possible union of two people is not whether one can change the other once the marriage is contracted, but whether or not one can live happily with the other person as she or he now is. Do not reason, as so many do, that once your partner is more or less inescapably bound to you, you can remodel him or her to your liking. How sad it is that parents of young people approaching marriage actually advise their offspring to adopt this course of action. I am acquainted with a mother who gave just such counsel to her daughter who was betrothed to a young man of whom she remarked to her mother, "I love him very much, and I really want to marry him, but there are some things about him that I do not like."

Then she enumerated a number of attitudes and practices of his that she found to be disagreeable, in reply to which her well-meaning mother actually said: "Do not worry about those things now, my dear. When you are married to him, you can change all that."

This satisfied the young lady, who married, and then set right to work to remodel her husband to her standards of perfection, while he, of course, was practicing the same procedures on her. While we cannot attribute all the blame for what is now a broken marriage to these factors, we can be sure that they made a significant contribution to the unhappy result. So it will always be. Let those who are contemplating marriage beware of this deadly trap so that they will, in turn, be saved from many terrible heartaches to enjoy a happy and fruitful relationship together.

Along with the study of these vital principles, the contracting parties must understand the fact that, when two people set out to share their lives together, they are establishing a home government or organization, which, to be truly successful, must be patterned after the order established by God in heaven. There are alternatives to this, but not one of them is truly satisfactory, leading instead to separation and ruin. It was when Lucifer rejected the divine order and sought to introduce one of his own devising that trouble began for the first time in God's kingdom, and, by the same means was extended to this earth where Adam and Eve favored the structure proposed by Satan in preference to God's way.

That was the beginning of all sorrows and, it is safe to say that every breakdown of marriages, churches, and nations since that time, is due to the discarding of the divine form of government in favor of the human. Probably the most remarkable of these departures from right, is found in the falling away of the apostolic church.

No movement in human history before or since, has been blessed with so much light and power as were received by that church. To them the mighty truths of the mystery of God whereby the principles of the divine order and organization were set forth, were proclaimed by no less a heaven-appointed messenger than Paul to whom special revelations of this subject had been given. But, in Jerusalem, powerful leaders of the

movement, bringing old habits of thought from Jewish ritualism, sought to enforce human order and organization on the Spirit-filled church, while resisting the efforts put forth by God to establish the divine system.

The mighty champion for the Lord's way was the apostle Paul, while the leaders in Jerusalem, not including the eleven other apostles, championed the resistance to this message. The mighty battle for the supremacy continued for a number of years until Paul compromised and, by so doing, surrendered the church into the devil's hands. From that time on, the rise of the papacy was assured.<sup>2</sup> Once the order and organization designed in heaven had been replaced by another form, the decline of that wonderful church was made absolutely and inescapably certain.

When this is truly understood, it will be seen that the result in this case was not a singular and peculiar exception, but took place as the outworking of unchangeable laws and principles. Let every church, business, nation, and marriage know that the same fate awaits them unless they establish and maintain the divine order and organization.

These facts do not deny that many of these institutions *appear* to work successfully. Churches extend their spheres of influence, businesses flourish, nations reign supreme over large territories, and married couples live together till death at last parts them. But this does not mean that success is gained according to what the Lord would recognize. While it is true that nations have their day of power, which one of them has been able to survive permanently; what church organization today is really preaching the gospel and truly saving souls; from how many homes come children who are in fact saved from sin and fit to fulfill their divinely-appointed missions? True success is not measured in terms of passing time, but in reference to eternity.

It follows then that every person contemplating marriage, should very diligently study the subject of divine order and organization, otherwise known as the mystery of God. Avoid Lucifer's departure from the right way by spending much time in earnest contemplation of the unfortunate steps taken by the covering cherub and the consequences that he and others have suffered. Let this be no light and casual search, but put your mind to the stretch in the effort to really comprehend the issues and procedures involved.

Recommended sources of information are: Chapter One, "Why Was Sin Permitted", in *Patriarchs and Prophets*; Chapter Twenty-nine, "The Origin of Evil", in *The Great Controversy*; *The Spirit of the Papacy*, and *Lessons From the Reformation*, by A. T. Jones; and *God's Sabbath Rest*, by F. T. Wright.

These sources of information need to be read over and over many

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<sup>2</sup>Study *Entering into God's Sabbath Rest*, by F. T. Wright, pages 130-184.



times thoughtfully, prayerfully, and deeply until the truths and instructions they contain are indelibly embedded in the mind and heart, and become the guiding principle of the life. Do not be content, as so many seem to be, with a superficial gloss over them. Dig deeply, study earnestly, research widely, and work with the utmost diligence. Then the believer will begin to acquire some fitness to build a home which will truly be a divine government.

As already stated, the Spirit-inspired apostle Paul was especially blessed with light on these themes, and constantly instructed the church in regard to them. Recognizing their application to marriage and the home, he wrote: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

"For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Saviour of the body.

"Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it,

"that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

"that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.

"So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.

"For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.

"For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

"This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

"Nevertheless let each of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband." *Ephesians* 5:22-33.

Many men have used these verses to demand subservience from their wives, claiming that God has given them the right to command their spouses to bow to their authority. They have thus assumed the character and role of oppressive dictators and brought great unhappiness to their families before whom they have grievously misrepresented God's lovely character.

It is true that the Scriptures recognize that the husband is the head of the wife and that she is to submit to him, but this truth has been misunderstood and perverted. Unconverted men who consequently have within them the selfish spirit of an oppressor, have used this Scripture to



**The Bible declaration that the husband is the head of the wife has been misused to justify the cruellest oppression on the part of men over their women. The fact is that only those husbands within whom Christ's love has been established and who understand the way in which Christ is their Head, can, in turn, be head over their wives as Christ is Head over them.**

justify their harsh rulership over their wives and children. In so doing, they have misused the Scriptures to their eternal detriment and the enslavement of their families. Women have experienced great suffering in consequence, countless homes have been broken up, and the lives of the children have been blighted and prevented from becoming all they might have been. Human nature will not endure this slavery and abuse forever but will arise to fight for its rights. This struggle is apparent today in the formation of the women's liberation movement, the object of which is to free women from male domination, by reversing their positions. In other words, the woman becomes the head, and the man finds himself being required to submit to her.

But this solution, while it does provide some relief for the oppressed females, is not of the divine order, and will not result in the happiness and blessing that God designed marriage should bring. It is easily seen to be out of harmony with the divine because, like all human solutions, it exalts to headship those to whom God had never assigned such a position.

What is overlooked is the frequent use of the small but highly significant word, "as", which appears no less than seven times in the Scriptures listed above. The husband is to be the head of the wife but only as Christ is the Head of the church. Wives are to submit themselves to their husbands as they and their husbands submit themselves to Christ.

This means that Christ's headship of the church, and of each individual in that institution, is the model after which all other headships are to be fashioned. In whatever particular, and to whatever degree a husband in his headship in the family does not reflect the ministry of Christ as the Head of the church, he falls short of the only true standard, and is inviting ruin into his household.

Therefore, any man who contemplates entering into marriage and parenthood, needs a very thorough and comprehensive understanding of Christ's role as the Head over every individual. As well, the spirit of Jesus must be within, so that he finds no disposition to rule over anyone else, but rather is inclined to serve with true love and total selflessness.

Before taking a wife to himself, he needs to ask some searching questions such as: Do I really understand in what ways Christ is the Head of the church and of me? Am I actually experiencing in myself this wonderful relationship in which I am subject to Jesus as my true Head? Am I learning from this just how my wife will feel when she is subject to me as I am to the divine husband? Do I realize that this relationship can be truly established only when I am motivated by the same spirit of true love which infused Christ's entire being? Do I know that it is not enough to know about these things in the intellectual mind even though this is vitally important, but that these principles must be so infused into my entire being that they become the spring of all my actions? Do I comprehend that I cannot truly fill the role of head in my home except I have the principles of His character implanted within me?

Furthermore, do I have the wisdom and stability to make the responsible decisions required of the head of the home? Do I understand and consistently practice the Sabbath rest principles which teach that God is the infinite Source of all things, Christ is the Connector and Channel, and I am the helpless, dependent receiver?

These are serious questions which every young man should ask himself and, not until he can, in all honesty, answer them satisfactorily, should he consider undertaking the responsibilities of establishing a home government. Then, to whatever degree he finds deficiencies in these areas, he should go to work with the utmost diligence to have those shortcomings remedied. It will require considerable effort and the closest application to the task, but the expenditure, discipline, and sacrifice will be more than worth it.

It is during the period of courtship, while the young man is asking these questions about himself, that the young woman should be studying

her prospective mate to determine whether he does in fact understand the great theme of Christ being the Head of every individual in the church. She knows that the Lord has instructed her to be subject to her husband, but this will only be possible if he is filled with the spirit of Jesus, is well versed in his comprehension of the relationship which Christ maintains between Himself and every true believer, and is competent to fill the position of a leader and a husband. To provide them both with a mutual appreciation and working knowledge of these principles, they would do well to spend together a fair proportion of their courting hours in deep, prayerful study of these themes. They would then know each other's mind on the matter, and, if both were truly sincere, they would be drawn into a close unity of spirit and thought on the subject. What a splendid start this would be to a happy, united marriage!

Only those young people who believe the truth as it is in Jesus can develop a marriage in which the parties involved can live out their God-ordained roles wherein the husband is the head and the wife is the companion, for, in every marriage contracted between unbelievers, both parties will seek to dominate the other. For each of them, entry into wedlock is the commencement of a struggle for supremacy. It is not too much to say this, for oppression is a characteristic of every false religion. This is one reason why the Scriptures are so adamant that a person should never be united to an unbeliever.

"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

"And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

"And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.'

"Therefore 'Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.'

" 'I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.' " *2 Corinthians* 6:14-18.

Foolish indeed is the young woman who gives her life to an unbeliever, for she will certainly learn that evil shadows will cover her for the rest of her days. Sister White wrote a letter to a young woman contemplating marriage with an unbeliever in which communication she stated, "My sister, unless you would have a home where the shadows are never lifted, do not unite yourself with one who is an enemy of God." *Testimonies* 5:363.

The entire letter from which this statement is quoted should be read with a very receptive mind by every believer, and especially if that person



**Incredibly foolish is the Christian woman who gives her life in marriage to an unbeliever. She will find that she will have to abandon her faith in Jesus and forfeit her hope of eternal life, or suffer a home from which the shadows are never lifted.**

is contemplating marriage. Then do some serious practical thinking to verify the truth of these words. See the difficulties arising when the unbelieving father is determined to take the children to the sports arena on Sabbath afternoon. Consider too the anxiety that will tear you apart when, deprived of your company at worldly amusements, your husband will be prone to respond to opportunities to form a relationship with

another person. And these are but two examples of countless situations which will turn what should have been joy and fulfillment into misery and disappointment. Think up as many more examples as you can, and look at them realistically, not wishfully, and you will be persuaded never to enter into a mixed marriage. If by any chance this is still not enough, talk with believers who are united to unbelievers, to find out the real facts of the case. There are a number who have become believers since they married, so that their situation is not their fault. Occasionally, you will find what seems an exception to the rule, a couple living what appears to be a united life despite the fact that one of them is an unbeliever. This pleases the devil very well, for he knows that all that some people need is a single seeming exception to justify their doing the same thing.

But the counsel will stand true forever: "My sister, unless you would have a home where the shadows are never lifted, do not unite yourself with one who is an enemy of God."

Do not make the mistake of supposing that only those who are actively and openly warring against God are His enemies! The fact is that every single unbeliever in the world is an enemy of God. The only souls who are friends of God are those within whom, by the process of the new birth, the actual life of God has been implanted. Thus, and in no other way, you become actual members of God's family, and are removed from the category of enemies to friends. No Christian can marry outside of this family and expect to have a happy and successful marriage. Those who do, against the wise and loving counsel given, and in the face of the obvious implications and complications of the situation, are simply asking for sorrows and regrets.

There are those who rationalize that love takes care of all problems, and that love as strong, as deep, as true as they believe theirs to be will certainly work all things out to their mutual satisfaction. Oh! How many have fallen for this delusion only to awaken to the terrible mistake they have made when it is too late to escape. The fact is that the love of the unbeliever is a selfish love which gives only that it might receive in return. Just so long as the love given is requited as it is felt that it should be, all is well, but if the responses are not according to what the unbeliever wants, then the trouble begins. How many in their broken lives can testify to the truth of these words.

A further mistake made by some is to suppose that, because two people are in the truth, and are loyal members of God's true movement, their marriage can be nothing other than a success. While the probability is greater, it is by no means a certainty. In fact, I know of a specific example in which both prospective partners were in the truth and despite the urgent warnings given them to test further, declared that their being united in the message was enough. It was not! The marriage proved to be a disaster.

There were two possible reasons why it did. The first is incompatibility. Care should have been taken by both of them to ensure that they shared common interests and that their natures and dispositions complemented each other. For instance, serious difficulties will arise if one of the partners is sociable, outgoing, has a wide circle of legitimate friends, and gains considerable fulfillment by visiting among them and fellow-shiping with them, while the other partner in the marriage tends to be less sociable and more selective in forming friendships, and finds greater pleasure in remaining at home. Such incompatibility will put a heavy strain on the relationship and usually leads to serious difficulty, estrangement, and eventual separation.

A second aspect which must be considered by those who are in the Lord's movement together, is whether the truth has in fact become a living part of their experience, or is it still largely a profession? A person can believe that he is absolutely in the truth whereas in fact, it has never really become his life's experience. This difficulty will cause the greatest problems in the area of home government where God desires the establishment of the divine order or system of government in the individual, the marriage, the family, and the church on earth, as it is in the family in heaven. No doubt the lesson which believers are slowest at learning is submission to the divine order. Rebellion has been too deeply rooted in the selfish human heart for too long for it to be easily replaced with the humble, submissive spirit of Jesus.

Therefore, even though both parties are professed members of God's true church, they need to carefully examine themselves and each other to ensure that they do understand how Christ is the Head of the church, and how they are to submit to Him and to each other.

For instance, in the specific example referred to above, if the prospective bride had asked those vital questions as to whether or not the man courting her understood just how Christ is the Head of the church, and whether he lived in true submission to Jesus, and if he had the capacity to love her as the Lord loved him, she would have received negative answers. Then, if she had made her decisions in the light of this knowledge, she would have saved herself a multitude of sorrows. She would never have agreed to submit to a man who could not fill the role of a husband as Christ fills His.

Of course, the prospective bridegroom is not the only one to be tested before entering into marriage. The woman also needs to meet certain specified qualifications. The divine counsel to her is: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord." *Ephesians* 5:22.

The word, "submit", has frightening connotations to the average mind. To most people it means the surrender of their individuality, the giving up of all personal rights, subservience to another mind, and initiation into bondage, frustration, confinement, and suffering. And, *it is*

*all of that if the husband is not a son of the living God*, for, as already stated, every person who does not have the religion of Christ, is an oppressor. Bear in mind that to have the religion of Christ means much more than merely believing the truth. It means that the spirit of Jesus, the mind of Christ, and the character of God have actually been established within the individual so that these forces become the spring of all his actions. That is the only kind of man who is not an oppressor, and the only kind to whom a wife can safely submit.

When the word "submit", is understood in Bible terms, that is, as God intended that it should be known, there is nothing fearful or threatening about it. The Scriptures do not merely say, "Wives, submit to your own husbands", but add, "as to the Lord".

"Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." *Ephesians* 5:22, 24.

Those qualifying words make a great difference to the instruction given. Wives are to submit to their husbands as believers everywhere are to relate to their Head, Jesus Christ. One would expect that every believer would find this an easy principle to accept and that it would be a pleasure for them to submit to Christ, but, surprising as it may seem, when the principles of the Sabbath rest message were presented a few years ago, some strongly reacted against it.<sup>3</sup> They declared that handing over to God the role of decision making and problem-solving would mean the failure to use the very talents the Lord had provided, and this could only result in the atrophy of those powers.

Certainly, it could appear that these would be the unfortunate results, but the real facts are quite different. That which men fear will destroy them, actually glorifies them. Jesus proved this by remaining subject to His heavenly Father in all things as it is written: "He glorified His life by making everything in it subordinate to the will of His Father." *The Ministry of Healing*, 19.

No one who has studied the life and ministry of Christ could ever say that submission to His Father ever deprived Him of freedom and fulfillment. There was a very beautiful relationship between Himself and His heavenly Parent. Such closeness of mind and spirit unified them that they acted in perfect accord, all their moves being marvelously coordinated. Jesus recognized and trusted the Almighty to be the Source of all wisdom and the Author of every plan and solution needed to advance the work. Totally submissive to the will and direction of the Father, Jesus left all the plan-making and problem-solving to Him, while He prosecuted the work given Him to do.

Incredibly beneficial were the results. There was no mind on earth to match His, no power with which to compare that which He exercised, no

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<sup>3</sup>Study *Entering into God's Sabbath Rest*, by F. T. Wright.



character with anything like the same beauty, and no ministry which even remotely approached the effectiveness achieved by His. That being what submission to the Father produces, every one should most earnestly seek to understand the expression, "Submit, as to the Lord".

The submission to which reference is made in the Scriptures, is a very beautiful state to which a woman can aspire. It is the manifestation of true humility, pure love, utter selflessness, and true dedication. It is admirable and lovely, utterly desirable, and truly precious. It is something which should never be given to any man who has not achieved the same submission in his relation to the divine Head, Jesus Christ. To do so would be like offering something delicate and beautiful to swine. Therefore, a woman should not only cultivate these graces, but should make very certain that the man she intends to marry understands and appreciates these qualities, will not take advantage of them, and has the same lovely spirit within himself.

She is to understand that her husband is to love her and she is to love him, ". . . just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it." *Ephesians* 5:25.

Accordingly, she has to ask herself whether the man she may marry has received the love of God into his soul. Does he know by experience how Christ loves him, and is he able to give the same love? These are questions she must also ask of herself, and, only if she can answer them satisfactorily, should she consider herself safe to marry. This is a quality of love unknown to the natural heart and beyond the reach of any human to acquire or develop of himself. It comes only from above and is found in those alone who, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, have been imbued with the attributes of Christ, as is verified in the following paragraph. Because every father and mother is a gospel minister to their children, these words apply as much to them as to those who are generally recognized as ministers:

"The Holy Spirit is the breath of spiritual life in the soul. The impartation of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ. It imbues the *receiver* with the attributes of Christ. Only those who are thus taught of God, those who possess the inward working of the Spirit, and in whose life the Christ-life is manifested, are to stand as representative men, to minister in behalf of the church." *The Desire of Ages*, 805.

As this statement is considered, let the mind escape from the average interpretation of it so that an extended view of its message may be obtained. To achieve this, let every Christian home be viewed as a Christian church, in which the mother and the father are the representatives of the Lord. Let it be understood that the child's first and most enduring impressions of what God is like are supplied by the parents. If they are to be true representatives of the Lord, they must meet the specifications laid down in this quotation. Otherwise, they will not

only be failures in the vital work of revealing God to their children and to each other, but they will give such an erroneous view of our loving heavenly Father as will make him unattractive and undesirable. It will turn them from Him, instead of attracting them to Him, a procedure which effectively separates them from life itself.

"Those who have never experienced the tender, winning love of Christ cannot lead others to the fountain of life. His love in the heart is a constraining power, which leads men to reveal Him in the conversation, in the tender, pitiful spirit, in the uplifting of the lives of those with whom



Only those parents who themselves have experienced the tender, winning love of Christ, can lead their children to the fountain of life. Those Christian parents who succeed in their efforts must know Christ; and in order to know Him, they must know His love. In heaven, their fitness as parents is measured by their ability to love as Christ loved and to work as He worked.

they associate. Christian workers who succeed in their efforts must know Christ; and in order to know Him, they must know His love. In heaven their fitness as workers is measured by their ability to love as Christ loved and to work as He worked." *The Acts of the Apostles*, 550, 551.

Let the paragraph now be considered as a specific application to parents who are certainly Christian workers if they are doing their work according to God's evaluation of parent to child ministry: Those *parents* who have never experienced the tender, winning love of Christ cannot lead *their children* to the fountain of life. His love in the heart is a constraining power, which leads *parents* to reveal Him in the conversation, in the tender, pitiful spirit, in the uplifting of the lives of *their children* with whom they associate. Christian *parents* who succeed in their efforts must know Christ; and in order to know Him, they must know His love. In heaven *parents'* fitness as workers is measured by their ability to love as Christ loved and to work as He worked.

No one can successfully undertake any kind of missionary work without this love within themselves. Therefore, inasmuch as parents are engaged in soul-saving endeavors of the highest order, they cannot achieve their commission to bring their little ones to Jesus unless they have His love in their hearts. This is a truth with which every prospective parent must come to grips as each critically examines himself or herself to determine whether he or she possesses the necessary qualifications for marriage. Such self-examination and evaluation is possible only as the Holy Spirit ministers to the soul. He will also make the suppliant aware through the Word of God that it is only as the individual is filled with the Holy Spirit that this love can be embedded in the heart.

This lesson was experienced by the believers at Pentecost when the descent of the Holy Spirit proved to be the outpouring of divine love.

"The Spirit came upon the waiting, praying disciples with a fullness that reached every heart. The Infinite One revealed Himself in power to His church. It was as if for ages this influence had been held in restraint, and now heaven rejoiced in being able to pour out upon the church the riches of the Spirit's grace. And under the influence of the Spirit, words of penitence and confession mingled with songs of praise for sins forgiven. Words of thanksgiving and of prophecy were heard. All heaven bent low to behold and to adore the wisdom of matchless, incomprehensible love. Lost in wonder, the apostles exclaimed, 'Herein is love.' They grasped the imparted gift. And what followed? The sword of the Spirit, newly edged with power and bathed in the lightnings of heaven, cut its way through unbelief. Thousands were converted in a day." *The Acts of the Apostles*, 38.

It was not merely power that was bestowed upon the waiting, praying church at Pentecost. It was "... the riches of the Spirit's grace", with which they were endowed in flood tide proportions that day. It was not

just the Spirit's grace, but the riches of that gift with which they were deluged. All those treasures are summed up in the greatest of all heaven's gifts—love!

"Supreme love for God and unselfish love for one another—this is the best gift that our heavenly Father can bestow. This love is not an impulse, but a divine principle, a permanent power. The unconsecrated heart cannot originate or produce it. Only in the heart where Jesus reigns is it found. 'We love Him, because He first loved us.' In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the ruling principle of action. It modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, and ennobles the affections. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the life and sheds a refining influence on all around." *The Acts of the Apostles*, 551.

This powerful and indispensable attribute is essential to a successful marriage. If the prospective husband and wife will make certain that it is implanted within them, and will cherish and cultivate the gift, they will have acquired the greatest asset toward ensuring a beautiful, productive, and happy marriage.

But remember that it is divine, not human love, of which we are speaking here. Between the two are great differences which are only truly understood by those who experience them. Human love can be very powerful, but it is changeable and therefore, unreliable. Young men and women do not understand this, but believe instead that the strong physical and emotional feelings they experience in their early relationships with each other will abide forever, but, alas, how quickly the changes do in fact come. For human love to retain its original ardor, it must receive all that it expects in return for the love given, which means what was given plus a profit. Therefore, human love does not give! It invests! Then, unhappiness reigns if the level of profit is not deemed high enough, or, worse yet, if a loss is sustained.

Divine love is true love. It is unchangeable and therefore utterly reliable. Its intensity is unaffected by its reception. It does not invest with the object of reaping a profit, but bestows love because that is the only thing it knows to do. Only those within whom this love abides and who have an understanding of its workings can promise to love, honor, and cherish for better or for worse, in sickness or in health, in good or evil times, and for richer or for poorer.

He who is blessed with this love will find that even though his marriage partner may come to hate him, he will still know only a yearning love for the other, for, just as God loves even His worst enemies and renders them only good for evil, so the person in whom God's infinite love abides will be disposed to do the same.

When a young man and a young woman in the ardor of their love for each other solemnly pledge their trust each to the other, they really

believe that they will more than keep their promises. They are fully persuaded that their loyalty is forever. Not a doubt nor a fear clouds the future as they see it.

But, what they must realize is that, unless the one making the promises has been endowed with divine love, there is no possibility of those promises being truly kept. Like the man in *Romans 7*, the things that he wants to do, he finds himself quite incapable of doing. So, when a young woman listens to her lover breathing sweet assurances of lasting love and lifelong devotion, let her believe that he means every word of it, but let her understand that, unless divine love reigns in his heart, she cannot be assured that he will keep those promises. The same applies to the young man whose body, mind, and heart are excited by her avowals of love and fidelity. He must understand that, despite her confidence in her feelings, and the genuine sincerity of her declarations, she too will be unable to match her actions with her vows unless divine love reigns in her heart.

"It is only in Christ that a marriage alliance can be safely formed. Human love should draw its closest bonds from divine love. Only where Christ reigns can there be deep, true, unselfish affection." *The Ministry of Healing*, 358.

Extensive and searching indeed are the questions to be asked and the considerations to be explored by those contemplating the awesome responsibility of marriage. When these things are considered, it will be realized how lightly, irresponsibly, carelessly, and ignorantly the average person enters into this most important of earthly relationships. But, now that the light of the gospel shines so clearly, the time has come when there must be a great change in our approach to choosing a marriage partner. If this question is not considered with a much more intelligent and responsible attitude, then the children certainly will be seriously handicapped and the child salvation message will fail to achieve all that it is designed to accomplish.



# **The Divine Purpose in Marriage**

## **Chapter 15**

As never before, today's world is plagued with broken marriages blighting the lives of parents and children, and bringing confusion, suffering, broken health, and disillusionment to so many. The divorce rate is the highest it has ever been and is steadily rising. All too frequently marriage as an institution is a failure—a source, not of satisfaction, joy, fulfillment, and blessing, but of conflict, unrest, dissatisfaction, and bondage.

Yet we find that the rising generation is entering into the relationship with unabated eagerness and the undiminished confidence that, though all others may fail, their marriage will be the initiation into lifelong bliss. In fact, our Saviour's prophetic commentary on these last days is that men and women would be ". . . marrying and giving in marriage . . ." just as they were back in Noah's day. *Matthew 24:38.*

Despite their abounding belief that theirs will be a happy and successful alliance, the witness of reality declares emphatically that they have very little chance of realizing their dream. It is far more likely that they will end up with a broken marriage, disillusioned, and unhappy.

In the light of these facts, one would expect that marriage would be abandoned by the majority, that the stream of brides and grooms flocking to the altar would dry up, and the family system break down. But it does not! The question is: Why not?

In the first case, the Creator has built the very powerful mating instinct and need into every human being. Men and women are driven by this to come together for the purpose of reproduction. So strong is the impulse that it blots out the negative indications shouting at them from uncounted millions of unhappy marriages.

Others are obsessed with the urge to ensure that the family name lives on in perpetuity. Happiness in marriage, the compatibility of the marriage partner, and such things are of minor importance to this class of person.

Many have other reasons besides these, but we believe that the Christian motive for marriage stands high above all human considerations and earthly and fleshly desires. So it must, for the Creator did not provide this relationship simply for the gratification of physical needs, or for the satisfaction of the social instincts, important and right as these factors are. He had in mind a much higher, purer, and holier purpose. It is when human beings understand what God designed marriage should achieve, and work with Him toward the attainment of these ideals, that true happiness in marriage can be found, and real fulfillment realized. To grasp something of the meaning of this, let us journey far back in time to a period long before marriage between man and woman was first instituted anywhere in the universe. That institution took place in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve were first created. "Then marriage and the Sabbath had their origin, twin institutions for the glory of God in the benefit of humanity." *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 63.

The marriage relationship as we on this earth know it, in which the human being is divided into two complementary parts, the male and the female, with the capacity to reproduce themselves, is not shared by the angels in heaven. Christ made this very clear when He answered the cavilling Jews over the question of marrying to preserve the inheritance of a childless, dead brother. He said: "... You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.

"For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven." *Matthew* 22:29, 30.

This is confirmed in the Spirit of Prophecy.

"There are men to-day who express their belief that there will be marriages and births in the new earth, but those who believe the Scriptures cannot accept such doctrines. The doctrine that children will be born in the new earth is not a part of the 'sure word of prophecy.' The words of Christ are too plain to be misunderstood. They should forever settle the question of marriages and births in the new earth. Neither those who shall be raised from the dead, nor those who shall be translated without seeing death, will marry or be given in marriage. They will be as the angels of God, members of the royal family." *Medical Ministry*, 99, 100.



Everyone of us is a begotten being, Adam and Eve being the only members of the human family who were created and not begotten. Christ too was begotten, but whereas our begetting was our beginning, in Christ's case it was not so, for He was eternally pre-existent before He was begotten.



Every angel therefore is a created being, and not a begotten one. The only created human beings were Adam and Eve. The rest of us were begotten of them through their descendants, just as the next generation is born of us. This does not deny the fact that we are creatures as distinct from the Creator, for we inherit whatever Adam and Eve had or were. So, as surely as by being created, they were creatures, so, by inheritance from them, we are begotten as creatures.

Those who are given existence by being created, do not journey through the various stages of growth from embryo to adulthood, but come to life fully formed. Adam and Eve never experienced babyhood, childhood, and youth, but only adulthood. The same is true of the angels.

So then, in the eternity of existence before man was created and marriage between two different individuals introduced, this relationship was unknown to all the created intelligences throughout the universe. Why, after an eternity of pre-existence, did God endow the human family with capabilities unknown to the privileged heavenly host? There had to be a very good reason for this and there was. A need had arisen which called for a revelation of the divine character, order, and system of government such as had never even been thought of before. It was a necessity which never should have arisen, for the divine order was perfect, beautiful, and conducive only to the absolute happiness of every created being. Throughout the indeterminable reaches of time between God's first creative act, and the emergence of the initial challenge to the system, no question had been raised and no doubt advanced against the wisdom of the Almighty.

The Creator God is the one in whom absolute power, infinite love, and unlimited wisdom are to be found. These perfectly balanced attributes combined to produce a wonderful system of government in which every possible problem was solved. There was no flaw, deficiency, discord, misery, decay, or death. It was a system infused with life and was designed to endure eternally.

In the establishment of this wonderful and perfect system, one of the problems requiring a solution was how to establish unrestricted communication between an infinite God, absolute in power on the one hand, and, on the other, created intelligences who, by comparison, are very limited in their capacities. Obviously, the outflow of power from the Omnipotent One has to be far beyond any human capacity of computation in order to sustain a created universe containing at least a billion galaxies each containing up to a billion solar systems and more. Remember that there is nothing in the entire universe that is self-sustaining. Every created thing is dependent on the energy which continually flows from the Creator into it to ensure that it can operate as designed and planned.

Obviously, between a God with the capacity to bear such infinite responsibilities, and the brightest and best of the created ones, there is a vast gulf fixed. No angel or man can approach directly into God's presence and survive.

Therefore, there had to be a Connector to link the Infinite with the finite; the Creator with the creature. Such a Being had to have the actual life, nature, and power of God on the one side, and the life, nature, and power of an intelligent creature on the other side. He would have to be both Creator and creature in the one individual. Such a Person could not be created, for a Creator cannot be created. He is One who has no beginning, for He must be there eternally before all else so that by Him all things could be called into existence.

There was only one way in which the problem could be solved in love and it was by marriage—the combining of the Creator and the creature in the one Person, Jesus Christ. Let it be stressed that Christ's bonding with the creature was not the marriage of an individual with an individual, but of one Person who was and is the God, Jesus Christ, with the entire creature world. Through this unique and very special union, every intelligence in the universe was gathered into one family relationship with Him. The created form with which Jesus clothed His deity in the first instance was that of an angel, just as, much later, He was to clothe His divinity with sinful, fallen, mortal humanity when He was conceived of Mary and born in Bethlehem.

In the original marriage, the nature of which we will study in more detail in a moment, Christ became an actual member of the creature world by being begotten into it. This is a simple matter to prove. Long before man was created, Jesus was declared by the Father to be His only-begotten Son. Never had this fact been more positively spelled out than when, in consequence of Lucifer's challenge to the divine order, Jehovah assembled the hosts of heaven to have the position of Christ clarified. In that convocation, stress was laid on the fact that Jesus Christ was indeed the only-begotten Son of the Eternal One, as this statement describing that meeting shows:

"The King of the universe summoned the heavenly hosts before Him, that in their presence He might set forth the true position of His Son and show the relation He sustained to all created beings. The Son of God shared the Father's throne, and the glory of the eternal, self-existent One encircled both. About the throne gathered the holy angels, a vast, unnumbered throng—'ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands' (*Revelation* 5:11), the most exalted angels, as ministers and subjects, rejoicing in the light that fell upon them from the presence of the Deity. Before the assembled inhabitants of heaven the King declared that none but Christ, the Only Begotten of God, could fully enter into His purposes, and to Him it was committed to execute the

mighty counsels of His will. The Son of God had wrought the Father's will in the creation of all the hosts of heaven; and to Him, as well as to God, their homage and allegiance were due. Christ was still to exercise divine power, in the creation of the earth and its inhabitants. But in all this He would not seek power or exaltation for Himself contrary to God's plan, but would exalt the Father's glory and execute His purposes of beneficence and love." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 36.

It is clear that the Father did not present Jesus as One who was to become the begotten Son, but as One who was that already, and had been such from eternity in the past. Therefore, God gave Jesus to the human family as a Son already begotten, not as One to be begotten. Christ did not become the Begotten Son of the Most High when He was born in Bethlehem, for He had achieved that status long, long before. Nor does this deny that he entered the human family by being begotten into it, for this was how He did become one of us. Christ was twice begotten. In the first of the two, he tabernacled His divinity in the form of an angel; in the second, in the form of sinful, fallen, mortal humanity. There is a considerable amount of information in the Scriptures revealing how this incarnation was accomplished in the second case, but our heavenly Father has not seen fit to reveal to us just how Jesus was begotten into the angel form. Therefore, we must be exceedingly careful not to venture into the dangerous realm of speculation in such matters. Let us be satisfied with the precious truth that Christ was indeed the begotten of God long before Bethlehem in order to achieve the marriage between the Creator and the world of the created.

It is important to remember that, unlike the human race for whom begetting is beginning; when He was begotten, Christ did not begin. Therefore, the glorious truth that Christ became a very real part of the creature world, does not deny the fact that He is eternally pre-existent. He has no beginning and no ending. Together with His Father and the Holy Spirit, before anything else was, He was there. But there came the time, so far back in the eternity of the past that it is beyond our knowledge and understanding, when the heavenly Trio began their creative work. God's eternal purpose for Christ was that He should be the effective Connector between God the Father and the creature world by being married into the realm of created intelligences.

This was no mere exercise but a wonderful fact. While retaining His omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience, He, at the same time, literally and actually became an angel. For this reason He is called the Archangel in *1 Thessalonians* 4:16 and *Jude* 9, and is called "the Angel" when He walked and talked with Abraham, wrestled with Jacob, led the Israelites in the cloudy pillar, revealed to Joshua the strategy for the

overthrow of Jericho, announced the birth of Samson, and commissioned Gideon to deliver Israel.<sup>1</sup>

Now up till this point, there will be those who will have difficulty in understanding how Christ married into the creature world, simply because they will be thinking in terms of a Person to person union. But Christ never married a particular individual among the created intelligences either in heaven or down upon this earth. Instead, by clothing His divinity with the nature and form of an angel, He married into the realm of created intelligences, and thereby not one, but every created being is embraced by that union, in that sense is married to Christ, and thus is given access to the Father, so that and thereby, "Heaven is a ceaseless approaching to God *through Christ*." *The Desire of Ages*, 331. Adam and Eve were included in this relationship, and we in them.

So perfect and complete was the marriage of Christ to the creatures, that His divinity was hidden from view and He appeared as an angel among the angels. His divinity was not seen by the angels simply because that element of His nature was always directed toward the Father, while the other side was always presented toward the created beings. While no pride dimmed the spiritual vision and perceptions of the angels, this created no problems, and no object lesson was needed for heaven's inhabitants. But, when self-exaltation began to surface in Lucifer, the trouble began. Looking upon Jesus, Lucifer was unable to see the dual aspect of His nature, and regarded Him as being nothing more than a created being just like himself. This led him to ponder the reason for his being denied admission to the intimate relationship with the Father so freely accorded to Christ. "'Why,' questioned this mighty angel, 'should Christ have the supremacy? Why is he honored above Lucifer?'" *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 37.

Had he understood the marriage relationship between Christ and the world of intelligent creatures, he would have found that God, whom he could not see, was wedded to the angel whom he could see. He would then have recognized the simple truth that Christ alone had the capacity to enter right into the presence of God. Then he would have known that the divine arrangement was the only possible means whereby heaven could be governed in love. Furthermore, he would have been fully aware that he did not and could not be blessed with the ability to come into the Father's all-powerful presence to the extent that the Archangel, Michael, did. Instead of selfishly aspiring to the usurpation of Christ's position, he would have rejoiced to behold the sheer beauty and glory of the marriage formed between the Father, through Jesus Christ, and the entire realm of created intelligences.

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<sup>1</sup> See Entering into God's Sabbath Rest, Chapter 3, by F. T. Wright.

Instead of yielding to the divine influences, the evil one chose to cast the hellish shadows of his specious accusations against the perfect divine order. So effectively did he succeed in his efforts that even the angels who elected to remain loyal to God were confused, and remained so for the next four millennia at least. Thus there arose the need for a clearer revelation of the principles being contested at the very heart of the controversy.

So it was, at the very time when Satan had chosen to reject all further allegiance to the divine order, that the Sovereign of the universe provided something new—a marriage between two separate and intelligent individuals. Up till that time, no such thing had ever existed among the angels or ever will. Christ made that forever clear and, while we have no specific statement to confirm that the same is true in every other inhabited world, it is definitely indicated that this planet is the only one on which the marriage relationship between two individuals as distinct from Christ's union with the creature world, has been instituted.



The creation of male and female with the power to reproduce themselves, introduced a new and distinct order of beings into the universe.

There was not a single created being whose future was not threatened by Lucifer's assault on the divine order. On the one side they had the Lord warning them of the fatal consequences of heeding and following the devil, while he, on the other hand, persuasively contended that to stay with God was to subject themselves to perpetual bondage. It was a time for fearful decision making.

Then, when God indicated that He and the Son would create this world and its inhabitants in Their own image, intense interest gripped the angelic host. They realized that, in His great love for them, He was about to create a wonderful object lesson of the marriage relationship which existed between Christ individually and them collectively. They felt they needed all the information they could get in order to make a safe decision. So, it is no wonder that:

"All heaven took a deep and joyful interest in the creation of the world and of man. *Human beings were a new and distinct order.* They were made 'in the image of God,' and it was the Creator's design that they should populate the earth." *The Review and Herald*, February 11, 1902; *The SDA Bible Commentary* 1:1081.

Between the beginning of God's created works and the fall of Lucifer, there were no marriages of individuals to individuals, but only the all-embracing union between Christ and all created intelligences. The purpose of that arrangement was to make available to every created being the fullness of every development, the achievement of the highest aspirations, the realization of every worthwhile ideal, the entry into the closest possible union with the Almighty Creator, and the satisfaction of the sweetest and highest joys beyond imagination.

But to achieve all this, the beneficiary must remain within the marriage relationship, understanding its principles, obeying its laws, and following its procedures. Failure to do so was to invite and be plagued with the loss of these blessings beyond comparison, and to be cursed with every possible misery and failure including the termination of ones very existence. There can be no other outcome, for there is no pathway to eternal security apart from that devised in the secret councils of the Godhead. Remember that God's way of life and happiness is not the best way. It is the *only* way. There are no alternatives with which to compare it. God's way is the only path of life. It is not so because He arbitrarily designed His government in order to please Himself, but because, in the nature of the case, there was no other way.

Once we recognize that God's way is the only way, we will realize the truth that only one form of government—only one divine order—can ever be established in the life of one of God's true children, or in the Christian family, a holy community, a righteous nation, a sinless solar system, a spotless galaxy, a perfect heaven, or an unblemished universe.

This is not so in the realms which have cast off the perfect divine system, and turned to their own ways. Individuals do not all operate by the same principles; the order and organization found in one family is foreign to another; local governments differ from county to county; and the traveler moving from land to land will come under a variety of authorities ranging from freedom loving democracies to restrictive and oppressive despotisms. No matter what system is adopted in human government, there is always dissatisfaction with it. Family members grumble; local and state governments are continually criticized; and national ruling bodies generate endless complaints.

But God's principles and procedures are so perfect that they operate equally well in the government of the individual as in the management of the family, the nation, the planet, the galaxy, or the universe. Therefore, the one and only way to have a truly happy and successful family is to ensure that the divine order which operates so successfully in heaven, is established in the home. Let the prayer be answered; "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as *it is* in heaven." *Matthew 6:10*.

Even though the system had worked flawlessly throughout the eternity of the past from its smallest scale in the life of an individual to its grandest dimensions of the entire universe, Satan was able to cast a shadow over its operations. He contended that the constitution of God's government restricts liberty, imposes a ceiling on progress and achievement, establishes the Godhead as an oppressive despotism, introduces untold misery and hardship, and denies all created beings the unrestricted right to be themselves.

These charges and assertions were absolutely groundless, but they had to be met for the sake of all those whose happiness and existence were threatened by them. The marriage arrangement by which alone the universe could be bound together in love and operate successfully, had to be revealed in more detail. A practical demonstration was required of the fusion of two lives to produce a third which was of the two and manifested the life and characteristics of them both. The intelligences throughout the universe needed to see the happiness and enrichment that this produced, and the perfect harmony and unity binding heart to heart and mind to mind as the divine order governed every impulse and action.

Thus God designed that the angels and the inhabitants of the unfallen worlds would see for themselves through this perfect and complete miniaturization—this microcosm—that if they faithfully continued to work within and according to the structure of the divine order, they would know only perfect happiness and total fulfillment. They would then truly see that God does love every one of His creatures to infinity, and that with absolute unselfishness, He lives, plans, and works for them and not for Himself. Far from being a cruel despot, He would show that He is a

loving marriage partner. He would demonstrate that, as surely as the divine principles produced perfect happiness in the microcosm of the Eden paradise, they would achieve the same delightful results in the macrocosm of the entire universe.

Therefore, when Adam and Eve were united in holy union, they were commissioned with the weighty privilege of demonstrating the truth of God's claims before the studious eyes of the onlooking inhabitants of the entire universe. That was the specific and supreme purpose of their creation and marriage. By ordaining that they should fulfill this commission in a miniaturized, local setting, God provided a revelation of the operating principles of heaven's order which was much more advanced than any previous demonstration.

At first, in the unblemished happiness emanating from Adam's and Eve's happy and successful life together, the angels and the unfallen worlds would have received verification that the divine design for living was in fact all that God claimed for it. Then, as Adam and Eve bore children, and they in turn other little ones, the interested onlookers throughout the universe would see that, in the ever enlarging human family, the system worked equally well to produce even greater happiness, security, harmony, achievement, and fulfillment. It was to have been an all-convincing demonstration.

Therefore, it was a very dedicated and purposeful God who devised the marriage institution for man as a new and distinct arrangement. Because the highest joy that can be found is in service, marriage had to be designed as an instrument of service. It cannot therefore be an end in itself but the means whereby the truest and highest ideals can be realized.

"God celebrated the first marriage. Thus the institution has for its originator the Creator of the universe. 'Marriage is honorable' (*Hebrews* 13:4); it was one of the first gifts of God to man, and it is one of the two institutions that, after the Fall, Adam brought with him beyond the gates of Paradise. When the divine principles are recognized and obeyed in this relation, marriage is a blessing; it guards the purity and happiness of the race, it provides for man's social needs, it elevates the physical, the intellectual, and the moral nature." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 46.

"He [Christ] referred them to the blessed days of Eden, when God pronounced all things 'very good.' Then marriage and the Sabbath had their origin, twin institutions for the glory of God in the benefit of humanity." *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 63.

A vital and integral part of the divine order was the mysterious uniting of two lives—the marriage of the Creator and the creature—to form one composite Being who was and forever will be, God in the flesh—divinity tabernacled in humanity. It is the wonder and the mystery of the incarnation, and the incarnation is the marriage. It is as the principles built into these relationships are seen, understood, and applied that the



stability, security, happiness, and successful operation of the entire universe is assured. While the plan is marvelous in its simplicity, and brilliant and practical in its application, it is at the same time so profound that even the sinless intelligences found it difficult to understand. Paul speaks of it as a hidden mystery.

"For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles—

"if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

"how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I wrote before in a few words,

"by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),

"which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:

"that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,

"of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

"To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

"and to make all people see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;

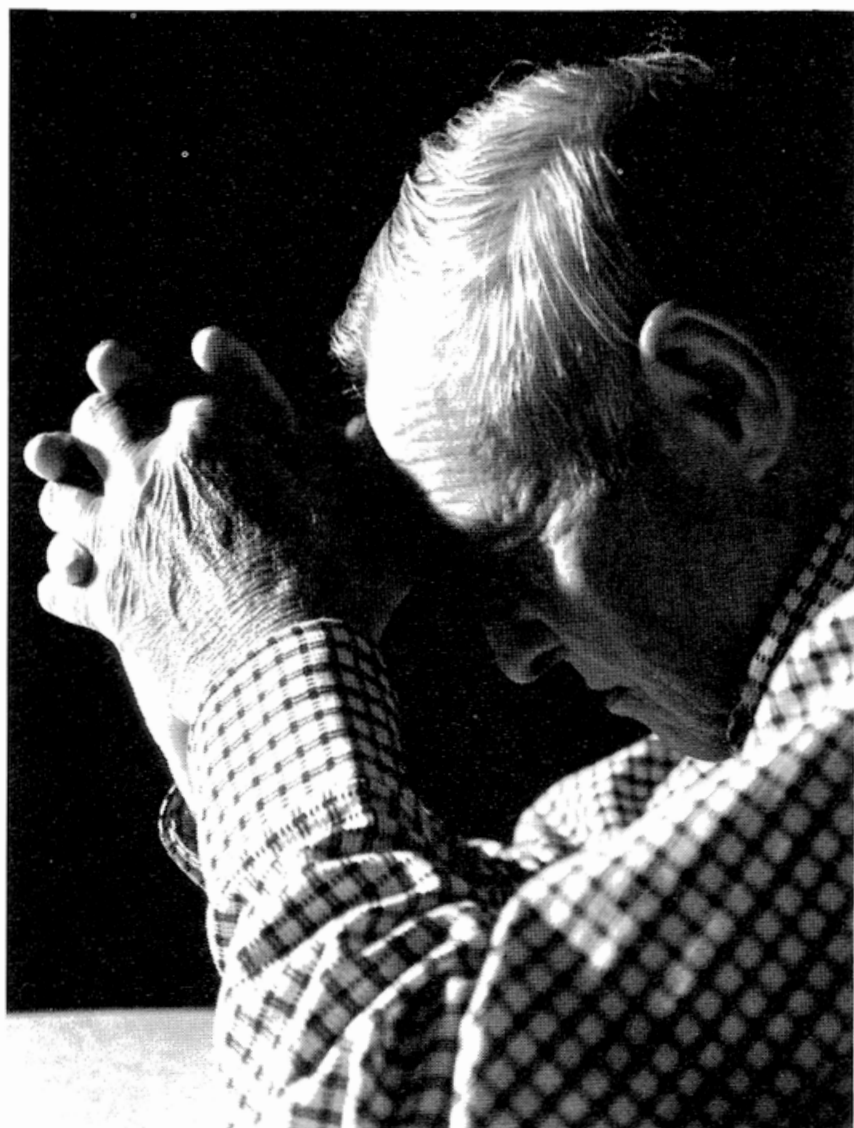
"to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,

"according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,

"in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in him." *Ephesians* 3:1-12.

But, as they saw children springing from the united lives of Adam and Eve, at least something of the mystery opened to their minds. They read, in the deepened love which the birth of the children imparted to the parents, the assurance that the marriage of Christ to creation had bound them in the closest ties of love to their heavenly husband, Jesus Christ. The utter helplessness of the child, and its total dependence on its parents proclaimed to them their constant need of their Creator Father, the infinite Source and Origin of all they had or could ever need. The marriages of Adam and Eve and subsequent men and women were to be priceless messages of hope and confidence to every created being.

That divine purpose has not changed. The Lord still intends that every home government shall be a miniature of the heavenly—a



There are few things that can break one's heart worse than a broken marriage. Those who have been obliged to suffer this have found that a part of them has died, leaving them with an incredible sense of loss, loneliness, and destitution. But, no one is left uninformed as to how to relate to these circumstances, for Jesus too has had a broken marriage though certainly through no fault of His own. Let all be consoled with the truth that while we can give a beautiful witness to the divine order when we have a happy marriage, it is a noble achievement when we can relate to a broken marriage as Jesus does to His.

microcosm of the macrocosm. God's will or system is to be maintained in the one as in the other, so that the same love, peace, unity, grace, beauty, and all the sweet unalloyed bliss of heaven found above, will be the all-pervading qualities in the earthly counterpart.

To build such a marriage, and establish a home government capable of meeting these specifications laid down by the Master Architect of the universe, is the solemn responsibility undertaken by every person contemplating marriage, yet how few are aware of what they are taking on when they contract such an alliance.

Obviously, to succeed in this vital field requires the right partner, the implantation of God's life and love within, a spirit of total self-sacrifice, a thorough knowledge of heaven's constitution, and a determined dedication to achieve the divine purpose. Those who approach the task with these qualifications will know a happiness in marriage and home life which will be impossible to anyone without them. The rewards are so complete and wonderful, and the attendant joy so rich and beautiful, that to become aware of the prospects inspires one to achieve these highest ideals.

At this point many will lament that their opportunity to realize these joys has gone forever. They recall their entry into marriage for the wrong reasons because of their ignorance of these principles, and the steady deterioration of the relationship ever since. They are convinced that they could never salvage from the wreckage anything that would begin to witness to the high and holy ideals discussed in this chapter. These consider their marriage to be an irredeemable failure.

These considerations usually lead to deep regrets and self-pitying thoughts. The saddened soul remembers how he or she undertook marriage with great expectations, confident that the relationship with this wonderful partner would be productive of great happiness and untold blessings. Deep down it was strongly felt that wedlock actually owed this to the individual undertaking its responsibilities.

Now there is a feeling of being cheated out of what the individual is convinced is rightfully his or hers, and a mounting desire which usually leads to a desperate desire to somehow capture those elusive hopes before life has entirely passed. Having become quite satisfied that there is no further hope of gaining fulfillment with the original spouse, the eye is directed toward another candidate for the position. A fresh contract is formed, described by one mind who had probably tried it and failed, as the triumph of optimism over experience.

But to adopt this course is to again miss the divine purpose, because, for those whose marriage has failed, God has a gift which will more than compensate them for the noble course they are called upon to follow; for the self-sacrificing cross they are invited to take up in following Jesus.

Christ too has a marriage which failed, though certainly through no fault of His. Therefore, every person whose marriage has broken down can be comforted in the knowledge that Christ has passed over the same ground and therefore perfectly understands and empathizes with the discouraged soul. "As the shepherd goes before his sheep, himself first encountering the perils of the way, so does Jesus with His people. 'When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them.' The way to heaven is consecrated by the Saviour's footprints. The path may be steep and rugged, but Jesus has traveled that way; His feet have pressed down the cruel thorns, to make the pathway easier for us. Every burden that we are called to bear He Himself has borne." *The Desire of Ages*, 480. But more importantly, every Christian has in Christ's reaction to His marriage breakdown, a perfect guide as to how he is to respond to the same tragic development in his life.

When Jesus entered into the creature world so closely, so intimately, that it became one complete side of His nature, He took to Himself a very beautiful partner. Creation ceased to be merely something which He had called into existence. It was now the second side of His nature, something to which He was so totally married that He was God in the flesh.

To some this will seem to be pantheistic. One should not be surprised at that, for this false doctrine is a clever counterfeit of the true and looks so like the real thing that it is almost impossible to distinguish the difference.

What we are discussing here is not pantheism which teaches that God is an all-pervading essence in nature, that the works of God are God Himself,<sup>2</sup> but the beautiful truth that Christ, through marriage, fused His life into His own creation. If He had not done this, there would have been no incarnation and no salvation.

So, when Christ the Creator clothed His divinity with the form and nature of a creature, He entered into a relationship worthy of Him as a Husband, one that promised and provided unlimited joy and fulfillment for eternity. So rewarding was the fellowship for both Christ and the angels that there was nothing more that could have been asked from it. Yet, with the passing of time, new delights were discovered, new wonders were experienced, new heights were scaled, and new satisfactions were realized, and still the limits had not been reached, nor the possibilities exhausted.

Jesus and His Father found no fault with Christ's bride. How could they? They themselves were her Creators, and, so perfect and complete was their workmanship, that it left nothing to be desired. It seemed that the eternal happiness of all concerned was assured. That alliance, and

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<sup>2</sup>See Appendix A, page 384, for an article on Pantheism.

the fulfillment and joy which sprang from it, were those of which God designed marriage to be the perfect object lesson.

But, a problem arose in the marriage between the Creator and His creation. First of all, in heaven and then upon this newly made earth, the relationship between Christ and His creatures broke down, and the union binding Christ to the entire universe was threatened. As the problem developed, Jesus found that first one third of the angels, and then the inhabitants of this earth, who had once been so lovable, beautiful, compatible, and responsive, had become sinful, murderously hostile, and subject to death. It was a tragic change, and the future of all concerned now depended on how Jesus would respond to the crisis. Had He done as men do today, He would have divorced Himself from the relationship, justifying His action by declaring quite correctly that His bride was no longer worthy of Him. He could have claimed He had the perfect right to divorce her on the grounds of her adultery, treachery, unfaithfulness, uncleanness, and generally reduced efficiency. He could quite correctly have contended that the alliance was not returning to Him what it was designed to provide a faithful Husband, particularly after all the love and devotion He had poured into the marriage. He could have created for Himself another bride to replace the one He had lost.

But He did not do any of this! Instead, before the devil left heaven, Jesus yearningly offered to extend the marriage into a new dimension. He would unite His perfect creatorship with the fallen, sinful, mortal flesh of the creatures who had violated their marriage contract. Christ was just as willing to save Lucifer as He was to redeem mankind, but the enemy scorned the offer. This truth is well argued by Elder A. T. Jones in the following statement:

"And yet at that very moment, and from the moment when Lucifer took his first false step, God was offering to give His only begotten Son and Himself in Him; and the Son Himself was freely offering Himself to die a sacrifice; to save him who had sinned—to save this very one who was here making the charge and insisting upon it that God would deny Himself nothing, and would make no sacrifices for anybody.

"The sacrifice of Christ was in the invitation to Lucifer to return to God as certainly as it was in the invitation of *man* to return to God. For Lucifer had sinned, and from that moment he was a sinner as certainly as ever man was a sinner. And we have before found that God's eternal purpose in Christ is the same toward all: that purpose to 'gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.' Lucifer had sinned and was a sinner when God invited him to return to God. But God did not invite him to return and take his place as of old as a sinner. Sin can not abide in the presence of God. Therefore the invitation of God to sinful Lucifer to return was in itself the offer to him of salvation from sin, that he might return and take his place *in*

righteousness. But 'the wages of sin is death.' Therefore to save Lucifer from sin was to save him from death, and to save him from death was to die for him. Consequently, the sacrifice of the Son of God to save Lucifer from sin, was in the invitation of God to him to return, as certainly as the sacrifice of Christ to save man from sin, was in the invitation to man to return from sin to God. For whether sin be in man or in cherub, it is sin; and without the offering of life there is 'no remission,'—and *that* the offering of the life of the Son of God. John 3:16; 10:15-18." *The Spirit of the Papacy*, 13. Destiny Press edition.

Lucifer scorned the gracious offer and subsequently departed heaven, an irrecoverable, self-made divorcee from the divine system. By so doing, he prevented the Saviour at that stage in the developing crisis from making the extended entry into the sinful, fallen, mortal creature world.

Had the Redeemer's love been anything less than infinite, He would have claimed that He had done enough, and would have left the rebellious among His creatures to suffer their self-imposed fate, while He enjoyed a compatible, happy, and fulfilling relationship with those who had never broken the alliance with Him.

But love such as Jesus has would not hold back until there was absolutely nothing more that could be done. So, even though fallen angels would not accept His grace, the offer of mercy remained open to fallen man. Thus, when this provision for salvation from sin and death was held out to fallen man, and some accepted it, Christ then entered into a new marriage relationship, this time, not with the perfect, but with the imperfect; not with the righteous, but with the unrighteous; not with the worthy, but with the unworthy; not with the lovely, the beautiful, the desirable; but with the unlovely, the ugly, the undesirable; and not with the compatible, but with the incompatible.

Even as born again Christians, the wives of Jesus Christ, we fall into the category of the unlovely, the incompatible, and the unworthy. Anyone who cannot see that has never caught a glimpse of the incomparable perfection and loveliness of Jesus, while those who have will be acutely aware of how unworthy we are to be members of the royal household.

"The nearer we come to Jesus, and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly shall we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the less shall we feel like exalting ourselves." *The Acts of the Apostles*, 561. Even if our lives were as spotless as Daniel's, the man whom heaven describes as being greatly beloved, we would still not be worthy of Christ as our Husband. Daniel's reaction when he was given a view of the Saviour's spotless perfection, proves this. "It was the same presence of divine holiness that had caused the prophet Daniel to fall as one dead before the angel of God. He said, 'My comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.' So when Isaiah

beheld the glory of the Lord, he exclaimed, 'Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.' *Daniel* 10:8; *Isaiah* 6:5. Humanity, with its weakness and sin, was brought in contrast with the perfection of divinity, and he felt altogether deficient and unholy. *Thus it has been with all who have been granted a view of God's greatness and majesty.*" *The Desire of Ages*, 246.

Having extended His marriage responsibilities, Christ demonstrates the way in which we are to relate to the same kind of problem. He knows what it means to have a beautiful marriage go bad, for He has been through all that in the rebellion of the holy angels and man. He knows how tempting it is to divorce the guilty party and seek the companionship of the sinless and the beautiful. But, He does not succumb to this temptation. Instead, with undiminished and unchanged love, He treats His beloved as if she had never sinned.

We are to do likewise, for we are to love our marriage partners as Christ loves us, His marriage partners. Christ has shown us how to love the lovely, and how to love the unlovely. Thus He has demonstrated the divine purposes to be fulfilled in both the successful and the unsuccessful marriage. Of course, if God's will were to be carried out on earth as it is in heaven, there would be only happy and successful matrimony, but, inasmuch as this is not the case due to the entrance of sin, the Lord looks to His people to provide a picture of His saving relationship toward those who have lost their edenic glory.

If you are fortunate enough to be married to a truly compatible and beautiful partner, with both of you understanding the divine principles and procedures for the successful building of a marriage, then you can show before the worlds both fallen and unfallen what the beautiful and desirable outworking of the divine order is. This is what God intended that human marriages should achieve when He placed Adam and Eve in Eden to live together as husband and wife.

This is the happiest and most satisfying witness to be called upon to give, but not the most noble. Should you find that the marriage has lost the unity and compatibility which you had hoped would be manifest in it, and the partner with whom you formerly exchanged such love has become a different person, unlovely, and undesirable, the time has truly come when you are to love your partner just as Christ loves you, one who is also unlovely and inefficient. You now can demonstrate just as He does, that you too can love what has become unlovely in your eyes, just as intensely as you can love the one who was once so beautiful and compatible in your sight.

When your relationship to a spouse has lost its first glow and beauty, the natural response is to find fault with the other person with the objective of justifying the withdrawal of your care and attention. We pity

ourselves for being involved in a marriage, which, from its shining introduction, has dissolved into a disaster, and feel that we are worthy of something much better.

When assailed by these thoughts, think of the exceedingly greater disparity between you and your heavenly Husband, Jesus. If you have been thinking that you are worthy of someone much better than the one whom you now feel forced to live with, think of yourself in these terms in relation to Christ. Are you a worthy partner to Him? Does He not deserve someone far better, more lovely, valuable, competent, compatible, responsive, intelligent, energetic, and so forth, than you? He surely does! If ever a husband had more than ample justification for putting away his spouse on the basis of unworthiness, incompetence, disloyalty, unloveliness, unfaithfulness, incompatibility, inefficiency, and more, much, much more, then Jesus is the most justified of all.

He deserves the very best such as all His created intelligences were when they came forth from His creative hand, but, praise His holy Name, He stays with us, and, amazingly, loves to do so. He never permits any thoughts of self-pity to mar His infinitely loving attitude towards us. He never even thinks about our being unworthy of Him. He is obsessed with a determination to love and restore, never to cast us off in favor of those who are more lovable than we are.

In doing this, He displays a nobility of character that is beautiful beyond description. This is truly and magnificently living out the gospel, and it is exactly what the Lord calls upon us to do. In fact, to fail to copy the Pattern is to deny the gospel and the salvation that it offers.

This principle is very clearly enunciated in the parable of the unjust steward recorded in *Matthew* 18:21-35. A king, in taking account of his wealth, discovered a servant who owed him the staggering sum of ten thousand talents which would be equal to at least \$6,221,880 according to the 1956 valuation recorded in *The SDA Bible Commentary* 5:449. Today, the value would be nearer \$15,000,000. That is an enormous debt and one that the average person would never be able to repay.

Yet the servant, as he realized the plight he was in, begged the king to give him time to repay it all. The king was well aware that the man had no hope of ever refunding the embezzled millions, but, instead of selling him and his family to the slave traders, he forgave him for the robbery. This the monarch did so totally, that the man stood before him as clear of the debt as if he had never incurred it in the first case.

But, as the man went on his way, he encountered a person who owed him but a trifling sum, a mere one hundred denarii, equal to about \$15.00 today. Now the king's servant was appealed to by this debtor as he had himself entreated the king, but the outcome was very different. Whereas the king had been moved with compassion and forgave the



debt, his recently pardoned servant was merciless, and, when his debtor could not pay, had him thrown into prison.

Thus he demonstrated that he did not participate in the spirit of his master, that he was unable to forgive as he had been forgiven, or love as he had been loved. By so doing, he cancelled the forgiveness which had been extended to him with the inevitable consequence that the original debt rolled back on him, so that he then stood before the king as if he had never been forgiven at all.

Having told the story, Christ then made His point. He solemnly said: "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses." *Matthew 18:35.*

"We are not forgiven *because* we forgive, but as we forgive. The ground of all forgiveness is found in the unmerited love of God, but by our attitude toward others we show whether we have made that love our own. Wherefore Christ says, 'With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.' *Matthew 7:2.*" *Christ's Object Lessons*, 251.

Every professed believer in Jesus must not rest until the full impact of the principles enunciated by Christ in this parable are clearly understood, and our responses to real or imagined offenses are adjusted to harmonize with them. The need to do this cannot be over-stressed, for our eternal life depends on it. Only those who live out the gospel as Jesus does, have the spirit which alone is acceptable in heaven.

In practical terms this means that, should our once happy marriage begin to break down, and we find ourselves incapable of responding to this situation exactly as Christ did when His joyous marriage broke down, then we must undertake an urgent work of soul-searching, cleansing from selfishness and sin, and infilling with divine love until we can relate to our spouses as Jesus did to those who had broken with Him.

It would help, I am sure, if, when you are contemplating departure in any way from the marriage partner who you believe has failed you, you stop to think what it would mean to you if Christ were to withdraw from you for the same reasons. Of course, if you are devoid of any real sense of need of Christ, this thought will have little if any impact on your mind, but if you truly realize that you are a helpless, dependent creature who cannot live without Christ, then you will be afraid to take any step that will distance you farther from Jesus.

Let none miss the awesome truth that failure to walk in the pathway followed by the perfect Pattern places our lives in serious jeopardy. In other words, if we withdraw from our spouses because of their real or supposed failure, then we separate ourselves from Christ, and that, while it is maintained, is the forfeiture of eternal life.

This is because Christ's course was the outworking of self-sacrificing love, the operational law of life for earth and heaven. To walk otherwise

than according to this principle is to deny the gospel, which is but to cut yourself off from salvation. Think carefully of this matter, for it is an issue so serious as to be fraught with eternal consequences.

When the average marriage partner is confronted with the breaking down of the family relationship, divorce looms up as a possible solution to the problem, but, the true Christian could consider this as a solution only if he finds that Christ entertained the idea when He was faced with the threat of the dissolution of His marriage. The fact is however, that, no matter how searching an examination is made of Christ's reaction to His broken marriage, not even the slightest consideration of divorce as a way out of His troubles will be found. So it has to be with the Christian. It must be as established in his mind as firmly as it is in Christ's that the divine procedure does not contemplate this measure; does not even give it a moment's consideration.

The outworking of these principles is seen in the way that Jesus consistently related Himself to those who had failed Him. Christ's marriage to His creatures places us in varying positions as co-workers with Him. But, every one of us has failed Him to a lesser or a greater extent. With some, the betrayal has been nothing short of catastrophic, as in the cases of Adam and Eve; Aaron and the golden calf; Moses when in fury he struck the rock; David's persistent lying to Achish, his adultery with Bathsheba, and his murder of the innocent Uriah; Peter's denial of Christ with cursings; and Paul's compromise with the leaders in Jerusalem which led to his arrest and, eventually, to his execution. These are but samples taken from the much larger number which could be quoted.

All these were major sins against the marriage of the human with the divine, and surely more than justified Christ's withdrawal from His partners who had failed Him so shamefully, so badly, and so inexcusably! But there existed not the slightest intention on Christ's part of doing this. Not one of those men lost their position. It may be argued that there were others who did. This is true, but, and let not this point be overlooked, it was not Christ who effected the divorce. They were the ones who cast off the relationship with Him, and not the other way about.

One of the most remarkable cases is that of King Saul who, having rejected the Saviour, plunged Israel into a miserable despotism and thus utterly disgraced himself before God and man. Yet the Lord did not deprive him of his position, for he remained king until he died.

In the light of God's principles and procedures, we can better understand the truth that "If you reject Christ's delegated messengers, you reject Christ." Testimonies to Ministers, 97.

"To reject the Lord's servants, is to reject Christ Himself." *The Desire of Ages*, 489.

"When Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled against the authority of Moses, they thought they were opposing only a human leader, a man like themselves; and they came to believe that they were verily doing God service. But in rejecting God's chosen instrument they rejected Christ; they insulted the Spirit of God. So, in the days of Christ, the Jewish scribes and elders, who professed great zeal for the honor of God, crucified His Son. The same spirit still exists in the hearts of those who set themselves to follow their own will in opposition to the will of God." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 635.

Think of the messengers as being Christ's marriage partners. In a sense, they are also the marriage partners of those who believe and accept the message which they bear. Just as we expect perfection of our spouses, so we require that the messengers render us a faultless service. In our view, the necessity for this requirement is intensified by the fact that so many false messengers have arisen whose ministry has come to nothing, and their seemingly honest and conscientious followers have found their lives blighted, and their hopes destroyed. So, when the messenger fails to maintain perfection of behavior, we tend to relegate him to the domain of the cast-off.

It is certainly true that there are false messengers abroad, but there is no excuse for being deceived by them. Long before they fall, we should know with great certainty that they are indeed false, and have nothing to do with them. Likewise we should have clearly identified the messenger of God as such long before he falls, if he ever does. Sad it is to say that most have.

But, according to the divine principle and procedure of marriage, the Lord does not divorce Himself from His appointed messenger, nor take away his position and work. That person is now a sadder and wiser messenger, but the messenger still. Search the Scriptures from cover to cover and it will be found that this is the way the Lord has always operated, and can be relied on to act throughout eternity. If the messenger is to cease his appointed work, it will only be by his taking himself away from the Lord, for the Saviour dismisses no one. It is always the human being who leaves Christ; never Christ who leaves him, no matter how sinful he may become. "Christ will never abandon the soul for whom He has died. The soul may leave Him and be overwhelmed with temptation, but Christ can never turn from one for whom He has paid the ransom of His own life." *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 118, 119.

"He will never abandon one for whom He has died. Unless His followers choose to leave Him, He will hold them fast." *The Desire of Ages*, 483.

These facts leave no room for divorce as a problem solving technique, but, so long as sinful men continue their attempts at being



When the Christian's marriage-ship begins to leak and founder, God's solution is not for us to take wing in search of a new partner. In His marriage relationship with us, He demonstrates that He never leaves us; it is we who leave Him. So it must always be the unbeliever who departs, never the Christian unless driven away by relentless persecution.

problem-solvers, this supposed solution will remain. Christ Himself will not always be able to avoid being divorced, for, when the sinner elects to separate himself from the divine Husband, and with wilful determination adheres to that decision despite every effort on the Saviour's part to win him back, there is nothing left for Christ to do but to let him go. Such a development took place after the feeding of the five thousand and the subsequent crisis in Galilee. Once the people had determined on total divorce from Christ, He simply let them follow the path they had chosen after rejecting His best efforts to save them from so terrible a fate.

"With a yearning heart, Jesus saw those who had been His disciples departing from Him, the Life and the Light of men. The consciousness that His compassion was unappreciated. His love unrequited, His mercy slighted, His salvation rejected, filled Him with sorrow that was inexpressible. It was such developments as these that made Him a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.

"Without attempting to hinder those who were leaving Him, Jesus turned to the twelve and said, 'Will ye also go away?' " *The Desire of Ages*, 393.

That was a very real and permanent divorce, however, it was not initiated or executed by Jesus, but came entirely from the people. When it was forced upon Him, against His best efforts to prevent it, He had no choice but to accept it. In like manner, the true follower of Christ will never initiate divorce as a solution, but, if the other partner insists on it, then the believing one, after having done all to prevent such an outcome, must not hinder the one who desires to leave.

To remain with a dissatisfying spouse can be nothing other than a very difficult and trying experience, but, when it is remembered that the trial of Jesus in His marriage to sinful, human nature is far greater than can ever be known by any earthly being, our sufferings sink into insignificance.

But Christ's sights are lifted far above His own sufferings and the difficulties of living and working with degenerate partners, to the glorious results to be achieved through His marriage with fallen creatures. He knows that it will be worth it all to bring everyone of His people back to the original marriage relationship in which He will again be married only to a worthy creation. In fact, those who will have been *redeemed* from this earth will be more fit to be the marriage partners of Jesus than the original occupants of this position. But let no one think that Christ wants to make a perfect marriage partner for selfish reasons, so that He can receive His just dues. Christ is no hireling. He does not give to receive but receives to give. His joy is found in the happiness of others and His true followers will have the same spirit.

Some, because they are blessed with a compatible and happy marriage, will be better able to provide the Lord with an object lesson of

the divine order as it was before sin entered the world. Such a home will be one in which God's will is done ". . . on earth, as it is in heaven." *Matthew* 6:10. In a home of this nature, the members of the partnership and the children must become better and still better acquainted with the divine order so as to ensure that their family is a true reflection of that which is in heaven above. There must be no stopping place, no relaxation of effort, no point where they can rest in the complacent assurance that they have attained all that is required. Theirs is the happy task of making known the manifold wisdom of God by the church ". . . to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,

"according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,

"in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him." *Ephesians* 3:10-13.

Happy indeed is the role of families fulfilling this divine purpose. It is the objective to which every Christian family should aspire—a perfect miniature working model of the marvelous system of government by which alone the universe can safely function, and through which alone unlimited joy and fulfillment can be guaranteed to every inhabitant of the universe. Very importantly, it provides the ideal atmosphere in which to successfully raise children.

But it is not the only witness that can be given to and presented before the principalities and powers in heavenly places who are watching with the most intense interest the demonstrations of the divine perfections being given in and through the human family. There is the much more difficult but nobler witness to be declared by those whose marriage partner is not fulfilling that one's responsibilities in the home and family. It is by understanding and copying Christ's position and work as the Husband of sinful humanity, that this exacting task can be successfully achieved. The rewards eventually realized by those who discharge this commission effectively are beyond computation.

How vital it is that every one already married, together with those yet to contract such a relationship, be brought to realize that there is a divine purpose in the alliance much higher and more important than the satisfaction of man's social needs. When every Christian truly understands this and labors under the direction of the Holy Spirit and in His power to truly achieve God's divine purpose in marriage, we shall see the most wonderful children growing up to the honor and glory of the Lord and His church in heaven and on earth.



# Marriage is Forever

## Chapter 16

Once the believer in Jesus clearly perceives the divine purpose in marriage, and understands the structure of heaven's order, he will cease to think of God so much in terms of a king and his subjects, as of an infinitely loving Father and His children. The heavenly organization will be viewed not so much as a kingdom, but as a family.

This does not deny that God is in fact King of kings, and that every citizen in His kingdom is a subject, for it is the truth that He is the Monarch of the universe and we are His liege subjects. The problem is that the concepts arising from our view of this relationship are colored by our knowledge of earthly kings and the citizens under them. Our observations of the relationships operating between this world's rulers and their peoples inform us that there is an established class structure which maintains the king and queen in privileged isolation above and away from the so-called commoners. It is not a family relationship. The members of the monarchy experience that only within their own, the "royal" family, where its members enjoy favors and advantages denied to those outside the "sacred" circle.

The nearer the king approaches to absolutism or despotism, the more marked is this separation between him and his people, and the more ruthlessly will he put down any challenge to his authority whether it be real or merely suspect. Yet, because we think of God and His children as King and subjects, even the extreme misrepresentation of true kingship as provided by dictators, tends to influence our thinking in regard to

Jehovah and His kingdom. We need to look upon this world's kingdoms as representations of what God is not, rather than an education in what He is.

When Christ was faced with the task of conveying a true picture of His Father's position and work to the people of His time, He found that there were no earthly governments to which He could direct their attention as an example.

" 'Whereunto,' asked Christ, 'shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?' *Mark* 4:30. He could not employ the kingdoms of the world as a similitude. In society He found nothing with which to compare it. Earthly kingdoms rule by the ascendancy of physical power; but from Christ's kingdom every carnal weapon, every instrument of coercion, is banished. This kingdom is to uplift and ennoble humanity. God's church is the court of holy life, filled with varied gifts and endowed with the Holy Spirit. The members are to find their happiness in the happiness of those whom they help and bless." *The Acts of the Apostles*, 12.

"The germ in the seed grows by the unfolding of the life-principle which God has implanted. Its development depends upon no human power. So it is with the kingdom of Christ. It is a new creation. Its principles of development are the opposite of those that rule the kingdoms of this world. Earthly governments prevail by physical force; they maintain their dominion by war; but the founder of the new kingdom is the Prince of *Peace*. The Holy Spirit represents worldly kingdoms under the symbol of fierce beasts of prey; but Christ is 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' *John* 1:29. In His plan of government there is no employment of brute force to compel the conscience. The Jews looked for the kingdom of God to be established in the same way as the kingdoms of the world. To promote righteousness they resorted to external measures. They devised methods and plans. But Christ implants a principle. By implanting truth and righteousness, He counterworks error and sin." Christ's *Object Lessons*, 77.

The eternal Father does not distance Himself from His people, for, in and through Christ, He is closer to them than earthly parents are to their children. It is for this reason that Christ is called Immanuel, which literally means, "God with us." See *The Desire of Ages*, 19.

None of the worldly, unconverted, earthly rulers of the past could ever claim this title, for they have always distanced themselves from the inhabitants of their kingdoms. As may be expected, both king and people read in the relationship between them, the picture of how they, in turn, relate to their distant gods.

The admission of the inadequacy of this was forced from the lips of Nebuchadnezzar's supposedly wise men when they were required to reveal the king's dream, and provide its interpretation. They advised the





**In a family relationship, the nearer the members are to one another, the greater their happiness. So also it is in the great family of God. The nearer He is to His children and they to Him, the happier both He and they are.**

angry monarch that the secret was known only to the distant "... gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." *Daniel 2:11*. The Babylonian god did not come down to his people; he was not a father to them; did not communicate with them; and therefore did not offer them a family relationship. Of them, as they were in their supposed existence, the haughty Nebuchadnezzar upon his elevated throne was an accurate representation.

In a family relationship, the closer the members are, the greater their happiness. In like manner, the closer the Lord God of heaven can be to His children, the happier He is. It was for this reason that He directed the erection of the sanctuary. "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." *Exodus 25:8*. Even that was not enough. He would only be satisfied when He was dwelling *in* them as it is written:

". . . I will dwell *in* them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." *2 Corinthians* 6:16.

During all the immeasurable millennia between the beginning of God's creation until now, the closest representation of the unity which the heavenly Father desires to establish between Himself and His children, is best provided in a truly Christian home. It was when the first marriage was celebrated in Eden, that the doorway to great light on the divine order was opened. The marriage thereafter became the study of the unfallen intelligences who desired to understand the mystery of it and to enter into closer fellowship with their divine Husband, Christ.

In like manner, those who aspire to the rearing of beautiful children—children who will reflect the divine image, return unlimited joy to their devoted parents, and be an eternal blessing to their fellow creatures—must study and understand this subject until they are able to establish its principles in their individual lives, in their marriage relationship, in the family, and in the church. No one who desires to really achieve in this vital field can be satisfied with a superficial, uncertain knowledge of heaven's order and organization. All must be prepared to put all their faculties to the stretch in their search for the complete answer to these questions.

When such search is made, it will be found that Christ alone is Head of the church by virtue of the fact that He is the Head of every member in that body. Likewise, He is Head of the family by being the Head of each individual in the family. It will then be understood that the members of the body move only by direction from the Head, so that the activities of the members are their response to the will of Christ.

When Jesus entered into a marriage relationship with the created world, it was an eternal union. The Father did not loan Him, nor did He provide Himself on any temporary basis for the service of His espoused. The Almighty gave Jesus Christ to the family on earth and up in heaven. It was a gift once given that was never to be withdrawn. Jesus Christ's marriage is "according to the *eternal* purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." *Ephesians* 3:11.

"For God so loved the world that He *gave* His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

When Jesus entered into marriage it was forever, and, as stated in the last chapter, He never gives the slightest consideration to divorce as a solution to the breakdown of the union between Himself and any partner. The many divorces which have been imposed on Him, have always come from the other side, never from Him.

It is of course a very easy thing to solemnly promise on the wedding day that you will be true and faithful to each other so long as you both continue living. Flushed with the glow of springtime love, confident that

your relationship will endure no matter what trials may test it, you sincerely and honestly promise faithfulness. But, things can and do assume a different appearance when passing time and severe trials expose weaknesses in the natures of both parties.

When Jesus made His marriage vow, it was not for the short span of a human lifetime. It was for eternity! There would be no second chance if He found dissatisfaction in His marriage to the created world. Immanuel had to be very sure that He knew what He was doing from the outset so that He would be able to forever uphold His side of the contract. Not even the entrance of sin with the decay it imposed on His bride could lead Him to regret His commitment, or induce Him to withdraw from it.

Rather, He saw that, due to His loving care and kindly administration, His wayward one would emerge from her detour into the land of sin, more competent, desirable, and lovely than before she left Him.

"Christ can look on the misery of the world without a shade of sorrow for having created man. In the human heart He sees more than sin, more than misery. In His infinite wisdom and love He sees man's possibilities, the height to which he may attain. He knows that, even though human beings have abused their mercies and destroyed their God-given dignity, yet the Creator is to be glorified in their redemption." *Testimonies* 7:269.

For untold thousands and tens of thousands of years, the marriage between Him and the created world continued in unblemished perfection, and blessed unity. But the time came through no fault of His, when His dedication was severely tested, yet He came through the trial faithful to His marriage vows. It is most important that all those who aim to establish a family government in which they can raise truly converted children, understand that the union formed when two lives are bonded in wedlock is of enduring permanence. Therefore, consideration will be given in detail to some of the tests to Christ's marriage that were listed briefly in the last chapter.

There, reference was made to Adam and Eve, Aaron, Moses, David, Peter, and Paul, each of whom failed to honor their marriage vows to Christ at some time or the other. The first of these offenders was Lucifer, the covering cherub. A consideration of how Christ and His Father dealt with his unfaithfulness is a revelation to us of how we are to deal with those who fail us.

The point to be seen in this study is that when Christ married into God's creation, this gave to each individual in that marriage a position. Lucifer, for instance, was placed nearest to God to serve as the covering cherub in the sanctuary. It will be shown that once he had been established in that position, the Lord would never take it from him no matter how unworthily he might behave. Instead, the Father, the Son,

and the Holy Spirit worked to save him from leaving his assigned position, and, when he did, offered it back to him on condition of repentance, confession, and cleansing from the evil now abiding in him.

So too, when a man and a woman marry, they establish each other in certain specific positions in their lives and in their homes. This is an unconditional step which they take. They do not say that they will uphold each other in their rightful places if and just so long as the other continues to be pleasing. Christ's example demonstrates that they are to continue respecting their partner's position irrespective of the degree to which the other person is unfaithful or displeasing.

Let none overlook the point that it is in their *rightful* position that we are to recognize and uphold the one with whom we have solemnly exchanged marriage vows. When the other person assumes a place that the Lord has never given to him or her, it would be a serious mistake to recognize and uphold that person in that position. At the same time, such a development will not be used by the faithful one as a justification for the withdrawal of all support and for departure from the unfaithful one.

Once again, the example of Christ is the guideline as to how the Christian is to relate to this kind of situation. For instance, when Lucifer abandoned his post of duty and embarked on a seditious mission against God and His kingdom, the Lord could not work with him in that purpose, but He did not cut him off from all life support systems either. Even when he left heaven and seduced the human family, God still continued to supply him with all that was necessary to sustain his life. To this day, the devil lives by the supplies which come from a heavenly Husband who, though divorced by the devil, still fully meets His marriage responsibilities as far as the situation will permit. They do not live or work together, but Christ does not look upon this as an excuse for shutting Satan away from what he needs to continue living. When, in the end, destruction finally overtakes him, it will not be because God will cut him off; it will be because he will have placed himself where the Lord will no longer be able to reach him with the vital supplies necessary to keep him alive and functioning. Throughout seven thousand years during which time Satan's behavior will more than justify Christ's termination of every responsibility of the marriage contract with him, Christ has remained and will remain faithful to what He has promised. Thus He demonstrates how absolutely He understands that clause in the marriage vow which specifies that the marriage partners are bound to each other until death parts them. Only when, at the end of the millennium, Satan finally dies, will Christ be released from all further responsibility toward him.

If the unfaithful one makes moves to break up the relationship, then such efforts as only divine love can provide must and will be made to win that one back and return that one to the position vacated. But, if after all

that yearning love can do, the other person still insists on walking the pathway of separation, then there is no option but to let that one go and accept the divorce we are compelled to bear.

All this is revealed in the story of Lucifer's unjustified defection.

It would have been impossible for him to have sinned worse than he did. His crimes against the divine government were the most grievous possible and there were no greater lengths in rebellion to which he could have gone. Yet the Lord did not dispossess him of his position as the covering cherub. It was he who vacated it.

Consider the seriousness of Lucifer's crimes against the government of God. At great cost to Himself in Jesus Christ, the eternal Father and Source of all life established a divine order in the universe by which alone happiness, fulfillment, and immortality could be guaranteed to every created being. It was an infinitely selfless undertaking, an amazing manifestation of His character of limitless love.

As the Creator of all, He was and eternally will be the Owner of everything existing. Therefore, He had the perfect right to administrate the universe in any way that He chose, without any of His created subjects having the least right to question, challenge, or in any way call for changes or modifications to the system. God's governmental system is a theocracy, not a democracy.

Therefore, no matter how displeased Lucifer came to be with the divine order, he still had no right to rebel against it. This would remain true even if he had justification for his dissatisfaction as he would have had if God had been a despotic, oppressive overlord. God owned everything; Lucifer possessed nothing. All that he was or held was a trusteeship, not ownership, and only the owner has the right to determine how his possessions shall be managed.

But, Lucifer did not stop with insidious complaints against the divine order. He called for such a restructuring of heaven's governmental system as would relocate him as an owner of the kingdom and not merely a trustee in it. He demanded that Christ be replaced by himself; that he, the creature who had brought nothing into existence and therefore had no right of himself to anything or any position, should occupy the place and take the position of Him who had brought everything into existence and therefore had the right of ownership of all things and of any position He saw fit to occupy.

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** God through Christ and the Holy Spirit, is both the Creator and the Sustainer of the universe. Without Him the beautiful flowers would be unable to produce the seeds which guarantee the next generation, and all life would cease to exist. Even the suns, planets, solar systems, and the mighty galaxies would pass away. Nothing would survive. Foolish indeed is the created being who thinks that he can live without His almighty Source. No one can go to war with God and win.



It was audacious, monstrous, inexcusable, treasonous, ungrateful rebellion of the worst order. It would be impossible to overstate the iniquitousness of the course of action which he adopted. That which made it even worse was his determination to pursue his utterly selfish aims no matter what the cost to others might be. His propositions, if they had been carried out, would have resulted in the death of every living thing throughout the entire universe, and the destruction of every planet, sun, and system God had ever created.

Some may feel that this is saying too much, that surely the consequences could not have been so serious. But, no one who understands the divine order and what it was specifically designed to achieve, will have any doubts as to the truth of these words. To state the matter briefly: God is the Source from whom all life flows. He is the Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe. He who called into existence the entire creation, upholds "... all things by the word of His power . . . ." *Hebrews 1:3*.<sup>\*</sup> If the Lord were to cease this ministry, then all creation would cease to function and would be destroyed.

But, in order to accomplish this work of sustaining the universe, there had to be a Connector, who, because He Himself is also God, could receive the flood tide of power from the Deity, and, because, on the second side, He is truly creature, could safely channel the needed amounts of power to each created being and celestial body throughout the entire universe. Jesus Christ alone could and did fulfill that vital work.

But Lucifer was determined to replace Christ with himself, a mere creature who did not even begin to have the capacity to receive the energy flowing from God in order to channel it to the created world. Such a flow of power as emanates from God would have destroyed Lucifer in an instant if he had stepped into Christ's position. His total inability to receive and channel the required supplies of power to the universe would have meant that those who had been receiving life from God through Christ would have been totally cut off and would have perished.

Thus he became the great enemy of all created life and the lengths to which he was prepared to go to establish his selfish aims were demonstrated at Calvary when he unleashed against his Creator, Jesus Christ, every weapon of destruction and abuse at his command. Then the angels came to understand the real nature of his rebellion; the real character which had developed in him.

It was a situation in which a member of Christ's body had turned from Him in the worst possible way. The estrangement which was wholly from Lucifer's side, threatened to develop into total separation and would really test God's and Christ's commitment to be faithful to their created

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<sup>1</sup> See *Entering into God's Sabbath Rest*, Chapters 2 & 3, by F. T. Wright.

sons no matter what might develop. Because Jesus is the complete and perfect Example as to how every believer is to behave under similar circumstances, everyone of us must have a clear understanding of how the Father and the Son related themselves to the covering cherub's chosen course.

That which stands out in the defection of Lucifer is that the Creators and the loyal angels exhibited only one disposition and engaged in only one activity and that was to save and restore. No trace of condemnation is to be found anywhere among them.

"Lucifer's disposition to serve himself instead of his Creator aroused a feeling of apprehension when observed by those who considered that the glory of God should be supreme. In heavenly counsel the angels pleaded with Lucifer. The Son of God presented before him the greatness, the goodness, and the justice of the Creator, and the sacred, unchanging nature of His law. God Himself had established the order of heaven; and in departing from it, Lucifer would dishonor his Maker and bring ruin upon himself. But the warning, given in infinite love and mercy, only aroused a spirit of resistance. Lucifer allowed his jealousy of Christ to prevail, and became the more determined." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 35, 36.

But the Lord did not limit His saving efforts to these steps, for infinite love continues unabated until every possible recourse has been totally exhausted. Therefore, the Father convened a mighty meeting attended by all the heavenly host and relayed, no doubt, to every intelligent being throughout the universe. God's specific purpose in gathering them together was that He might solve the problem by explaining just why it was that none but Christ could occupy the position He did. "The King of the universe summoned the heavenly hosts before Him, that in their presence He might set forth the true position of His Son and show the relation He sustained to all created beings." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 36.

It was a mighty, a beautiful, and a convincing revelation of the marriage between Christ and the created world; it was a presentation of the structure of the divine order and organization; and, as such, was a beautiful manifestation of the selfless, infinite love which had formed this structure for the happiness and blessing of every created being.

As the Almighty unfolded these truths, the angels were filled with wonder, admiration, and love. Lucifer himself was mightily moved to repentance, but he resisted the influence of God and Christ. Even though he briefly joined with the angels in their outburst of adoration and praise, his jealousy later resurfaced.

He then embarked on a campaign of lying insinuations against the governing Heads of the universe. "Leaving his place in the immediate presence of the Father, Lucifer went forth to diffuse the spirit of discontent among the angels. He worked with mysterious secrecy, and



for a time concealed his real purpose under an appearance of reverence for God." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 37.

His charges, lying though they were, had a telling effect. Because he had spent an extremely long period of time serving the Almighty in His immediate presence, he was accepted as the highest angelic authority on the subject of God and His character. No other angel enjoyed closer access to the Father than Lucifer, so that he, in the very nature of the situation, knew more of God than did any one else. Therefore, when he began to lay charges against the Creator, the other angels listened.

Notice carefully that the Lord had neither divorced nor dismissed this rebel from his assigned position. The fact that he no longer occupied it was due to his having left it, not to his having been suspended from it. "Leaving his place in the immediate presence of the Father, Lucifer went forth . . . ." In the meantime, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit continued their ministry of love. Devoid of any spirit of condemnation or of separation, they worked to bring him back into perfect harmony with the remainder of the kingdom. What a model this is for those confronted with a marriage partner who is breaking away! How many fragmenting marriage relationships would be restored if at least one of the contractors would relate to the problem as Jesus and His Father did.

"In great mercy, according to His divine character, God bore long with Lucifer. The spirit of discontent and disaffection had never before been known in heaven. It was a new element, strange, mysterious, unaccountable. Lucifer himself had not at first been acquainted with the real nature of his feelings; for a time he had feared to express the workings and imaginings of his mind; yet he did not dismiss them. He did not see whither he was drifting. But such efforts as infinite love and wisdom only could devise, were made to convince him of his error. His disaffection was proved to be without cause, and he was made to see what would be the result of persisting in revolt. Lucifer was convinced that he was in the wrong. He saw that 'the Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works' (*Psalms* 145:17); that the divine statutes are just, and that he ought to acknowledge them as such before all heaven. Had he done this, he might have saved himself and many angels. He had not at that time fully cast off his allegiance to God." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 39.

One cannot study this terrible conflict without being amazed at two things. Firstly, it is astonishing that, in the face of such clear explanations of the divine order, and against such manifestations of infinite love and compassion toward him, the devil could still persist in rebellion; and secondly that, in the face of such treasonous, inexcusable behavior, the Lord maintained His absolute faithfulness to His marriage vows. He convincingly demonstrated that He would love His creatures as promised, for better or for worse, until death brings eternal separation.

This is confirmed in the strongest of terms by the fact that, after all this, Lucifer's position was held open for him. "Though he had left his position as covering cherub, yet if he had been willing to return to God, acknowledging the Creator's wisdom, and satisfied to fill the place appointed him in God's great plan, he would have been reinstated in his office." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 39.

God's behavior is truly incredible. Upon confession and cleansing, Lucifer would have stood before God just as if he had never sinned at all. There is no talk here of his having to suffer a punishment for his crimes, of his being obliged to accept a demotion, or of his being required to prove, over a period of probation, that he was in fact truly repentant and worthy of reinstatement. God's ways are certainly different from man's ways. To understand them fully is beyond the capacity of humanity until the Holy Spirit illumines the mind and implants the same love within.

In Lucifer's case, the Lord did all that He could to prevent a divorce, but despite His best efforts, the mighty angel persisted in separating himself from God until the divorce was complete and irreversible.

"The time had come for a final decision; he must fully yield to the divine sovereignty or place himself in open rebellion. He nearly reached the decision to return, but pride forbade him. It was too great a sacrifice for one who had been so highly honored to confess that he had been in error, that his imaginings were false, and to yield to the authority which he had been working to prove unjust." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 39.

Satan now had no option but to leave heaven, for he could find no place for the operation of his principles where he had lost the battle to establish them. The war in heaven which resulted in Satan's eternal divorce from Christ and his expulsion from Paradise was certainly not a physical struggle between the devil and Christ. There was no question as to who had the greater power. That was not the issue being contested. Furthermore, the Creator of the universe does not become involved in physical struggles with His children nor does He ever use weapons of force. "God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power." *The Desire of Ages*, 759.

This statement makes it plain that the rebellion in heaven was not overcome by force but by truth and love. Likewise, the rebellion on this earth is being dealt with in the same way. The war in heaven was a struggle for the minds and loyalties of the angels. It was Satan's effort to establish his principles of operation in heaven firstly, and then throughout the universe, but when he lost the war so that no place was found by him

in heaven for his kingdom, then he had to choose either to live according to the divine order, or to take himself elsewhere. He chose the latter, and, in so doing, made his divorce from Christ final and permanent.

It is true that, when he found himself outside the heavenly gates, he pleaded to be allowed to return, but the Lord was unable to permit this because the devil and his followers had placed themselves where they could no longer be restored.

"After Satan and those who fell with him were shut out of heaven, and he realized that he had forever lost all its purity and glory, he repented, and wished to be reinstated in heaven. He was willing to take his proper place, or any position that might be assigned him. But no; heaven must not be placed in jeopardy. All heaven might be marred should he be taken back; for sin originated with him, and the seeds of rebellion were within him. Both he and his followers wept, and implored to be taken back into the favor of God. But their sin—their hatred, their envy and jealousy—had been so great that God could not blot it out. It must remain to receive its final punishment." *Early Writings*, 146.

There is no sin which God cannot blot out provided that there is genuine repentance and acceptable confession. Satan and his followers did repent and they did make a confession, but these steps on their part were not of the character which would give them access to God's saving, cleansing power. Like Balaam and Judas, they repented for the results of their sin, and not for the iniquity itself. This is proved by the fact that, when they realized that the repentance they had offered and the confessions they had made did not bring them re-admission into Paradise, they planned an all out war against the government of heaven. They showed how totally and permanently they had divorced themselves from their heavenly Husband.

Throughout the entire drama, no moves toward separation and divorce were made by Christ and His Father. Neither did they demote the rebellious angel from his position as the covering cherub, for that is not the way things are done wherever the divine order is established. Yearning, pitying, saving love alone were manifest on Christ's part. It was Lucifer who generated separation, and who established the divorce.

Wonder and be astonished at the behavior of Christ the Husband who was and is faithful to Lucifer just so long as both shall live. Today, the Saviour's love for Lucifer is undiminished and unchanged. What an example this is to every one who will be a follower of Jesus! How different this is from the ways of men both in the world and in the churches of the world.

The statement was made earlier in these studies that God has never dismissed anyone from the position assigned him no matter how grievously that person has sinned against Him. It was then later stated that this was absolute faithfulness to the marriage vow.

To confirm this, we would do well to study God's dealings with His people as a specific guide as to how we are to relate to those who fail us or even war against us. We need to understand and practice the marriage vow as Christ has given it meaning.

Unfortunately, there is not the space in this publication to survey each and every case in Bible history which reveals the outworking of the divine principles. So, we shall confine ourselves to a few selected examples which are typical of the rest, while at the same time noting the main points in respect to some of the other individuals who had been called of God to fulfill an important role, but who failed the Lord very badly. We begin with Adam and Eve.

The defection of our first parents was a reproduction of Satan's sin in heaven, but the Lord did not divorce them. Instead, He extended His marriage by entering into a bond with sinful, fallen humanity. This was the ultimate humility, sacrifice, and manifestation of marital faithfulness.

Abraham and Sarah, like Lucifer, lost sight of their true position and sought to do God's part of the contract. When, by their devisings, they achieved the birth of Ishmael, they prided themselves on having achieved the divine purpose. But they had followed procedures which were Babylonian or antichristian through and through. They could not have sinned more grievously, yet, the divine Husband did not cast them off, nor did He criticize, condemn, denounce, or separate Himself from them. He did not even suggest that they be deprived of their God-given position as the parents of the promised Seed.

Jacob also resorted to the utterly Babylonian procedures of devising his own plans, and of deceiving his father in order to ensure that the promise of the birthright be secured to himself. But again, we find no intention on God's part of divorcing him or of denying him the birthright blessings or of unseating him from his position.

Already the case of Aaron has been considered in Chapter Two in the light of the training given to him throughout his childhood and youth. We wish to consider it now from the point of view revealing Christ's relationship to him when he became responsible for the casting and erection of the golden calf and the licentious debauchery and wild dancing which accompanied it.

Aaron's sin stands out as one of the most terrible betrayals of sacred trust ever recorded in the Scriptures. He had been left in charge of the people in the encampment and was responsible for the maintenance of law and order. But, the disappearance of Moses up the mountain proved to have a very unsettling effect on the Israelites who had become accustomed in Egypt to having a visible God in the form of the idols which they had now left behind. In the place of these idols they looked to Moses as their visible God rather than to the Lord Jehovah in heaven above. So, when days passed by without Moses' reappearance, they

began to grow uneasy and restless. These feelings soon swelled until the people demanded action. They had to have a visible god. Aaron being the one in authority, they brought their demands to him.

"Such a crisis demanded a man of firmness, decision, and unflinching courage; one who held the honor of God above popular favor, personal safety, or life itself. But the present leader of Israel was not of this character." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 316.

So with calm assurance, Aaron made the calf and the people began their worship of the image in the place of God. From the mountaintop, God and Moses observed the disgraceful performance going on below. It was so evil that, had not Moses especially interceded for Israel, the protecting Spirit of God would have been forced to withdraw and leave the people exposed to swift and certain destruction.

All that Aaron had done was exceedingly sinful, but, when Moses came down the mountain, Aaron made things much worse for himself by exhibiting no signs of repentance whatsoever but stoutly defended himself instead by attempting to lay all the blame on the people.

Like Lucifer, Aaron had been highly privileged and this is what made his sin all the more grievous. "The fact that Aaron had been blessed and honored so far above the people was what made his sin so heinous. It was Aaron 'the saint of the Lord' (*Psalms* 106:16), that had made the idol and announced the feast. It was he who had been appointed as spokesman for Moses, and concerning whom God Himself had testified, 'I know that he can speak well' (*Exodus* 4:14), that had failed to check the idolaters in their heaven-daring purpose. He by whom God had wrought in bringing judgments both upon the Egyptians and upon their gods, had heard unmoved the proclamation before the molten image, 'These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.' It was he who had been with Moses on the mount, and had there beheld the glory of the Lord, who had seen that in the manifestation of that glory there was nothing of which an image could be made—it was he who had changed that glory into the similitude of an ox. He to whom God had committed the government of the people in the absence of Moses, was found sanctioning their rebellion. The Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him.' *Deuteronomy* 9:20. But in answer to the earnest intercession of Moses, his life was spared; and in penitence and humiliation for his great sin, he was restored to the favor of God." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 320, 323.

Consideration of this record of disloyalty, uncovers the picture of a man who could watch *unmoved* as God's people debased themselves around the golden image. It would have been serious enough if, after having yielded to the people because of weakness and fear, he had watched them in an agony of remorse, but to stand by *unmoved* was to exhibit a serious lack of spiritual integrity, a toleration for sin as if it were

but a minor matter. Aaron had certainly revealed the kind of man that he was, and, according to human judgment had shown that he was unfit to bear sacred responsibilities or to hold a holy office.

But God's ways are not man's ways and He sees differently from His children. Aaron had already been appointed to holy office, and as a member of Christ's body, the Lord would never divorce him or separate from him. Aaron could have vacated his position even as Lucifer did in heaven, and would have done so as Lucifer did if he had refused to repent. Had he left, the Lord would have had no choice but to accept that, but the separation would have come from Aaron's side, never from God's.

Some would claim that the words: "And the Lord was very angry with Aaron and would have destroyed him . . . ." Deuteronomy 9:20, prove that the Lord had separated from Moses' brother, and was about to remove him from his position by killing him.

To take this stand is to misinterpret Scripture. God does not destroy, nor does He take away a person's position, nor withdraw from him. Instead, the sinning soul destroys himself, takes himself out of his divinely-appointed position, and separates himself from God. Aaron had done this to the extent that he was virtually outside the circle of protection, and, but for Moses' prayer and Aaron's penitence and confession, he would have perished that day. For those not yet confirmed on how God destroys, a study of *Behold Your God* by F. T. Wright and available from Destiny Press, is highly recommended.

The penitent Aaron was able to return to God and retain his position. Shortly after the golden calf incident, the people, according to God's direction, began the construction of the tabernacle. When it was completed, it was necessary to appoint the high priest and those priests who would assist him in his work.

If the selection of the high priest had been the responsibility of the people, it is quite clear that Aaron would never have been elected. So far as men could see, he had utterly and permanently disqualified himself from holding a position as a spiritual leader of the people, and therefore, they would not even have considered him as a candidate for the high priesthood.

But the people were not consulted, for God, in His love and wisdom, realizes that man is not capable of appointing others their positions. Israel was not a democracy, a "government of the people, by the people, for the people."<sup>2</sup> It was both a civil and religious theocracy, a government of and by the Lord for the benefit of everyone in it. This governmental system is so constituted that God alone through Jesus Christ and the

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<sup>2</sup> *World Book Encyclopedia*, 5:104, 1982 edition, quoting Abraham Lincoln.

Holy Spirit has the responsibility of deciding what position shall be filled by each and every member in the church.

It was by virtue of this arrangement that Aaron was appointed to the position of high priest in Israel. God chose the man, and He expected the people to recognize and accept what He had done. They did so without question or protest, for there is no record of any unrest or discontent over Aaron's appointment. He proved to be a faithful priest from then until his death, his one mistake being his support of his sister Miriam when she murmured against Moses and his position. Again, that did not cost him his ministry and work. Instead, he was required to understand the nature of his sin and to repent of it and make an adequate, acceptable confession, which he did.

God's dealings with Aaron are an amazing revelation of His ways in contrast to the ways of men who are so ready to think in terms of divorce in order to solve their problems. Let it be repeated that, when two people marry, they give to each other a position which once given can never be withdrawn, for divorce never comes from the Christian who truly understands the structure of the divine order and practices its principles. Even when the other partner sins most grievously against the marriage as both Lucifer and Aaron did, they are not to be demoted or cast off. Instead, divine love is to forgive and seek total restoration. If this is rejected as in Lucifer's case, divorce will follow, for the sinner has turned his back on love, and this can only lead to separation, but it will come only from the side of the unrepentant. "The very essence of the gospel is restoration . . . ." *The Desire of Ages*, 824.

Jehovah dealt with Aaron according to His unchanging ways, which means that He will relate Himself to every one of His messengers in the selfsame manner. Understanding God's ways then becomes our guide to the way in which we are to relate to marriage partners, family members, church members, and messengers.

What all this means is that our recognition of a person in a certain position does not depend on whether, in the light of serious mistakes he has made, we adjudge him worthy to be at that post of duty or not, but on whether the evidence shows that the Lord called him to that position in the first case.

The pattern however, which tends to repeat itself, is that the marriage partner satisfies himself prior to the wedding day that his bride is the one for him. As a true Christian who practices the Sabbath rest principles, he believes that she is divinely-appointed to be his wife. But, after some time, she makes a bad mistake, reveals some hitherto unseen weakness, and betrays the family to its enemies. Then comes the temptation to believe that she has now disqualified herself for her position and it is time to think in terms of disciplinary measures to correct the evil. If these were



**It is usual for a marriage to begin very happily. Beautiful bonds of love bind the partners as one, but how quickly this pure relationship begins to die and be replaced by division when undesirable traits of character are revealed under the stresses and pressures of life. But, when divine love reigns in the heart, nothing can change the relationship except to deepen and extend it. Thus it is that God loves His children. There is nothing which can change His love for us. Nothing!**

to be administered, they would certainly make the situation worse, and this would in turn, start the mind thinking in terms of separation.

The same pattern applies to the building of a movement. To initiate proceedings, God calls a messenger to proclaim present truth. Those who accept the light as from God are quite satisfied that the instrument through whom the message is communicated is called of the Lord and they gladly support him in his divinely-appointed ministry.

Unfortunately, and more so as time goes by, there is a tendency to think of him as a very holy, unique person not subject to the same problems which trouble other people. Accordingly, they erect a pedestal and seat him on it high above them. So, despite his diligent efforts to teach them better, while he protests that he is one like themselves, they have made themselves a god out of the man who is no more than a messenger.



In the meantime, he is being harassed by temptations of which they know nothing. While they live lives that are more sheltered than his, he is being attacked on every hand, endures hardship, is deprived of comforts that the average person takes for granted, is betrayed by those who profess to be friends and supporters of the work, and is assailed by faith-testing discouragements.

Most messengers have failed under this kind of pressure, and, when they do there are those who, while they still acknowledge that the messenger was called of God, now declare that his sin has disqualified him for his position, and they withdraw their support.

By so doing, they demonstrate that they did not understand the divine order nor the marriage principle. Instead of sitting in judgment on the fallen one, they should have made a fresh study of the way the Lord has related Himself to this kind of situation and then done likewise. They must learn that divorce never comes from God's side, and therefore must never come from their side either. They need to realize, that if we divorce him or her whom the Lord has not divorced, then we are spiritual adulterers ourselves.

There would be few things if any which would be more difficult to do than to go on supporting a person who, in our eyes had disqualified himself for his work. To humanity, divorce is a so much more attractive solution, but, it is not God's way. Yet, it is here that the victory must be gained, for those who do not learn to practice the principles of the divine order down here will never qualify for a part in that order in the coming kingdom.

Among those who understood these principles and how to live them, was David as is revealed in his relation to an unrepentant and revengeful King Saul.

David knew as did all Israel, that the Lord had personally directed Samuel the prophet to anoint Saul to be the first king of Israel. God had given Saul his position, but it was not long before the monarch began to drift into terrible apostasy. He became a cruel oppressor of the people and was dragging all Israel into perdition with him. If ever a man could be judged in human sight to have disqualified himself for his position, it was Israel's first king.

Yet, the Lord did not unseat him from his throne, but actually protected and sustained him until his death terminated the relationship. It is another remarkable example of the way in which God remains faithful to His responsibilities. It demonstrates once more that the Lord never changes in His relationship to us; but it is we who change toward Him. David, the new king elect, demonstrated a marvelous knowledge of these principles when, on two different occasions, he was provided with the opportunity to slay the king, and the arguments to justify it.

Saul had become a cruel, despotic ruler, a curse to Israel, and an evil witness to the nations around. He was dragging the people down with him into ever deeper apostasy and degradation. He had ceased to serve the Lord or His people, and was a disgrace to his profession. The name of God was held in contempt among the heathen because of him. It had become clear that, so long as he continued as the head of the monarchy, Israel was certain to suffer loss and walk in darkness. The situation was desperate and the pressure of the hour called for someone to take immediate and decisive action.

The opportunity was presented to David when the sovereign entered alone into the very cave where he and his men were hiding. "So he [King Saul] came to the sheep-folds by the road, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to attend to his needs. (David and his men were staying in the recesses of the cave.)

"Then the men of David said to him, This is the day of which the Lord said to you, 'Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you.' ' And David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe." *1 Samuel 24:3, 4.*

If ever a man's life was endangered, it was King Saul's that day. Argument piled on argument calling for his execution. His crimes against Israel and his unfaithfulness to God were sins which made him worthy of death. The desperate needs of God's people called for his immediate removal. In fact, to have spared him under the circumstances would seem to be a shirking of responsibility ever afterwards to be regretted. If there was any doubt left in regard to what David should do, there was seeming Scripture support for the execution. His followers with positive conviction urged on him the necessity for immediate action. "Then the men of David said to him, This is the day of which the Lord said to you, 'Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you. . . .'"

No doubt David's personal feelings lent weight to the proposition, for he was wearied with continual flight and jeopardy on account of Saul's unrelenting determination to destroy him. To take the king's life in that cave that day would have rid him of an immense problem and shortened the waiting time for his assumption of the kingship. It was a very attractive prospect which was offering itself to him, and, without a doubt, he was sorely tempted to kill the king there and then.

In a situation like this, when human nature is clamoring for the solution which will rid it of its threats, men are prone to clutch on to any argument which can be used to justify their taking decisive action. But, the case of David demonstrated that, even when the justification for killing Saul seemed so conclusive, he was wise to carefully weigh up all the other evidences to make certain what was really the correct course to follow.

Against all the other evidences stood the divine principle of marriage. Saul was the Lord's anointed. It was God who had placed him in his position, and it was He who would have to remove him. It was not for David to sit in judgment on the king and *decree* his punishment. This principle is clearly stated in the following words:

"God permits men to be placed in positions of responsibility. When they err, He has power to correct or to remove them. We should be careful not to take into our hands the work of judging that belongs to God.

"The conduct of David toward Saul has a lesson. By command of God, Saul had been anointed as king over Israel. Because of his disobedience the Lord declared that the kingdom should be taken from him; and yet how tender and courteous and forbearing was the conduct of David toward him!" *The Ministry of Healing*, 484.

It was because David was established on the marriage principle that he was saved from making a terrible mistake that day and again on the later occasion when he was able to penetrate Saul's camp in the dead of night until he actually stood by the sleeping king. He understood that, as surely as God had placed Saul in the position of king, and maintained him in that role, he must respect and support the monarch too.

Every believer in Jesus needs to learn this same vital lesson in order to be saved from the fearful peril of rejecting God's delegated messengers. To do so is to reject Christ which is in turn to sever one's connection with eternal life. "If you reject Christ's delegated messengers, you reject Christ." *Testimonies to Ministers*, 97. It is not for us to decide whether a person is worthy of the position or whether he is filling it satisfactorily or not. Those are God's concerns, not ours. We are to concern ourselves with relating to the person in question in the same way that God does.

Another splendid example of Christ's attitude toward one to whom he had given a position was the relationship which he maintained toward Judas Iscariot. This man had been appointed to a place among the twelve, not because Christ chose him, but because, when he urged his presence among them, the Saviour understood that the other men in the group needed to learn the vital lessons that the presence of Judas would provide. "While Jesus was preparing the disciples for their ordination, one who had not been summoned urged his presence among them. It was Judas Iscariot, a man who professed to be a follower of Christ. He now came forward, soliciting a place in this inner circle of disciples. . . . Jesus neither repulsed nor welcomed him . . . If He had repulsed Judas, they would, in their own minds, have questioned the wisdom of their Master. The after history of Judas would show them the danger of allowing any worldly consideration to have weight in deciding the fitness of men for the work of God. The co-operation of such men as the

disciples were anxious to secure would have betrayed the work into the hands of its worst enemies." *The Desire of Ages*, 293, 294.

From the outset and increasingly so as they moved on toward the cross, Judas wielded an evil influence among the twelve. "With Judas an element of antagonism was introduced among the disciples. In connecting himself with Jesus he had responded to the attraction of His character and life. He had sincerely desired a change in himself, and had hoped to experience this through a union with Jesus. But this desire did not become predominant. That which ruled him was the hope of selfish benefit in the worldly kingdom which he expected Christ to establish. Though recognizing the divine power of the love of Christ, Judas did not yield to its supremacy. He continued to cherish his own judgment and opinions, his disposition to criticize and condemn. Christ's motives and movements, often so far above his comprehension, excited doubt and disapproval, and his own questionings and ambitions were insinuated to the disciples. Many of their contentions for supremacy, much of their dissatisfaction with Christ's methods, originated with Judas." *Education*, 91, 92.

If ever Christ had justification for separation from one of His creatures, He certainly had it in the case of Judas, but He never permitted the solution of separation to cross His mind. What a wonderful example this is to every man or woman who feels that his or her marriage has become stale, flat, irksome, burdensome, profitless, and positively wearing. If such think that they have justification for divorce, then Christ had much, much more so in the burdens and cares that Judas imposed upon Him. The more deeply and extensively one considers the faithfulness of Christ in His marriage relationship to His unfaithful, disloyal, uncaring, irresponsible, and unspiritual ones, the more one realizes the truth that His love never changes or diminishes in the slightest, but is truly infinite. It never has and never will find a limit, a ceiling, a boundary, or a stopping place. No matter how far it is called to go, it will, and still there will be an infinity beyond.

It will also be seen with convicting clarity that marriage, once contracted, is indeed until death terminates the relationship. True marriage can never be a temporary arrangement to be lightly broken up under the least provocation. When it is found that the other member of the relationship is no longer faithful to the marriage vow, every effort will be re-doubled to bring the wanderer back if at all possible. This is the beautiful witness we have in the peerless example of Jesus with Judas. No truly spiritual person can study the Saviour's dealing with this erring one without being deeply moved.

"Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him." *John* 6:64. Yet, knowing all, He had withheld no pleading of mercy or gift of love.

"Seeing the danger of Judas, He had brought him close to Himself, within the inner circle of His chosen and trusted disciples. Day after day, when the burden lay heaviest upon His own heart, He had borne the pain of continual contact with that stubborn, suspicious, brooding spirit; He had witnessed and labored to counteract among His disciples that continuous, secret, and subtle antagonism. And all this that no possible saving influence might be lacking to that imperiled soul!" *Education*, 92, 93.

Judas did not perceive and so was not able to realize that Jesus was his Husband. He had never learned the truth of the words: " 'For your Maker is your Husband, the Lord of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth.

" 'For the Lord has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a youthful wife when you were refused,' says your God." *Isaiah* 54:5, 6.

But though Judas could not see His Saviour in the role of a loving Husband, Christ's faithfulness to him as a Husband is not wasted, for it provides a living demonstration of the way Christ continues to love, support, and sustain even those who betray Him. When Christians have learned to love their marriage partners and each other as Christ loves all of us, then how speedily the work will be finished.

Christ never left Judas; did not cast him out; did not deprive him of the position of a disciple; did not deny him the same mighty powers to preach the gospel, heal the sick, and cast out demons as were given to the other eleven, when they all were sent out on their great missionary journey; and washed his feet first at the Lord's Supper. It was Judas who separated from his divine Husband and left the position granted to him. He did so, not because of any pressure from Christ, but in spite of every infinitely loving effort on his divine Husband's part to save the marriage.

Christ's behavior is so utterly different from the way in which humans approach the problem of the breakdown of human relationships, that it is difficult for us to really grasp the fact that His love is forever, irrespective of how much we betray Him. We are slow to realize that, once we admit another person into a position in our lives, we can never take the position away and give it to another no matter how unworthy that person has become to continue in that position. To reject another person from the position in which he has been placed is to reject Christ, and that is to reject eternal life.

For instance, it is clear that, despite Judas' unrelenting effort to undermine confidence in Christ's work and to sow discord among His followers, the Saviour did not reject Judas from his position, but respected and supported him in that position even to the extent that he

was sent forth as a representative teacher endowed like all the rest with the awesome power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, if one of the other disciples had become aware of the perfidy of Judas, and had accordingly withdrawn all support from him, he would have been rejecting a messenger delegated and supported by Christ and thus would have been rejecting Christ's work and Christ Himself.

Of course, the Saviour did not participate with Judas in his evil work, nor is a wife, for instance, to join in activities demanded by her husband when to do so would require the violation of principle, such as when he expects her to work or spend time with him in pleasure seeking on the Sabbath day, attend theaters, the races, and sporting venues, and disregard health and dress reform. Such a firm stand can prove very costly to the marriage but the resulting breakdown will be the fault of the transgressor, not of the true child of God.

The study of the relationship which Christ so consistently maintained with every one of those who were unfaithful to their marriage commitments to Him, has been but lightly touched on in this section. The facts are that an entire chapter could be devoted to each of the cases considered as well as to all the others which are recorded in Bible history. But, enough has been written to reveal the incredible faithfulness of Christ, our peerless Example, to the marriage of Himself with His creatures. He has demonstrated that His love has never been conditional on their love for Him, nor has He permitted His relationship to them to be affected by the degree to which they were faithful to Him. When this is understood, it will be clearly seen that He never withdraws His grace from them, but that the deprivation of these blessings is due to their separation from Him.

Thus the heavenly Husband has shown how we are to love as He loved and what true faithfulness to the marriage vow means.



# **The Extent of God's Commitment**

## **Chapter 17**

The main point established in the previous chapter was that when Jehovah enters into a working or marriage relationship with one of His creatures, He will honor the arrangement with total faithfulness until either the partner removes himself through apostasy, or is taken in death. No matter how grievously the human agent may sin, the Lord neither discards nor replaces him. This shining example teaches that no matter how much our marriage partners sin against us, we never withdraw from them, nor withhold our support. Marriage is forever.

There will be those who can accept this when they know that the original appointment was of God as in the cases of Lucifer, Adam and Eve, Moses, David, Paul, and others, but what should be done when it is evident that God never intended that we form a working relationship with the person to whom we are united? Should steps be taken to undo the mistakes of the past by breaking up the marriage and then seeking God's guidance into a relationship with the person of His appointment?

This might seem to be quite a logical argument, but the Lord Himself, by His own sterling example, demonstrates that that is not His way. By witness after witness, He has declared that, even when He finds Himself involved in a relationship contrary to His will and against His perfect judgment, and which should never have been formed, He will honor the union as if it had been blessed with His approval from the beginning. Splendid examples of this are provided in the cases of Aaron, the seventy elders, King Saul, and Judas, to indicate only some of those in this category. The positions in the Lord's work in which each of these were established were due to serious unbelief. If the people involved in the

appointment of each of these had exercised strong, intelligent faith, none of these would ever have been given the places they occupied for the remainder of their lives. But, once the Lord gave them their places, even though it was the fruit of unbelief, He never took it away from them, but worked with them to whatever extent they let Him until death terminated the marriage. Let each of these tragic stories be studied one by one so that this point can be clearly seen, and so that we shall become extremely careful about promoting anyone to any position in our lives or in the church, and so that, once we have, we will know that we have to honor the step taken until apostasy or death terminates the arrangement.

We will begin with Aaron.

The crisis which developed in the Israelite encampment when Moses was called to the top of Mt. Sinai, ". . . demanded a man of firmness, decision, and unflinching courage; one who held the honor of God above popular favor, personal safety, or life itself. *But the present leader of Israel was not of this character.* Aaron feebly remonstrated with the people, but his wavering and timidity at the critical moment only rendered them the more determined." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 316.

When the Lord tells us in His word that Aaron did not have the character required to cope with that situation, we are led to question why Aaron was chosen of God to fill this responsibility during Moses' absence. God seems to have left Himself open to the charge of injustice by expecting more from this man than he was capable of giving. But, no charge can be laid against the Lord for Aaron's appointment and failure. This becomes very clear when consideration is given to the circumstances which led to Aaron's elevation to the position of Moses' assistant, a position he was given because of Moses' unbelief.

When, at the burning bush, the Lord directed Moses to return to Egypt to lead the Israelites from Egyptian bondage to occupation of the promised land, Moses staggered before the sheer immensity of the task before him. He had no illusions about the awesome power of Egypt, for, as the general of her armies, he had once wielded that mighty power. He understood how helpless his people were by comparison. Furthermore, he, the once proud crown prince of what was then the world's mightiest nation, had fled in disgrace after having murdered a slave master whom he caught flogging an Israelite. Even the Lord's people would have regarded him as a failure despite the fact that it had been prophesied by the angels that Moses was the divinely-appointed instrument of their deliverance. Even if his own people still had confidence in him, he had none in himself and could only believe that they saw him as he saw himself. Add to all this the fact that he had become a very humble man indeed and had lost all aspirations toward leadership, and one can understand from the human point of view with what dismay he must have viewed the commission to return to Egypt.



So, Moses began to raise strenuous objections to the Lord's directives. "But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?' " Exodus 3:11.

In response, the Lord assured him that he would not go in his own strength but that Jehovah, the almighty One, would assuredly go with him and give him complete success.

"So He said, 'I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.' " Exodus 3:12.

This should have been enough, but Moses persisted with his objections.

"Then Moses said to God, 'Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?' " Exodus 3:13.

Patiently, the Lord responded to this question which was in reality an objection. "And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And He said, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.' " ' "

"Moreover God said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: 'The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent Me to you. This is My name for ever, and this is My memorial to all generations.' " ' " Exodus 3:14, 15.

God then proceeded to give Moses some specific instructions in regard to what he was to do on arrival in Egypt together with the positive assurance that the Israelites would not doubt his mission. He also warned him that Pharaoh would not immediately obey, but would resist the divine injunction. Still Moses raised objections as he sought a way of escape from his responsibilities. "Then Moses answered and said, 'But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you.' " ' " Exodus 4:1.

There was in fact no such supposition, for the Lord had plainly said: "Then they will heed your voice . . . ." Exodus 3:18. To suppose that the Israelites might not believe him in the face of such a plain assurance from the Omniscient, was blatant unbelief, yet Moses did it.

With infinite patience, the Lord continued to labor with His reluctant servant. To really convince him that he was divinely called and that his mission could not fail, He worked two miracles in his presence—the changing of Moses' rod into a serpent and back to a rod again; and the infecting of his hand with leprosy, followed by its cleansing. In addition, he was promised that, when he came to Egypt, he would repeat these signs both in the presence of the elders and the king. If these did not



**God will yet call men from different occupations even as He called Moses from minding sheep, and it is false humility and unbelief for the one called of God to argue back, as Moses did, that he is unqualified to fill the position to which the Lord has appointed him. We are to believe that all His biddings are His enablings.**

sweep away any unbelief on the part of the Jewish leaders and Pharaoh, he was to take water from the Nile and pour it on the dry land where it would be changed into blood. Still, Moses drew back.

"Then Moses said to the Lord, 'O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.' " Exodus 4:10.

Now, notice carefully what the Lord's solution to this problem was. It was to endow Moses with the power of utterance so he would have no problem in this regard. It definitely was not at this stage to offer him a spokesman in the person of Aaron. "So the Lord said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord?

" 'Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say.' " *Exodus* 4:11, 12.

Thus God answered every objection raised against His instructions and Moses should have surrendered his unbelief and trustingly obeyed the divine commission and stepped out in the Lord's strength. Instead, he, after all that, virtually refused to go at all by telling the Lord to send someone else. "But he said, 'O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send.' " *Exodus* 4:13.

This was a most serious manifestation of unbelief, the implications of which are expressed in these words: "But when we give ourselves wholly to God and in our work follow His directions, He makes Himself responsible for its accomplishment. He would not have us conjecture as to the success of our honest endeavors. Not once should we even think of failure. We are to co-operate with One who knows no failure.

"We should not talk of our own weakness and inability. This is a manifest distrust of God, a denial of His word. When we murmur because of our burdens, or refuse the responsibilities He calls upon us to bear, we are virtually saying that He is a hard master, that He requires what He has not given us power to do.

"The spirit of the slothful servant we are often fain to call humility. But true humility is widely different. To be clothed with humility does not mean that we are to be dwarfs in intellect, deficient in aspiration, and cowardly in our lives, shunning burdens lest we fail to carry them successfully. Real humility fulfills God's purposes by depending upon His strength.

"God works by whom He will. He sometimes selects the humblest instrument to do the greatest work, for His power is revealed through the weakness of men. We have our standard, and by it we pronounce one thing great and another small; but God does not estimate according to our rule. We are not to suppose that what is great to us must be great to God, or that what is small to us must be small to Him. It does not rest with us to pass judgment on our talents or to choose our work. We are to take up the burdens that God appoints, bearing them for His sake, and ever going to Him for rest. Whatever our work, God is honored by wholehearted, cheerful service. He is pleased when we take up our duties with gratitude, rejoicing that we are accounted worthy to be co-laborers with Him." *Christ's Object Lessons*, 363, 364.

It is unbelief to do otherwise, and Moses' continued opposition to God's direction was not the manifestation of true humility, which ". . . fulfills God's purposes by depending upon His strength", but of unbelief. Moses was charging God in effect with not knowing what He was doing, and that He could make a far wiser choice for the position. This was to infer that God was unable to decide what was best for the work, and that Moses was better able to make these evaluations than was

the Almighty. It was a very serious stand for Moses to make, and it was fortunate that He was dealing with *a* loving God and not with an earthly potentate.

Now, notice carefully that it was when Moses rejected God's way, which was to give him fluent utterance, that the Lord gave him his way by appointing Aaron to be the spokesman in place of Moses. This course would never have been adopted if Moses had reacted in true humility and, in simple, living faith had believed in and laid hold of the promise of God: "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord?

"Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say." *Exodus* 4:11, 12.

In response, Moses should have thanked the Lord for this assurance and promptly made arrangements for his departure for Egypt, but, instead, he said: "O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send."

Then it was, and only then, when Moses had rejected God's way, that Aaron was chosen. "So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and He said: 'Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is also coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart.

" 'Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do.

" 'So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God.

" 'And you shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs.' " *Exodus* 4:14-17.

Thus it was through unbelief that Aaron was elevated to stand next to Moses in the administration of God's will in Israel. Even though such an appointment should never have been made; even though it was the fruit of unbelief; even though Aaron did not possess the strength of character needed to fill his position satisfactorily to the honor of God, and the blessing of Israel; once his appointment had been made, God honored it to the end.

Therefore, when Moses left the encampment and climbed Mt. Sinai, the Lord was left with no other choice than to place the entire encampment under his jurisdiction, even though there must have been more competent men in Israel, with the capacity to maintain law and order. Once Aaron had been selected as Moses' assistant, Moses' assistant he was, and it was for this reason that he was appointed to the high priesthood. It certainly was not due to his competence nor to any recommendations from his past performances. It was all the sad outworking of Moses' unbelief.

A distinction should be made between the goodness of Aaron on one hand and his capacities on the other. Without a doubt, he was a good man thanks to the righteousness established in him by the Lord, and by parental training. He loved the Lord and His cause, and was glad to forsake Egypt for the journey through the desert to the promised land.

But, to serve the Lord successfully, one must have more than righteousness; he must also be blessed with a range of qualifications adequate for the faithful fulfillment of the task before him.

Let us now proceed to the story of the appointment of the seventy elders.

Many people confuse this with the assignment of magistrates and judges to handle the courts of petty sessions which were making too great a demand on Moses' time. This was done through the counsel given by Jethro when, on delivering his daughter, Zipporah, Moses' wife, to her husband, he observed the unnecessary burden placed on Moses. This organizational step was taken before they even reached Mt. Sinai.

The elevation of the seventy elders took place after they left Mt. Sinai where they had spent nearly a year receiving the law, building the sanctuary, and having the sacrificial system more comprehensively established among them. (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 374.)

"A distance of only eleven days' journey lay between Sinai and Kadesh, on the borders of Canaan . . . ." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 376, but what eventful days they proved to be. Their pathway lay through a very terrible area where no one dwelt or even traveled and, after three days, the mixed multitude began their miserable murmuring once more. It soon spread to the entire encampment, and "Again they began to clamor for flesh to eat." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 377.

Things moved from bad to worse until they were in a state of serious rebellion made worse by the wonderful revelations of truth given them at Sinai, and because of the solemn covenant they had formed with God there. They were far more responsible than they had been before the illumination received at Sinai, and their evil course brought swifter retribution. "Their murmuring was now rebellion, and as such it must receive prompt and signal punishment, if Israel was to be preserved from anarchy and ruin. The fire of Jehovah burned among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.' The most guilty of the complainers were slain by lightning from the cloud." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 379.

In terror and desperation, the people pleaded with Moses to entreat the Lord to stay the destruction, which he did, and the fire was quenched.

One would expect that the people would have been deeply repentant and very much afraid to repeat their sin, "But the evil was soon worse than before. Instead of leading the survivors to humiliation and



After spending two forty day and night sessions in continual face to face communion with God in the Person of Jesus Christ, Moses was able to let go the arm of faith, indulge in self-pity and evil murmuring, and manifest unbelief. It was because of this that the seventy elders were chosen and appointed. How guarded then each one of us needs to be, against the ever-present danger of falling.

repentance, this fearful judgment seemed only to increase their murmurings. In all directions the people were gathered at the door of their tents, weeping and lamenting." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 379.

This was a tremendous trial for Moses which he seemed to feel was too much for him to bear though in fact it was not.

"The heart of Moses sank. He had pleaded that Israel should not be destroyed, even though his own posterity might then become a great nation. In his love for them he had prayed that his name might be blotted from the book of life rather than that they should be left to perish. He had imperiled all for them, and this was their response. All their hardships, even their imaginary sufferings, they charged upon him; and their wicked murmurings made doubly heavy the burden of care and responsibility under which he staggered. In his distress he was tempted even to distrust God. His prayer was almost a complaint. 'Wherefore hast Thou afflicted Thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favor in Thy sight, that Thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? . . . Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me.' " *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 379, 380.

It is evident that this mighty man of God had taken his eyes from his Source and focused them on himself. He had no thought for the way in which God was being rewarded for His mercy and goodness to the people, but only for the way in which he was being treated. "He had imperiled all for them, and this was their response." These words sum up the way that he felt and, in his prayer, he talked only of the fearful burdens which had been laid upon him, and which he declared were too much for him to bear.

It is surprising that Moses reacted the way he did when he was one of the greatest men in all human history and carries the distinction of being the meekest person ever to live on this earth apart from Christ Himself, as it is written: "Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth." *Numbers* 12:3.

"Moses was the greatest man who ever stood as leader of the people of God. He was greatly honored by God, not for the experience which he had gained in the Egyptian court, but because he was the meekest of men. God talked with him face to face, as a man talks with a friend. If men desire to be honored by God, let them be humble. Those who carry forward God's work should be distinguished from all others by their humility. Of the man who is noted for his meekness, Christ says, He can be trusted. Through him I can reveal Myself to the world. He will not weave into the web any threads of selfishness. I will manifest Myself to him as I do not to the world." *The SDA Bible Commentary* 1:1113.

Furthermore, this wonderful man had just spent two forty-day sessions alone with God on the mountain. During that time, he had received marvelous revelations of the power, perfection, goodness, righteousness, and holiness of God. When he emerged from the divine presence, his face shone with so bright a light that the people could not even look at him. He had to cover his face with a veil.

One would expect that, after all this, he would have been sealed against the temptation to indulge in self-pity and in murmuring against God. But he was not, as the record demonstrates. He seemed to have lost sight of the wonderful revelations of God's righteousness and power. It was as if he had never spent those eighty days with God on the mountain.

What a solemn warning is contained in this story! If Moses could fail as he did, then where stand we who have received far less by way of spiritual advantages than he had. We are now led to realize that we can never for a moment relax with the thought that we are immune to temptation. Constant guard must be maintained against the devices of the enemy.

Whenever we take our eyes off our Source and fix them on ourselves and our troubles, we can be sure that our burdens will rapidly increase in magnitude. They will appear to grow larger and larger until they so fill our entire consciousness, that there will be space for no other consideration. The inevitable and inescapable consequence of this is that unbelief will displace faith, and moves will be made which shall seriously harm the Lord's work. So it was in the case of Moses!

When he had uttered his prayer of unbelief and selfish murmuring, God, even though He knew that the solution, though at first beneficial to Moses and Israel, would soon bring serious evils into the camp, accepted Moses' plea and commissioned the appointment of the seventy elders.

"The Lord hearkened to his prayer, and directed him to summon seventy men of the elders of Israel—men not only advanced in years, but possessing dignity, sound judgment, and experience. 'And bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation,' He said, 'that they may stand there with thee. And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone.' " *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 380.

This was God's solution to the problem, but, let it be emphasized that not one of the seventy would have been given that position but for Moses' unbelief. It was his breakdown of faith that resulted in the seventy elders being appointed. That is made clear in the next paragraph after the one just quoted above.

"The Lord permitted Moses to choose for himself the most faithful and efficient men to share the responsibility with him. Their influence



would assist in holding in check the violence of the people, and quelling insurrection; yet serious evils would eventually result from their promotion. *They would never have been chosen had Moses manifested faith corresponding to the evidences he had witnessed of God's power and goodness.* But he had *magnified* his own burdens and services, almost losing sight of the fact that he was only the instrument by which God had wrought. He was not excusable in indulging, in the slightest degree, the spirit of murmuring that was the curse of Israel. Had he relied fully upon God, the Lord would have guided him continually and would have given him strength for every emergency."

Thus, the word of God makes it abundantly clear that the seventy, like Aaron, would never have been appointed to their special position if Moses had not been unbelieving. But, once they were, even though the appointments should never have been, and even though they were to bring great damage to the Lord's work, He honored them just the same. The seventy went on to eventually become the Sanhedrin, the most powerful body of men in the Jewish organization, and the group who condemned Christ to death and induced the Romans to crucify Him. What worse outworking than that could be imagined.

The next witness to which consideration will be given is the replacement of the theocracy in Israel with a monarchy, a kingdom like the kings around about them. The movement began with the people, who, making the corrupt behavior of Samuel's sons the pretext, asked for a king to match those found in the neighboring nations. Samuel was saddened by this development and with a burdened heart took the matter to the Lord.

No one knew better than Jehovah just what the people were really bringing on themselves, and, in His limitless love and mercy, He commissioned Samuel to clearly set before them what the king would impose on them. It was a truthful description designed to deliver them from making so terrible a mistake. Firstly, they were informed that the monarch would take their sons and daughters to cultivate his fields, lead his armies, and, in general, take care of the king's interests no matter what the needs of the populace might be. Next, they were warned that he would take the best of their lands, orchards, and vineyards for himself, thus making himself rich at the expense of his subjects.

Then the Lord solemnly warned them: "And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the Lord will not hear you in that day." *1 Samuel 8:18.*

When the Lord spoke those words, He was advising them that it was much easier to enter into a marriage than it was to dissolve it. In other words, once they had instituted a kingship, then the Lord would honor and recognize the new order of things until the death of the kingdom, an event which took place when the Jews rejected their Messiah and

crucified Him. The new movement that was put together by Christ and His ministry through the apostles, left behind the idea of an earthly kingdom forever.

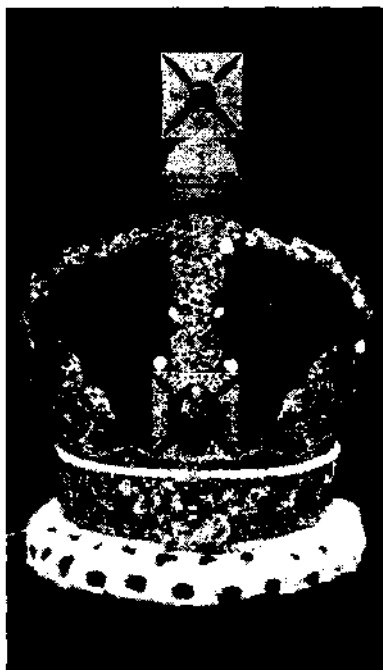
Despite these solemn warnings, the people were insistent on the Lord's giving them a king as it is written: "Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, 'No, but we will have a king over us.

" 'that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.' " *1 Samuel* 8:19, 20.

It was then and only then on the insistence of the people, that the Lord chose a king for them. As a demonstration of His not being in accord with what they had done, He selected a man from the tribe of Benjamin, and not from Judah, the tribe to which the kingly promises appertained. While initially the plan seemed to work very well, it was not long before the noble King Saul became a harsh despot, proving the truth of the Lord's words.

Why, against the best advice that could be given them from the highest and most reliable possible source, were the people so determined to have their king?

It was because they were cursed with a wicked heart of unbelief. Even though it was without any justification whatsoever, they had lost



**God never intended that a monarchy should be established in Israel, but, when the people insisted on it, the Lord gave them their king. Thereafter, the Lord worked with each king as far as possible until the monarchy finally came to its own end.**

confidence in God as their leader, and desired a visible authority in place of the invisible. Unbelief in Moses' case led to the appointment of Aaron firstly, and later of the seventy elders. So it was unbelief which caused the Lord to appoint the first king of Israel. But for this sad spiritual decay in Israel which dated back to their acquiring swords and other weapons, there never would have been a call for a king, and none would ever have been given them.

But even though the matter sprang from unbelief, and was contrary to the divine principles, as ever, God went the second mile and gave them what they demanded. Furthermore, it was not on a trial basis, for the Lord does not believe in trial marriages. With Him, marriage is forever. Therefore, once He had given them their king, He would respect the new order of things as long as it lasted.

As mentioned in the last chapter, "Marriage is Forever", David showed that he understood these principles by refusing to take the king's life when he was presented with the opportunity to do so on two occasions.

The last example that we will consider in this chapter is that of Judas, already examined to some extent in the previous chapter. The point to be stressed here is that, if the eleven disciples had been blessed with simple, trusting faith in Jesus, Judas would never have been chosen. Those men felt that Judas was just the right man to have a good influence on the leading classes, and they as positively urged his presence among them as did the Jews in Samuel's time ask for a king. For the same reasons and on the operation of the same principles that God gave them an earthly monarchy, Christ accepted Judas as a disciple. Once that was done, even though this man was forever manipulating things to his own advantage and according to his narrow ideas, Jesus withheld nothing from him that He gave to the other disciples. When the disciples were sent out on their missionary tour, Judas was sent with them endowed with the same power to cast out devils, heal the sick, and preach the gospel. Of course, Jesus knew that Judas would preach his version of the gospel emphasizing the kingdom of earthly grandeur and glory rather than the spiritual kingdom of grace.

Yet, knowing all this, once that union with Judas as a fellow worker had been established, Christ acknowledged it, respected it, and, without violating his own principles, related to Judas as if he were doing everything correctly. In other words, Jesus never let the failure of Judas to fulfill his responsibilities affect Him in any way in His relation to Judas. This is doubtless the finest example of this principle of operation to be found anywhere in history.

There is one seeming contradiction to this principle to which we shall now turn our attention.

Of necessity, there must be twelve numbered apostles even as there were twelve numbered tribes of Israel. So, when Judas took his life, there was a vacancy to be filled, a task undertaken by Christ's disciples after the ascension of Jesus, but before Pentecost. The record of it is found in *Acts* 1:15-26. Peter led out. Quoting Scripture to support his position, he advised the church that the place left vacant by Judas had to be filled and two names were proposed—Justus and Matthias. After praying that the Lord would guide them in the selection of the right man, they cast lots, and Matthias was selected. Henceforth, he was supposed to be the replacement for Judas.

It is quite amazing that they could have taken such a work upon themselves when they ought to have left it entirely in Christ's hands. They needed only to remember that those disciples whom Christ had chosen were all true and faithful, whereas the one whom they had urged on Christ had proved unfaithful. They should have recalled that they had never received any commission to call anyone to the work of God, but had plainly been instructed to ". . . ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into the harvest", when it was found that the reaping time had come and the laborers were few. *Matthew* 9:38.

Despite these clear instructions, no sooner was Jesus no longer with them than they took His work upon themselves and were confident that they had God's guidance and approval to the point where they believed that Matthias was indeed the replacement for Judas.

But the Lord manifestly did not share this conviction. There is not even a hint of His recognizing Matthias. Instead, a short time after Pentecost, the Lord chose someone else, Paul, to be the twelfth apostle. Matthias is never heard of again.

There are several factors present in the appointment of Matthias which also marked the call of Aaron, the seventy elders, King Saul, and Judas, yet we do not find the Lord giving Matthias the same recognition He gave the others. There must be a very valid and important reason for this and there is.

In the cases listed above apart from Matthias, the Lord personally chose someone to fill a position made necessary because of unbelief. It was God who selected Aaron; directed Moses to appoint seventy elders; chose Saul by name; and accepted Judas among the twelve. But, in the case of Matthias, God had nothing to do with it. He did not appear in answer to their prayers to name Matthias as the chosen one. No working relationship was formed between God and Matthias as there was between God and Aaron, the seventy, and so on. Therefore, the Lord was quite free from any obligations toward Matthias, and could select anyone whom He wished for the position, for, so far as He was concerned,

Matthias was not installed in the office of the twelfth apostle. (See *Entering into God's Sabbath Rest*, pages 360-368, available from Destiny Press.)

By these and other examples the Lord has confirmed in the mouth of two or three and more witnesses just how He relates to anyone with whom He has formed a working relationship. By so doing, He has shown precisely how we are to relate to a partner with whom we should never have been joined in the first case. He has assured us that, once the marriage has been formed, the Lord's way is for us to honor the bond until death dissolves the union. Only if the other person refuses God's way and initiates a divorce can we be free from any further responsibility to that relationship.

When one is suffering within a partnership which should never have been formed in the first instance, it is very tempting for that one to see in the dissolution of that partnership, the solution to the problem. For such a one, it would be an immense relief to be liberated from the unrewarding, unsatisfying marriage, and be free to start again on a correct basis. Therefore, it comes as a very great test to realize that the Lord has not provided this way of escape. Instead, He has called on us to dismiss from our minds all thoughts of separation and fresh beginnings. We are to realize that marriage is for life, and that, by the grace of God, we can give the same high and noble demonstration of love that Jesus gave. To love when that love is unrequited, is the greatest demonstration of divine love. Others may have easier access to legitimate, earthly happiness, but you will have nobility which brings greater happiness and satisfaction.



# **Further Consider- ations on Marriage**

## **Chapter 18**

In the two previous chapters, it has been stressed that divorce will never come from the Christian, but does this mean that the believer is obliged to live with a cruel, oppressive marriage partner regardless of how he or she is being treated? When the Christian has honestly and sincerely done everything possible to make the marriage work only to be treated with physical violence, immorality, and other indecencies, must he or she remain in such a situation forever? Has God made no escape from such tragic relationships?

If there were no escape from such drastic situations, many would view their future with dismay even though they possessed a noble willingness to suffer for Christ's sake and give a demonstration of infinite and enduring love to the world around them. At the same time, a point will be reached beyond which it will be impossible to continue as even Christ showed when He withdrew forever from a people who had signally demonstrated that they did not desire His presence or His ministry. There does come a time when the Christian, like his Saviour and Example, is left with no option but to separate. It is quite impossible for us to determine the exact point where the parting of the ways should come, but we do have counsel to the effect that a woman is not obliged to submit herself to perilous domination, but should flee from her persecutor. Sister White wrote to a hopelessly mistreated wife as follows:

"I have received your letter, and in reply to it I would say, I cannot advise you to return to D unless you see decided changes in him. The Lord is not pleased with the ideas he has had in the past of what is due to a wife. . . . If [he] holds to his former views, the future would be no

better for you than the past has been. He does not know how to treat a wife.

"I feel very sad about this matter. I feel indeed sorry for D, but I cannot advise you to go to him against your judgment. I speak to you as candidly as I spoke to him; it would be perilous for you to again place yourself under his dictation. I had hoped that he would change. . . ." *The Adventist Home*, 343.

At first, it would seem that this advice is in contradiction to the established practice of Jesus in never separating from anyone no matter how sinful he may be. But there is no conflict at all, provided the actions and counsels of Christ are correctly understood. The key lies in the fact that, while Christ never abandons a single soul for whom He died, at the same time He will never force His presence where it is not desired.

Therefore, when the Jews demonstrated how emphatically they hated Him and what He stood for, Christ accepted their will in the matter and permitted them to separate Him from them. Thus, when He was persecuted in one place, He simply left that area and journeyed to another, an action which some would view as Christ's act of separation from those unbelievers. But the real fact is that they, by forcing His departure, had separated Him from them. They had driven Him away, and in courteous respect for their right to accept or reject Him as they chose, Christ walked no more with them in that place. So they, not He, engineered the separation and divorce.

Accordingly, Christ's instruction is: "But when they persecute you in this city, flee to another. . . ." *Matthew* 10:23.

"The lives of the workers may be endangered by those who are controlled by Satan. It is then their privilege to follow the example of their Master, and go to another place. 'Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel,' Christ said, 'till the Son of man be come.' Let the messengers of truth pass on to another field. Here may be a more favorable opportunity for work, and they may successfully sow the seed of truth and reap the harvest. The report of their success will find its way to the place where the work was apparently unsuccessful, and the next messenger of truth who goes there will be more favorably received." *Gospel Workers*, 410.

"As the light and life of men was rejected by the ecclesiastical authorities in the days of Christ, so it has been rejected in every succeeding generation. Again and again the history of Christ's withdrawal from Judea has been repeated. When the reformers preached the word of God, they had no thought of separating themselves from the established church; but the religious leaders would not tolerate the light, and those that bore it were forced to seek another class, who were longing for the truth. In our day few of the professed followers of the Reformers are actuated by their spirit. Few are listening for the voice of

God, and ready to accept truth in whatever guise it may be presented. Often those who follow in the steps of the Reformers are forced to turn away from the churches they love, in order to declare the plain teaching of the word of God. And many times those who are seeking for light are by the same teaching obliged to leave the church of their fathers, that they may render obedience." *The Desire of Ages*, 232.

Notice carefully that the Reformers had no thought of separating themselves from the churches, nor did such a thought ever develop in their minds. They were "*forced* to seek another class"; "*forced* to turn away from the churches they love"; and were "*obliged* to leave the church of their fathers."

Let it be emphasized that not the Reformers and those who joined them, but the rejecters of God's truth were the ones who initiated and enforced the separation. So it will always be when true Christian principles are followed, either in accepting the separation forced on one by the church or by an oppressive, unchristian marriage partner.

It cannot really be determined by the Christian concerned just when the point has been reached when no other option is left but to accept separation and eventual divorce. Only the almighty, all-wise Plan-maker can recognize with infallible accuracy when the time has come, and upon Him we must depend to make the required decision. This is confirmed by the fact that God chose the time, the messenger, and the message of the second angel who announced both the spiritual fall of Babylon, and the fact that the believers no longer had a place in her midst. The appropriate course then for each believer was to accept rejection by the fallen churches and leave as directed.



That which began as a happy and promising marriage all too often ends in tragic separation and eventual divorce. There are times when the true child of God cannot prevent this when the partner is or has become an unbeliever, but the separation never comes from the side of the true Christian, even as God never divorces nor forsakes anyone. It is we who forsake Him; it is never He who forsakes us!



The Christian's responsibility is to make sure that every loving effort has been expended to ensure that the separation, if and when it comes, takes place in *spite of* the best efforts made to save the relationship and not because of any misbehavior on his or her part. Continual, careful, honest soul-searching is necessary to ensure that a wrong spirit does not creep in. Once you are persuaded that the other person in the marriage has troubled you enough, there is a natural but evil tendency to look with satisfaction and hope on those evidences which indicate further deterioration of the other person's attitude and works. The only desire that should be entertained is that the defecting one will yet come to repentance and unity be restored. If you manifest the spirit of Christ and in all things commit your life to His ordering, then you can absolutely rely on being safely guided through these difficult moves. Not for one moment more than is necessary will the Lord keep you where you have to suffer pain, frustration, and sorrows.

Another situation to be considered concerns those who have divorced and remarried before they heard of these principles and accepted them. Their previous partners have also remarried and settled. The natural question that will arise is: Now what should be done? Should they break up their present relationships and return to their former partners or should they respect their present marriages?

I do not believe that there is a blanket edict to cover every circumstance in this field, though we do have specific instruction concerning the situation with a woman who, after being sent away by her first husband, marries again.

"When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favour in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house,

"when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife.

"if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife,

"then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance." *Deuteronomy 24:1-4*.

Furthermore, while one person who has divorced and remarried might be prepared to break up the present marriage as a matter, not of convenience or desire, but of principle, and remarry the original partner, it would be a rare thing to find that the original partner would be willing

to do so, especially if he or she were not converted. Each case would have to be taken before God for His personal directions, but generally speaking, it is best to leave the presently established arrangement stand.

One thing is certain and it is that those who, in the days of their ignorance have not followed Christ's example when they separated from their spouses, should experience a genuine repentance for the course that they followed. They should feel a definite conviction that, if they could go back and relive the past, they would remain faithful to their original partners from whom they would not separate unless forced to depart.

We will now consider the vast difference in attitudes between those who do not understand Christ's example in never leaving anyone who has entered into a covenant relationship with Him, and those who do. The person who enters marriage with the thought that, if it does not work out, a divorce can be arranged and another attempt made, will take on marital responsibilities very lightly. This attitude virtually dooms the relationship to failure as is evidenced by the large number of people who, while subscribing to this philosophy, have contracted marriage after marriage.

But when it is understood that the joining of two lives in wedlock is a commitment never to separate and divorce, then it is realized that the greatest care be taken to ensure that the partner chosen is in fact the one you can live with and love forever, and that the same person can live with and love you with the same enduring faithfulness. If sufficient care is not taken to make certain that the right choice is made, and if you are committed to never separating, then almost inevitably you will marry the wrong person and be in bondage for the rest of your life.

After your decision to accept Christ as your Saviour, the decision to marry is the next single most important step you can take. It is so important that only God can wisely make it for you. The only safety is for each person to faithfully apply the Sabbath rest principles so that God alone is the Plan-maker.

The general principles of operation for the Sabbath rest message are recorded in detail in the book, *Entering into God's Sabbath Rest*, available from Destiny Press. In brief, the steps as applicable to the choice of a marriage partner are as follows:

Become a truly intelligent believer in the message and establish its principle of operation in all things in your life. Believe that the Lord has planned every detail of your future including whether or not you shall marry, and precisely who is to be the marriage partner. Once the problem is in His capable hands, lay aside all speculation as to who might be your future spouse, dismiss the matter from your mind and move on with the business of efficiently performing the present duties the Lord has assigned you. Then, at exactly the right time and place, the Lord will bring together you and His choice for you. This does not mean that it will

necessarily be a perfect match, but it does mean that God will provide the most suitable person available, and that such a marriage will certainly work well provided that both parties understand and live out the marriage principles.

Let consideration now be given to the peril of assuming that, because your partner is a dedicated Christian committed to the principle of never initiating a separation or a divorce, your marriage will not suffer if you feel that you can do as you please with impunity. Even if both of you are dedicated Christians, there could still be times when you will feel pressured not to submit to one situation or another, due to some area of incompatibility, and might be tempted to take advantage of the dedication expressed by your spouse. Do not make so foolish a mistake. Instead, while you are to trust your truly Christian spouse never to initiate a separation, remember that Satan is a relentless foe who watches every moment for an opportunity to destroy the representation of God's character and government in marriage. Christ's counsel to watch and pray is certainly very necessary in this matter.

It is safe to say that, if your spouse is not a Christian, one of the surest ways to lose him or her is to take the relationship for granted, and assume that, once the marriage vows are exchanged, your mate is virtually your prisoner for life, leaving you free to pay little attention to your spouse's feelings. More than once I have seen marriages wherein one of the two looked upon the other as a possession which could never escape or become the property of another. The people who had these ideas were quite indifferent to the needs of the other individual and partnered the spouse only in those activities in which they themselves were interested.

When the predictable separation came; when it was discovered by the hapless spouse that the other one had departed never to return; great



**People need to be appreciated, loved, and wanted. Keep love alive with simple, genuine, natural expressions of affection.**

was the consternation indeed. It seemed unbelievable to the forsaken one, who, of course, leveled all the blame on the other as the law-breaker, the unfaithful one.

People need to be appreciated, wanted, and loved, including husbands and wives. Let none make the mistake of taking the other person for granted. Even if your mate never leaves you, great will be the loss if you make a less than satisfactory contribution to the marriage.

"Love cannot long exist without expression. Let not the heart of one connected with you starve for the want of kindness and sympathy.

"Though difficulties, perplexities, and discouragements may arise, let neither husband nor wife harbor the thought that their union is a mistake or a disappointment. Determine to be all that it is possible to be to each other. Continue the early attentions. In every way encourage each other in fighting the battles of life. Study to advance the happiness of each other. Let there be mutual love, mutual forbearance. Then marriage, instead of being the end of love, will be as it were the very beginning of love. The warmth of true friendship, the love that binds heart to heart, is a foretaste of the joys of heaven.

"Around every family there is a sacred circle that should be kept unbroken. Within this circle no other person has a right to come. Let not the husband or the wife permit another to share the confidences that belong solely to themselves.

"Let each give love rather than exact it. Cultivate that which is noblest in yourselves, and be quick to recognize the good qualities in each other. The consciousness of being appreciated is a wonderful stimulus and satisfaction. Sympathy and respect encourage the striving after excellence, and love itself increases as it stimulates to nobler aims." *The Ministry of Healing*, 360, 361.

Finally in this chapter, the distinction must be made between love with fellowship, and love without it. The vital difference was made plain to me a number of years ago when several folk approached me with a very serious human relations problem. They all worked in the same factory with a number of people who had no respect for the gospel whatsoever. Consequently, they found no common interests, no areas where they could share their experiences, and no material for fruitful conversation. So great was the disparity that friction began to develop which led in turn to animosity and hatred. The situation became more and more tense, and was most unpleasant.

The believers in Jesus were concerned about the presence in them of these feelings and concluded that they were not right with the Lord. Then they heard a presentation of acceptable confession, a printed form of which is available from Destiny Press. They learned that the real problem facing the individual is not what he does but what he is, and that, if we are to be delivered from these problems, we must confess both what we

have done and what we are. Then, as we give away the hatred to the Lord, He literally removes the evil thereby creating an empty space, a vacuum, into which He then infuses His infinite love. Once this love has taken the place of our hatred, we respond to the pressure of our enemies with a loving instead of a hateful spirit.

These earnest souls grasped these principles as bread from heaven, and, to their delight, found that when they applied them, all feelings of hatred and anger vanished. They then returned to work expecting to find a bond of love and unity between them and the other workers who made no profession of Christianity. To their dismay, they found that there still was no common ground at all between them, and that fellowship was impossible. Once again they were uncertain and somewhat bewildered. While they could happily report that there had been a change within them and that they could now relate to their former enemies with a loving spirit, they still felt that there was a great gulf between them and their fellow workers. They felt that this should not be.

But it could not be otherwise! It is not possible to have fellowship with those whose conversation is exclusively on worldly things; whose tastes are fleshly and sensual; who entertain no interest whatsoever in heavenly matters; whose choice of music is totally foreign to every Christian principle; and who think only of this life and its transient, sordid pleasures?

Paul understood that there can be no fellowship between this class of people and Christians, for which reason he wrote:

"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

"And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

"And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.'

"Therefore 'Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.'

" 'I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.' " *2 Corinthians* 6:14-18.

When those believers went back to work after being cleansed of their hatred, there was no more basis for fellowship than before they received the purifying ministry of Christ. In fact, there was less. They, having achieved an even higher plane of Christian living, would have been that much more separated from the children of darkness with whom they worked.

But this did not mean that they did not love them. Love was certainly there but it was without fellowship. Consequently, the divine love flowing

from the believers in Jesus found no bond, no answering chord, no positive feedback, and no kindred spirit. This is the most difficult relationship to endure. Love with fellowship between those of like faith, belief, principles, interests, and objectives is very beautiful and satisfying. It is the experience that makes heaven so desirable. It is that to which God will bring every one of His children and into which He will immerse them once sin has been obliterated and His everlasting kingdom established.

Just as certainly as the Lord knows by experience the pain of a broken marriage, so too He understands the sadness and frustration of love without fellowship. Little do we understand of the intensity and infinitude of God's love. The Scriptures declare that "... God is love . . . ." *1 John 4:16.*

They also affirm that the Lord never changes, not even by a shadow of turning. See *James 1:17.*

If these truths are taken at face value as they must be, then it must be concluded that God's love is unalterable. It means that, no matter what we do to Him or against Him, His love for us is still the same. Consider this in respect to Lucifer who became Satan, the devil, and who has done more harm to God's kingdom than any other being who has ever existed.

Before the first shadows began to form in his mind while he was still a magnificent example of God's perfect creative work, the eternal Father loved him with immeasurable intensity. When those dark doubts and then evil surmisings formed within the covering cherub, and when he campaigned throughout heaven with the objective of destroying Jesus and reorganizing the kingdom, God's love for him was unaffected in the least, but the fellowship was gone. They walked farther and farther apart as the devil's course diverged more and more from the pathway of righteousness and truth.

Then the wicked one departed from heaven and the evil effects of his administration began to be apparent in terrible sufferings, diseases, tortures, and so on. The Lord hated the iniquity. He felt pain beyond measure as He witnessed the progress of this cancer, but His love for the devil was just as strong, just as true, just as faithful as it had ever been. Even when Satan tortured, defamed, and persecuted God's precious, only-begotten Son to death, there was no change in His love for the fallen angel.

Some may question how God could love the devil, but the problem disappears when the nature of that love is understood. Human love usually loves as long as love is returned, but dies out to be replaced with hatred when the other person does not respond in like manner. But God

loves regardless of any return. So He loves Satan today as much as He ever did. It is because God loves His worst enemy that He can call upon us to love our enemies too.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.'

"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

"that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

"For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

"And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?

"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." *Matthew 5:43-48.*

Divine love which has its source in the heart of God is the beautiful attribute which the eternal Father desires to implant within each and every believer. Those who are endowed with this incomparable gift will be able to cope very well with a marriage which is breaking down despite their dedicated efforts to save it. Such people will find that they will be able to continue loving without being loved in return, that they will be capable of suffering the frustration and heartache of love without fellowship. While we all long for love with fellowship, those who are denied it can rejoice in the knowledge that they are sharing in the sufferings of Christ, and are revealing His character, as they reflect the divine image and fashion their lives after His likeness.

"For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake." *Philippians 1:29.*

"And of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor." *The Desire of Ages, 225.*



# **Effecting the New Birth**

## **Chapter 19**

We have now come to the point in this study on child salvation where we are ready to address ourselves to the vital question of how to ensure that the infant is born again from its earliest moments. The parents have carefully prepared for the marriage; they understand the divine purpose in the sacred relationship they are to share for the rest of their lives; they have dedicated themselves to the task of bringing up children who will be an honor to God, their parents, the church, and to society in general; and the wedding has taken place. The way has been cleared for the conception and birth of the offspring.

However, young people would be wise not to undertake this responsibility immediately, but to give themselves time instead to settle into the new life with each other, to adjust to the responsibilities they now face, and, most importantly, to ensure that they have the faith and experience needed to make certain that they can lead their unborn into the new birth.

The successful management of the challenges and difficulties which confront the couple in the months immediately succeeding the wedding, is usually more than enough to handle without the added stress of a pregnancy.

"As life with its burden of perplexity and care meets the newly wedded pair, the romance with which imagination so often invests marriage disappears. Husband and wife learn each other's character as it was impossible to learn it in their previous association. This is a most



critical period in their experience. The happiness and usefulness of their whole future life depend upon their taking a right course now. Often they discern in each other unsuspected weaknesses and defects; but the hearts that love has united will discern excellencies also heretofore unknown. Let all seek to discover the excellencies rather than the defects." *The Ministry of Healing*, 360.

This is indeed one of the most critical periods in the experience of married life, and it is extremely important that the couple emerge from it firmly in control of their relationship. In His recognition of this, the Lord gave special instruction to Israel that a young man for the first year after he was married was exempt from military service and business commitments. "When a man has taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war or be charged with any business; he shall be free at home one year, and bring happiness to his wife whom he has taken." *Deuteronomy* 24:5.

When sufficient time has been given for the couple to adequately settle in with each other, then it is time to think about and plan for their first child. The timing of the first and succeeding conceptions should not be left to chance, but ought to be carefully planned. The plan to have children should be committed to the almighty Plan-maker, to be carried through, deferred, or given up as He shall indicate. This control of the timing is achieved by the necessary precautions being taken to prevent a conception from taking place before the couple is ready for it. It needs to be emphasized that those who do not use the presently available knowledge of birth control procedures, but believe that God, in response to their strong faith, will actually prevent a conception from taking place until He decides the time is right, will find that the Lord definitely does not work any miracles to frustrate the outworking of natural law. Provided there are no precautions taken to prevent a new life from being started, they will find themselves with a pregnancy sooner or later.

When the believing husband and wife, who understand the principles of child salvation, face the question of initiating a new life, they will want some time to prepare themselves spiritually for the event.

The more thorough this preparation is, the more certain will be the successful achievement of the desired object—the salvation of the child. My gravest fear is that young married people will approach this responsibility in far too casual a manner. It is worrisome to observe what seems to be a tendency for many of those classed as believers to think that all they have to do is to go through the motions of dedicatory prayer, and the new birth of the unborn infant is assured. What needs to be realized is that it takes a strong, active, living faith to penetrate through the darkness with which sin has enshrouded us, and lay hold on the resources of Omnipotence. This kind of faith can only be developed over a period of time, during which, active spiritual exercise produces a strong and living connection with the Almighty.

It is by faith and faith alone that the gift of victory can be imparted to the freshly conceived infant. The child itself at this stage of its development has no capacity to understand the word of God which is the basis for belief, and it depends on its parents to possess and exercise the faith necessary for its salvation. What a betrayal of an infant in its utter helplessness and total dependence, when its parents through unbelief, indifference, or ignorance fail to introduce it to the most essential and priceless gift with which it could ever be endowed!

An awesome sense of responsibility, and a godly fear that they will in some way come short of God's ideal, should possess every married person contemplating parenthood whether it be the first or any other child. If this is the case, the husband and wife will feel the need for time prior to the conception to ensure that their faith is of sufficient strength and of the right character to guarantee that the life of Christ will in actual fact be implanted in the little one.

The first step on the part of the parents-to-be, is to make certain that they themselves are in fact truly born again, for it is impossible for them to lead their children where they have not been themselves. That the new birth has been achieved in the experience of the adult can only be determined by careful testing in the light of God's word. This is necessary, for the devil is very clever at counterfeiting true conversions. He can make it appear that the individual has been truly converted when in fact only an outer disguise has been thrown around the evil nature still resident within.

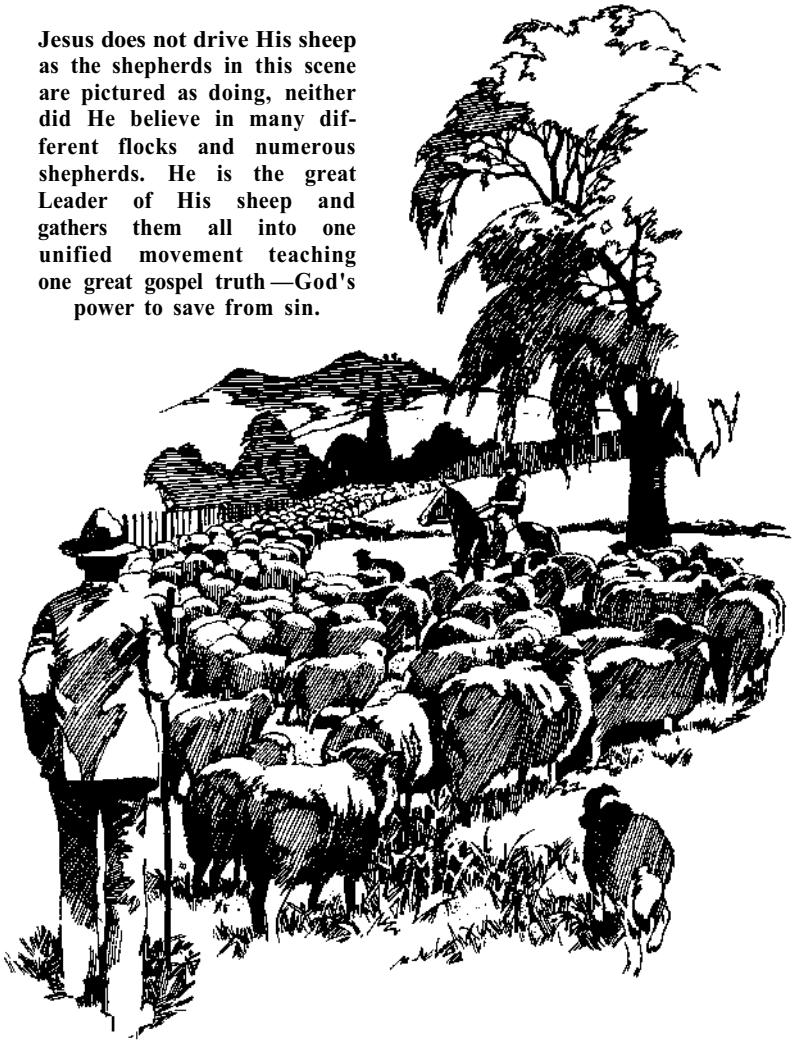
Such a situation existed in 1844 among those who had actually rejected the light God had sent from heaven. The problem is described in these words: "I saw that the mysterious signs and wonders, and false reformations would increase, and spread. The reformations that were shown me, were not reformations from error to truth; but from bad to worse; for those who professed a change of heart, had only wrapt about them a religious garb, which covered up the iniquity of a wicked heart. Some appeared to have been really converted, so as to deceive God's people; but if their hearts could be seen, they would appear as black as ever." *Present Truth*, August, 1849, 21, 22. Quoted from *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, by F. D. Nichol, 222.

What then are the evidences that we have been born from above and have not been deceived by some false spirit?

Ask firstly where the experience came from. If its source was the truth, then we can be sure it was from God, for ". . . you shall know *the truth* and *the truth* shall make you free." John 8:32.

This means that if the message which brought the wonderful, glowing experience you are now enjoying came from a messenger who had rejected saving truth, then it is highly suspect. The difficulty with this is recognizing with accuracy and certainty where saving truth is being taught

Jesus does not drive His sheep as the shepherds in this scene are pictured as doing, neither did He believe in many different flocks and numerous shepherds. He is the great Leader of His sheep and gathers them all into one unified movement teaching one great gospel truth—God's power to save from sin.



at the present time. There are so many voices which are claiming the divine commission to spread the gospel of peace and salvation, that it is not easy to determine who is in fact blessed with divine approval and guidance. How simple it would be if Satan's voice were so obviously different from God's that it would be simple to discern which is which.

However, no one needs to be discouraged with the thought that it is impossible for him to discern the difference between truth and error. The promises are, ". . . you shall *know* the truth . . .", and "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." *John* 8:32; 10:27.

Every person who is strictly honest, is determined to find the truth no matter what the cost might be, and who gives the problem of his finding it

to the almighty Problem-solver, will certainly know it when he is led to it. But those who are looking for that which they want to hear, and are not prepared to accept the words of life no matter through which channel the Lord elects to send them, will never truly find the light.

Let it ever be remembered that the Lord is not leading every movement in circulation even though every one of them has some truth. If the presence of some light in an organization is justification for seeking salvation from that source, then we would be approved for attending the most antichristian churches in the world, for even they teach some beautiful truths. But unfortunately, the truths they do teach are mingled with specious errors deadly to the development of a living experience in Christ. Thus the light found there is an alluring bait designed to destroy souls.

The fact is that, while all the different bodies have some light or the other, the true church is identified as the one in whom all these truths are found collectively. Furthermore, truths unknown in any of these other groups are to be found among God's true people who are being led by the one true Shepherd. When the Lord has any new light to communicate, He will not reveal it to the different groups, but will reveal it only to the members of that movement whom He is preparing for the great day of trouble and trial soon to come upon a dying world. This means that they hold and teach all the light which has been revealed up to the present time, and, as surely as they do remain faithful to the light revealed, they will be the recipients of ever advancing revelations from heaven. That these things are so is confirmed in the following statement:

"The different parties of professed Advent believers have each a little truth, but God has given all these truths to His children who are being prepared for the day of God. He has also given them truths that none of these parties know, neither will they understand. Things which are sealed up to them, the Lord has opened to those who will see and are ready to understand. If God has any new light to communicate, He will let His chosen and beloved understand it, without their going to have their minds enlightened by hearing those who are in darkness and error." *Early Writings*, 124.

Jesus certainly did not subscribe to the idea of many different movements all teaching different messages, yet all called and led of God. He spoke of one Shepherd and one fold. He said: "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be *one* flock and *one* Shepherd." *John* 10:16.

Once it has been determined that the message by which your new birth was accomplished did in fact come from the pure Source through divinely-commissioned channels, check and compare to make sure that all the correct steps were taken in their order with none missing. Did a knowledge of God's word, brought through the proclamation of present

truth, generate a very real awareness that you were a sinner by nature as well as in deed? Was this conviction of sin followed by a sincere repentance involving hatred for sin and a turning away from it? Did you then find that a frank and open confession was made as you laid your heart bare before the Lord in His sanctuary?

Then what followed? You strove with all your might to obey every one of God's commandments to perfection, but met with miserable failure. The words of *Romans 7* exactly described the desperate, repeated effort followed by as many utter failures until, in sheer despair, you abandoned all hope of victory and flung yourself on the mercies of your Saviour! Then, God's beautiful promises were seen by you with a glory, certainty, and power as you had never seen them before. It was as if they had been written just for you and you alone, so personal had they become. You became alive with faith, saw that your problem was what you were, not what you had done, gave to the Lord your sinfulness, and then reached out and grasped the proffered gift of His perfect righteousness. In that instant, the Lord washed away your uncleanness, and then implanted His divine life within. You were born again.

Not every one has the same intensity of experience as some do, but the essential elements will still be there. There are those in whom sin has been more deeply entrenched and who find it a greater struggle to escape from bondage than do others, but when they do, the deliverance is the more wonderful and dramatic. But, if yours was a quieter transition, this does not mean that it was any less real.

What will be found is that initially, only by faith will you know that you have been delivered. For a short period of time there will be no visible evidence that a mighty act of creative power has transformed you. Then the devil will inevitably assail you with an old familiar temptation designed to test your faith in what the Lord has done. If you have been born again, and if at this point you have implicit faith in God's having delivered you, the tempter will find absolutely no answering response from within. This will furnish positive evidence that you have been saved from the bondage of sin and ushered into a new life altogether.

If a period of time has elapsed between your being born again and the present moment, there will have been occasions in the meantime when dark clouds of discouragement have obscured the Saviour from your view, but this does not mean that you have lost the wonderful blessing and are once again a child of Satan in need of another deliverance. Christ does not easily lose His claim on those who have been born into His family and, when the battle is tough, He is right there to support and save. We do not need to return to the revival. It is a work of reformation which is now required. The critically important differences between these two works have been covered in the book *Revival and Reformation*, available from Destiny Press.

So, once you are satisfied that you are born again, the next step is to build a very strong, living faith so that there will be no weakness in this respect when the vital moment comes to pray that the unborn infant will be blessed with deliverance from sin's bondage and filled with the righteousness of Christ.

Begin by carefully restudying the truth that brought salvation to you. Strive prayerfully to really understand as never before the principles which govern the operations of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in bringing salvation to the captive sinner. Meditate on the great, living promises contained in the Scriptures until they become active elements in your heart and mind. Restudy the entire message on child salvation until you are gripped with the vision splendid of the marvelous potentials implicit in these procedures, and your whole being is alive with the prospect of parenting children who will be blessed with the indwelling presence of Christ from their earliest moments.

The more diligently you work on this program, the more certain will be the salvation of the children, and the more powerfully they will be blessed, and, in turn, be a blessing to all to whom they will render service both in this life and throughout the eternity soon to come. The rewards to be reaped by those who really do make a determined effort are beyond description. Nothing necessary could be considered too much trouble in view of the returns this effort will bring.

Thus, with that glowing faith which establishes a sweet, deep, quiet, abiding rest in God, and with hearts bound in the closest unity, let the husband and wife approach the time when a new life will be formed in her womb. While working in harmony with the divinely-appointed laws of nature, and through the active application of the Sabbath rest principles, let the Lord determine the exact time when the impregnation is to be achieved.

As soon as it is known that a conception has taken place, the time has come for the parents to meet together to intercede for the deliverance of the newly conceived. They are to approach this vital ministry in the knowledge that, no matter how righteous they themselves might have been made by the mediation of their Saviour, their babe is still cursed with the evil nature of the devil, and is therefore in bondage to the power of sin and in urgent need of deliverance. The importance of being aware of this cannot be overemphasized.

It is an awareness which those who mistakenly believe that a baby is conceived perfectly innocent and does not become a sinner until it commits its first transgression, can never have, and therefore, could never be led to see the need for the early new birth. There were only two humans who became sinful by carrying out an action of iniquity, and they were Adam and Eve. All the rest of us are firstly sinners by nature, and secondly sinners by action. With Adam and Eve, they became what they

were because of what they did, whereas with us, we do what we do because of what we already are. Our first parents were created righteous but became sinful, whereas we are conceived sinful and must be made righteous if we are to enter heaven.

Sinfulness is our inheritance. This is because once Adam lost his righteousness and immortality, he had nothing to impart to His children but iniquity and death.

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one man's obedience many will be made righteous." *Romans* 5:19.

It was by one man's transgression that the rest of us were made to be sinful, but this does not exonerate us for one moment. The consequence of being sinful whether it was our fault or another's, is death regardless.

It is easy to understand that sinful parents can impart only a sinful inheritance to their children because the inflexible laws of heredity dictate that the parents will pass on to their heirs that which they themselves have, but what of the parents who have been delivered from the old carnal nature and are blessed with the new life in Christ Jesus. Now that they literally possess the actual righteousness of Christ, surely the same laws of heredity would enable them to bequeath the new divine nature to their children.

This is what we would tend to conclude, but the real facts of the case are that, for a number of valid reasons, this is an impossibility. The divine nature is conferred only from Christ directly, and never by descent from a line of forebears dating back to Adam and Eve, the first humans to be endowed with the seed of Christ from which sprang their righteousness after their fall.

Let us see firstly why it is fortunate that each person who becomes a true Christian, does receive the gift from Christ directly and never by descent.

There is only one point of time when a person can receive any inheritance from his or her parents, and that is at the instant of conception. Subsequent to that moment of time, no matter how much a child may regret not having received certain characteristics or talents from its elders, there is nothing which can then be done to acquire them. All it can do is to make the best of what was received at that moment when the life from the father fused with that from the mother.

Think of what this would mean to the children of unconverted parents. At the only instant of time in all of eternity when they could have received the new nature, that is, at the moment of their conception, their parents would not have had the blessing themselves, and so could not have given it to their children. This would mean that the children of people who were unregenerate would be doomed. They would never have a chance. God certainly offers us a better plan of salvation than that.



On this earth, every living organism springs from a seed, and the inviolable law is that each reproduces after its own kind. This means that the parents pass on to their children only that which they themselves have. Thus, when Adam and Eve sinned, they could only impart sin and death to their offspring. This would lead one to expect that when they recovered righteousness and life, they could impart these gifts to their children, but there are several reasons why they could not. Christ alone is the producer of the seed in which is to be found righteousness and immortality. He alone can impart these wonderful qualities.



Some may argue that those who missed the opportunity of receiving the new life at conception from converted parents could then go to Christ and receive it from Him at a later date. This makes Christ to be a mere back-up, a second possibility to which people who had missed the first chance could turn.

But, the Lord does not have alternative means of salvation. There is only one way to heaven, not many pathways, and each one must find and follow that road.

A further obstacle which makes it quite impossible for the parents to give the new nature to their children lies in the fact that, when Adam and Eve sinned, they surrendered the entire human family clear down to the end of time into Satan's personal possession. This is why he is recognized in the Scriptures as ". . . the ruler of this world . . . ." *John 14:30*. This position opened the opportunity to implant his evil seed in every one of us, a right of which he has taken the utmost advantage, so that, apart from Jesus Christ, there is not a single person born of a woman who has escaped this infection.

Now, it is impossible to receive the seed of Satan and that of Christ at the same time, for the two cannot abide together in the soul temple. Therefore, only one of them preoccupies the inheritance opportunity, and that is always the evil nature, never the good. So then, as certainly as, by virtue of his ownership of the human race, the devil has the first right to establish his heredity in the freshly conceived embryo, the transmission of righteousness from the parents at this vital instant of time is excluded and must wait until, after conception, the old nature has been eradicated. Then, as explained earlier in this book, if the parents do their divinely-appointed work on behalf of their unborn offspring, Christ will bless their little ones with the new life coming directly from Him.

These are good reasons for Christ alone being the Source from which the new life flows, but necessity is not reason enough to establish the practice. It must also be according to law, in this case, that of heredity.

The law of heredity operates nowhere throughout the universe except on this earth, and even then only until Christ returns. Everywhere else, generation of life comes by direct creation from God. Therefore, only on this planet is there a line of descent whereby the parents transmit what they are and have to their children, who in turn become parents and pass their life on to their children, generation after generation.

Christ made this point very clear when He told the cavilling Pharisees that up in heaven, there is no marriage, "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven." *Matthew 22:30*.

This means that all life in heaven is acquired directly from the Creator, and the fact is that, since Adam fell and the second Adam took his place, the only life which can be taken there must also come directly

from Christ. This is certainly true of the physical life. These flesh and blood bodies in which we are tabernacled and which came to us by descent from our parents and not directly from our Creator, can never enter heaven.

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption." *1 Corinthians* 15:50.

It would be a mistake to interpret this verse to mean that the redeemed will not be flesh and blood beings in heaven, for they will be. What the Holy Spirit through Paul is saying is that the flesh and blood which we now have can never enter heaven, as the following statement confirms:

"We have seen by the Scriptures just given that when the Son of man comes, the dead are raised incorruptible and the living are changed. By this great change they are prepared to receive the kingdom; for Paul says: 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.' *1 Corinthians* 15:50. Man in his present state is mortal, corruptible; but the kingdom of God will be incorruptible, enduring forever. Therefore man in his present state cannot enter into the kingdom of God. But when Jesus comes, He confers immortality upon His people; and then He calls them to inherit the kingdom of which they have hitherto been only heirs." *The Great Controversy*, 322, 323.

When a person dies, the flesh and blood body he received from his parents is reduced to dust and has ceased to be a functioning entity. A new one is needed and is provided at the resurrection, not this time by earthly parents, but by the direct, creative act of God.

"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—

"in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." *1 Corinthians* 15:51-53.

Therefore, the operational law in force so far as the flesh and blood body is concerned is that the one which came by descent from earthly parents cannot go to heaven, while the one given by creative power will. This will mean that the only kind of bodies in heaven and the new earth are those which have been acquired by creation.

The fact that this is also true of the spiritual life indicates that the same law is operational there as well. It is positively known that every person who has been born again receives his new spiritual life directly from Christ, and there is no other way in which it is available. That which

the Saviour imparts to us at conversion is life everlasting as He declared repeatedly: "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me *has* everlasting life." *John* 6:47.

Thus Jesus, in the most positive manner possible, declared that the believer in Him is already in actual possession of eternal life. This is the truth. At the new birth we do not receive a temporary endowment to be exchanged for the permanent gift when Christ returns, but we then receive the actual, immortal life of Christ. It is the life we shall carry through all eternity. When we die, that life does not cease to exist, but returns to God who holds it until a new body tabernacle can be created for it.

This does not mean, as the popular churches teach, that conscious, intelligent activity continues after the body dies, for it does not. The eternal life within can find expression only when there is a physical mechanism through which to operate just as an electrical current can produce light only when there is a light bulb or tube through which to do it. When the bulb is broken, the light is extinguished even though the current has not ceased to exist. So, when a person's body dies, all consciousness, activity, memory, and feelings cease, even though the eternal life within has not ceased to exist. On the resurrection morning, the Lord will furnish a new body and once again conscious activity will resume, the memory will be restored, and body and spirit will recommence all normal functions.

The popular churches argue that, when a person dies, there separates from his fallen body, a spirit life with the capacity to see, hear, and communicate without eyes, ears, and vocal cords. Until death, that spirit life is said by them to be resident in the living body of the individual. If, for instance, this spirit life within the person can see after death without the equipment of physical eyes, then why cannot this same spirit see when a person becomes blind; that is, when he experiences death in the area of physical sight? That this spirit cannot see before the body dies, is proof that it cannot afterwards.

Take care to note that the possession of eternal life is not an unconditional guarantee that you will live eternally. The born-again Christian who has eternal life within him can fail to bear the tests imposed upon him, and be judged unfit to enter heaven. There could come a time in his experience when he will have sinned away the divine grace within him, and will be worse than before he was converted.

So then, eternal life can be obtained only by direct connection with Christ, for it does not come by descent through generation after generation. No earthly parent, no matter how well he has received the gift, can pass it on to his or her children.

Therefore, when an infant is conceived, his need to be born again is just as real and urgent whether his parents have received the gift of

righteousness or not. Married men and women need to have no misgivings in regard to the great and pressing need of their freshly conceived offspring. If they understand these things, they will clearly recognize that their very first objective is to obtain deliverance for their child from the indwelling life which is springing from Satan's implanted seed. In the firm knowledge and deep conviction that only the Lord can effect this cleansing ministry, they will then bow in prayer together and frankly confess the plight of their helpless little one and its utterly sinful condition. They will ask their great High Priest to eradicate the child's evil nature and place it in the sanctuary above.

When this has been accomplished, they will know that they must then take the next vital step which is the filling of the empty space with the imparted life of Christ. They will know by the many promises in the sacred word that the Lord is very anxious to effect this wonderful change in the unborn, for He knows that the blessed results will greatly advance the cause of righteousness and shorten the time of suffering for all His beloved children.

Their faith greatly strengthened by the divine promises and assurances, they ask the Lord to fill the vacuum in their little one with the matchless righteousness of Christ Himself. By faith and therefore in fact, they lay hold upon the gift, believing that the baby has actually received the blessing, and they thank the Lord that it has been filled with the divine presence.

At this time, there will be no visible evidences that their prayer has been heard and the blessing granted. That will come later. In the meantime, they can rest secure in the knowledge that, as surely as they have been careful to fulfill the conditions, the Lord has done His part. Their child is truly born again. The happy parents can rejoice in the precious assurance that their offspring has been saved from Satan's family, school, and fate. "It is so if you believe it." *Steps to Christ*, 51.

Then will be fulfilled to them the promise: "Even the babe in its mother's arms may dwell as under the shadow of the Almighty through the faith of the praying mother. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth. If we will live in communion with God, we too may expect the divine Spirit to mold our little ones, even from their earliest moments." *The Desire of Ages*, 512.

There is no difference between the procedures to be followed and the conditions to be met in bringing an unborn child the new birth, and the leading of an adult into the same experience, except that whereas the child must depend on the faith and decision of the parent, the adult must exercise his own faith and make his own decisions.

So, for those parents who have been born again, it is but a matter of leading their unborn infants down a pathway already familiar to them.



# The Prenatal Period

## Chapter 20

Once the newly conceived child has been freed from the indwelling presence of sin, and endowed with the perfectly righteous life of the Saviour, he has been placed on vantage ground. As already mentioned in chapter seven, he is delivered from the destroying presence of sin, whose capacity to inflict mental, physical, and spiritual impairment is terminated. Instead, he is filled with the presence of Jesus—a powerful, revitalizing, healing influence which restores every faculty and imparts life-giving power to brain and heart and nerves.

The transition from death to life qualifies the little one to become a student in Christ's school where the God of heaven becomes his Teacher. He now lives in the light of the divine presence and under God's protection. In him, the divine purpose can now be fulfilled.

Let us remind ourselves once more what the divine purpose for each individual is: It is the harmonious development to the highest possible levels of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers, and their total dedication to implicit, absolute, trusting, unquestioning, and immediate obedience to the Lord.

This means that the parents in their co-working with the heavenly agencies, must ever keep two objectives in mind—the development in their children of the highest possible capacities, and the training in them of the disposition and the habit of implicit obedience. By keeping these two ideals ever before them in their efforts to ensure salvation to their little ones, they avoid the tragedy of the child who has been born again devoting his exceptional capacities to Satan's service.

Satan is well pleased when men and women who have developed tremendous abilities, spend their lives building up his cause, and he is specially gratified when they think, as such invariably do, that they are serving the Lord when, in fact, they are Satan's agents of destruction. If he could rely on children, who have been born again from their very conceptions, becoming members of his army when they come to the age

of decision, he would encourage their being born again. Then, all the extraordinary powers and capacities they had developed would be used very effectively and successfully in building his kingdom. But, unfortunately for him, those who have been ushered into the family of the regenerate from their earliest moments, are the ones most unlikely to ever join forces with him. Not one of those of whom we have positive proof that they were born again from their earliest moment such as Jeremiah, Daniel and his three companions, John the Baptist, and Jesus Christ, ever defected. On the contrary, they are the ones who did the most damage to the devil's cause.

But, parents do not dare to sit back and complacently rest in the supposed assurance that it is virtually impossible for their born again children to leave the cause of God and transfer to the enemy's camp. Certainly, Satan does not abandon all hope of enticing them to forsake God and join with him.

See him confidently appealing to Christ on the mountain of temptation: "Again the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

"And he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.' " *Matthew 4:8, 9.*

When the scribes in the school which Christ visited on the occasion of His first Passover visit, saw the incredible mental and spiritual power manifested in Christ, the boy, they longed to bring him under their supervision so that they could train him for their service, which meant, even though they could not see it, preparation for enlistment in Satan's army.

"The rabbis knew that Jesus had not been instructed in their schools; yet His understanding of the prophecies far exceeded theirs. In this thoughtful Galilean boy they discerned great promise. They desired to gain Him as a student, that He might become a teacher in Israel. They wanted to have charge of His education, feeling that a mind so original must be brought under their molding." *The Desire of Ages*, 80.

Fortunately, neither the boy Jesus nor His earthly parents accepted any offers that the scribes might have made Him. Instead, He returned home with Joseph and Mary to continue His education under His heavenly Father's direction through His earthly parents as far as they were capable.

Parents who realize the possibilities bound up in their children, will certainly wish to avoid a one-sided result. The last thing they will want is to develop powerful abilities in their children and then see them use these in Satan's service. Consequently, they will ensure that they teach by precept and example the principles of implicit, unquestioning, uncomplaining, and immediate obedience.

To provide every opportunity for the best possible results to be achieved even as they were in Christ's life, God has given two valuable facilities. The first is the implantation within the child of Christ's own life by the germination of His seed subsequent to the eradication of the old evil seed of Satan, and the second is very effective training.

The implantation of the divine life, as already stated, delivers the child from the destructive work of indwelling sin, and blesses it with the regenerative power of Christ's own life. As emphasized, the earlier in the child's existence this takes place, the better, for then the least possible damage, if any at all, will have been done.

Once the child has been conceived, the parents must concentrate initially on one all-important objective—the gift of the new birth to the child. They must not rest satisfied until they are certain the child has been born again, for, if this is not accomplished, whatever else is attempted will be wasted effort.

The moment though that they are satisfied that the new birth has been accomplished, they must concentrate all their time, energy, strength, knowledge, skill, and wisdom on the training program which will fit the new-born Christian child for the work the Lord has designed for him. Do not rest satisfied for a single moment that the child with a divine nature will grow in the right direction as a matter of course, for it will not be so. The little mind must be trained to distinguish good from evil so that he learns to choose the one and reject the other. The necessity for excellent training as a preparation for a life-work is emphasized in these words regarding Samson:

"Not only the habits of the mother, but the training of the child were included in the angel's instruction to the Hebrew parents. It was not enough that Samson, the child who was to deliver Israel, should have a good legacy at his birth. *This was to be followed by careful training.* From infancy he was to be trained to habits of strict temperance." *The Ministry of Healing*, 379.

"And it was not enough that the promised child should receive a good legacy from the parents. This must be followed by careful training and the formation of right habits." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 561, 562.

As soon as the little one is born again (optimally immediately after conception) the training can and must commence. There is no safe room for the slightest delay. Parents must not make the mistake which seems to be made almost universally in this world, of supposing that the period

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Society is composed of families and it is also what the parents make it through the successful or unsuccessful training of the children. If only parents understood what they might achieve and how, the world would be a much better place than it is.





between conception and the actual birth and a little beyond, is devoted only to physical growth.

"The effect of prenatal influences is by many parents looked upon as a matter of little moment; but heaven does not so regard it. The message sent by an angel of God, and twice given in the most solemn manner, [to the prospective parents of Samson], shows it to be deserving of our most careful thought." *The Ministry of Healing*, 372.

Without any question, the pre-natal period is the most important, the most formative, the most easily managed period in the person's entire life. It is during this period of time that all the foundations are laid, the basic habit patterns formed, and the direction the life shall take is determined.

When parents realize the full potential for setting the children on the right course that is afforded them during those vital months between the commencement of a new life and the physical birth, they will determine to make the very most of their opportunity. On the other hand, when those of us who have raised our families realize what a splendid and irrecoverable opportunity which, because of our ignorance, we let slip by without its even being noticed, and when we are able to form some assessment of the loss both we and our precious children have sustained, we can be nothing short of heartbroken.

We are now able to see that there was a work to be done at that specific time that could never be done as satisfactorily or effectively at any other time but then. We deplore the fact, now that we can see things as they really are, that another damaging work was done instead, with the result that our offspring were turned away from God instead of being bonded to Him. With horror and remorse, we now *realize* that what we thought was a training of our precious juniors for eternal life, was in fact a virtual confirmation to eternal destruction. We now face the heartbreaking prospect, if indeed we do succeed in reaching heaven ourselves, of standing on the walls of the New Jerusalem to watch our children perishing in the flames outside, knowing as we will that it was our ignorance and mismanagement that produced this indescribably terrible outworking.

What then are parents to do during the prenatal period to ensure that when the final assembly of the saints surrounds the throne of God, they will be unbroken families, and the parents will be able to say: "Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells in Mount Zion." *Isaiah* 8:18.

The first step is to *realize* that every experience through which the mother passes; every emotion she feels; every habit she practices; is felt and responded to by the unborn infant just as the mother herself reacts to these things. Thus, the unborn infant is storing information conveyed to it

through the medium of its mother and is forming habit patterns coincidental with those of its maternal parent. How absolutely vital it is then that the mother, with the father's intelligent and loving support, establishes such habit patterns, pursues such interests, and responds to life's trials and pleasures in such a way as will convey to the child the best possible character building.

Everyone recognizes the power of heredity by which so much beyond human control is transmitted to the child, but we are talking here about another factor—the influence of environment and the parents' responses to it. It is an area over which the parents have sufficient control as to ensure that the unborn infant can have the best possible start in life. It is an awesome responsibility which confronts the parents when it is realized that the habits and attitudes of the elders are being reproduced in the child.

These truths are stated in clear, convincing language in the inspired writings:

"The child will be affected for good or for evil by the habits of the mother." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 561.

"Society is composed of families. And heads of families are responsible for the molding of society." *Selected Messages* 2:421.

"What an enormous weight of responsibility rests upon parents, when we consider the course pursued by them, before the birth of their children, has very much to do with the development of their character after their birth." *Selected Messages* 2:426.

"The father should bear in mind that the treatment of his wife before the birth of his offspring will materially affect the disposition of the mother during that period, and will have very much to do with the character developed by the child after its birth." *Selected Messages* 2:428.

"The offspring, *before its birth*, has transmitted to it disease, and an unhealthy appetite. And the irritability, nervousness, and despondency, manifested by the mother, will mark the character of her child." *Selected Messages* 2:431.

"Too much importance cannot be placed on the *early* training of children. The lessons learned, the habits formed, during the years of infancy and childhood, have more to do with the formation of the character and the direction of the life than have all the instruction and training of after years." *The Ministry of Healing*, 380.

Understanding as He did the magnitude of the work He was calling Samson to perform, the Lord made sure that he was given the best possible start in life. Therefore, the Lord gave his prospective parents comprehensive instructions that would initiate Samson's training before he was even born. The Almighty knew that Samson could never achieve the necessary qualifications for his mission unless a beginning was made early in his prenatal period of existence.

"God had an important work for the promised child of Manoah to do, and it was to secure for him the qualifications necessary for this work that the habits of both the mother and the child were to be carefully regulated. 'Neither let her drink wine or strong drink,' was the Angel's instruction for the wife of Manoah, 'nor eat any unclean thing. All that I commanded her let her observe.' The child will be affected for good or for evil by the habits of the mother. She must herself be controlled by principle and must practice temperance and self-denial, if she would seek the welfare of her child. Unwise advisers will urge upon the mother the necessity of gratifying every wish and impulse, but such teaching is false and mischievous. The mother is by the command of God Himself placed under the most solemn obligation to exercise self-control." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 561.

Tremendous and far reaching is the power of prenatal influence. It definitely shapes the character of the child for good or, more often, for evil. To demonstrate both the power and permanence of this force, I recall the experience of a family well-known to me.

A number of years ago, before the war broke out in Lebanon, the husband, an American, was appointed to teach at Middle East College, a Seventh-day Adventist school in Beirut. Accepting the appointment, he left with his wife and two very young daughters.

Soon after their arrival, their third child, another girl, was conceived, and around about the same time, the war erupted in the ill-fated city. Their lives were now terrorized by the dangers to which they were daily and nightly exposed, and there were numerous close encounters with death.

Bombs and shells landed so close from time to time that they shook their house to its foundations and cracked the walls. Often they trembled in the expectation of the building collapsing on them. On one occasion they were returning from the market where they had been grocery shopping, and had barely turned the corner from the main street when a savage battle broke out. The street which they had just left was filled with machine gun bullets, exploding grenades, bursting shells, and the screams of those who had been hit. Had they been a few seconds late in turning that corner, they very likely would have lost their lives.

As the struggle waxed fiercer, the college was temporarily relocated on Cyprus. Eventually, the appointment ended and they returned to the United States where I visited with them once more. During my stay in their home, we studied the child salvation message, and I made the point that prenatal influence is a very powerful force in shaping a person's future. This led them to report the difference between the child still unborn during those terrifying weeks of life-threatening horror, and the other two children.

They told me that there was a very noticeable difference between the third child and the other two. The third child was more highly strung, and would react with much higher levels of fear to anything that even suggested a threat—the sound of a police car, ambulance, or fire siren, the explosive bang of a door slamming in the wind, or the sudden roar of an aircraft flying low overhead. She manifested an insecurity of which the others knew nothing, and demonstrated a general mistrust in life, while her sisters were free from these difficulties.

I listened to this story with intense interest, for it confirmed the message I was presenting, while denying contrary conclusions that some might tend to draw. For instance, there are those who would claim that the unborn infant would have been isolated and insulated from the terrible events through which they were passing and would therefore be the least affected if at all.

But the fact is quite the opposite, for she was by far the worst affected of them all.

Why was this?

It was because the infant in its mother's womb felt and responded to the threat as the mother did, while the other two girls who no longer received their information through their mother, interpreted the threats and responded to them as individuals in their own right. There is no question but that the older girls were terrified, for they certainly were, but their terror did not match their mother's because she understood far better than they did, the threat to them all. It was that greater fear that the third child felt within the mother's womb which established in her a lifelong handicap of insecurity.

Another reason for the more marked response on the part of the unborn is that the domain of the child's mind was as yet unoccupied territory. Into that empty land, came the invasion of a world of danger, fear, and threatened destruction. There were very few if any happy, secure experiences to balance the account. It is a fact that that which is first fixed in the mind is that which makes the most permanent impression and abiding influence. It is for this reason that people who fade away in old age, repeat these things on their deathbeds. Alonzo T. Jones remarked on this in these words:

"The Bible should be the first thing in every line of study, for the reason that is expressed in a saying familiar to all: First impressions are most lasting. For this reason the Bible should be the source of the first instruction that the child receives in the world; and, as everybody is a child in the beginning of every line of study, the Bible should be the first of all things in all studies.

"It is the truth that when a person lives, and a few do live, to such an age that the life simply fades out because of age, the last thing that such a person thinks of is the first thing that he ever learned. This may be said

again, for it is a *principle* of education: The first thing that is ever fixed upon a person's mind is the last thing that that mind dwells upon, if the life of that person is completed and simply fades out in old age.

"A notable instance of this is William Ewart Gladstone, the great English statesman, who died in 1898. He died a very old man. As his life was fading out indeed, it was noticed that he was saying over and over again the Lord's prayer *in French*. That excited some query: as he was an Englishman, why should he be saying the Lord's prayer in *French*? Inquiries were made, and it was learned that when he was a little child, he was in charge of a French nurse, and that that French nurse was a Christian, and had taught him the Lord's prayer in her native language. And as that happened to be the first thing that was fixed upon his mind, it was the last thing that was dwelt upon by his mind as it faded out in death.

"Now, if that nurse had not been a Christian, and had taught that child, 'Hi, diddle, diddle, the cat's in the fiddle,' it would have worked precisely the same way, and *that* would have been the last thing that he would have spoken on his death-bed. If she had taught him Aesop's fables or fairy tales instead of the Lord's prayer, these would have been the last things that he would have murmured as his mind faded away.

"Another, who was personally known to the writer, died at a little past ninety-six years of age. The Lord's prayer was also one of the last things that that person repeated. Another thing she did in the last days of her life was to count—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, and so on up to ten, *but not* beyond—just as a little child learns to count. So that mind, in its last hours, was dwelling on the things of her first hours of conscious memory—the things that were first fixed in her mind.

"How beautiful it is that the last thought of a mind fading out in death is the thought of God in His Word! How aptly in the resurrection will the first thought take up the connection! This is enough to illustrate the principle that is the basis of the philosophy of using the Bible as the first thing in all Christian education." *The Bible in Education*, 69-71.

So it was with the unborn child in Lebanon versus her older sisters. While their first senses through their mother were of peaceful, secure days in the United States, hers were of unholy terror in the battleground of Beirut. As first impressions dominate, so her life forever after will tend to be ruled by fear and insecurity, while her more fortunate sisters will find that stability and peace will tend to dominate.

Satan understands the tremendous advantage to him who is the first to occupy the territory of the mind and he watches for every opportunity to fix his impressions before the Lord establishes His. The devil rejoices when he sees how the appalling ignorance of parents makes them neglectful in their duty and privilege of making the Lord and His word the first and only influence in the mind of the developing infant. He



**A careful study of the behavior patterns of children and adults in the light of the influences exerted on them during the prenatal period, will go a long way toward explaining why they are as they are today. The opportunities afforded parents during the prenatal period of making the children what they want them to be, is so great that it is a tragedy for them not to make the most of that time.**

joyfully finds unobstructed access to the minds of most unborn children. But, as more and more of God's people become aware of these principles, he will find doors that were once left open to him, now firmly closed, much to his alarm and rage.

Here is a further witness to confirm the deductions we have made on the Beirut child.

I was presenting the message on child salvation to the parents of seven children, four of whom are now themselves married. As I enunciated the principles here being argued, the mother recalled the state of mind she was in when her fourth, a boy, was being carried. Those were the days when the great second advent message was first being

unfolded to her and her husband's minds. She was so pleased and thrilled with the truths she was learning in the Adventist Church at that time, that it engaged her entire attention apart from thoughts and effort which had to be devoted to her family duties, and was the dominant theme of her conversation. For many months, the only books that she read were her Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and books on the advent faith.

Later, she became disillusioned with the church and the first love faded away so that she did not transmit to the next three children, the ardor for, interest in, and love of the truth that she had known during the prenatal period of the fourth.

What a marked difference between him and the other six. While the youngest does show some interest, she still is worldly minded, while the remainder are very much steeped in the world and its ways, and show no interest in spiritual things at all.

There is another mother of my acquaintance who was so ill during her fourth pregnancy that she had to spend most of her time in bed. She devoted the long hours to intensive and extensive reading of the Spirit of Prophecy and her Bible. The child born of that sacred influence has a sweetness of disposition and an interest in the truth which supercedes that manifested by any other member of the family.

There are researchers in the world today who are discovering these principles and by so doing are confirming, as true science always does, the truths found in God's holy word. One excellent work carried out in this field by Thomas Verny, M.D., with John Kelly, is reported in the book, *The Secret Life of the Unborn Child*. It was published in the United States in 1981 by Summit Books, New York, New York, and in the same year by Collins Publishers, 100 Lesmill Road, Don Mills, Ontario, Canada. It is a book that can be read with profit by every person seeking to understand the power of prenatal influences and education.

This recommendation however, is accompanied by a word of caution. The authors make no mention of the vital factor of the new birth, as one would expect, but deal only with the manifest power of prenatal and postnatal influences to shape the life of the individual. The results noted by these researches certainly present information of great value to the Christian who can use the knowledge to definite advantage. As he studies the book however, he must ever bear in mind that it is concerned with only one aspect of the case, and therefore, must take care not to lose sight of the fact that, without the new birth, it is no more possible to train a child to be a Christian, than it is to persuade a thorn bush to produce apples.

As the book is read, it becomes apparent that the forces of darkness can also take advantage of the laws of prenatal influence. Those who are dedicated to strengthening certain causes such as Communism,

Catholicism, or any other ideology, now have information at their command which will enable them to establish a predilection in children as yet unborn, for any chosen cause, be it good or evil. It is only necessary for them to enlist the support and cooperation of parents-to-be in order to subject the unborn to those influences which will establish the needed thought patterns and the desired habits, and the little ones will grow up dedicated to serve the systems they, from their earliest moments, have been trained to support.

The fact is, of course, that the devil is far better acquainted with the effectiveness of prenatal influence than Christians have been, and he has been using this means of setting babes in the wrong direction as far as possible ever since the human family came under his control. He has been anxious that Christians shall never be made aware of what they can do for their children during the prenatal period, for he knows that the mind and being of a child who is born again and who is then preoccupied with the right influences before it is even born, has no disposition to accommodate him.

With these possibilities for good or evil in our minds, we will now glean some of the information contained in *The Secret Life of the Unborn Child*. For the authors, the research into this question began in a most interesting fashion in the winter of 1975. Dr. Verny was spending a weekend with some friends at their country retreat. His hostess was seven months pregnant, and in the evenings, he would find her sitting alone in front of the fire singing a lullaby to the unborn infant.

This touching scene left a deep impression on his mind. This impression was heightened when she told him later that, after the birth of her son, no matter how hard the baby was crying, it always quieted down when she sang that same lullaby to him. This led him to pose the question to himself as to whether or not her case was unique or is it a general fact of life that a woman's feelings, thoughts, and actions actually influence the unborn child?

He already knew that at various moments during the pregnancy, many expectant mothers sense that their unborn children are responding to their feelings. Furthermore, he had heard stories and dreams from various individuals which strongly indicated a prenatal influence. However, he had never assembled these scattered items into an organized whole, as he was now led to do.

He found others also engaged in the same research, and remarks that they were able to study the fetus undisturbed by using the medical technology which has become available over the past twenty years. What they discovered constituted a remarkable departure from the commonly held view of the unborn child which saw no consequence in the growth



patterns achieved during the months before birth other than merely physical. Here now are the main conclusions drawn as a result of six years of intensive study and observation:

It was found that the little one still in its mother's womb can see, hear, experience, taste, and actually learn even though on a primitive level.

Very importantly, it was found that these perceptions begin to shape and mold the child's character and personality well before it is born. How he will eventually regard himself, and consequently act as a happy or sad, aggressive or humble, accepted or rejected individual, depends to a point on the messages it, while still in the womb, receives from its mother about itself and the world around it.

The third point which came through very strongly is that the principal source of these molding influences is the child's mother. It was found that the unborn child feels every experience through which the mother passes as if it were in fact the adult. This does not mean that every momentary anxiety felt by the mother has a virtually disastrous effect on the fetus. What does become consequential are persistent patterns of feelings which, when communicated to the little one, significantly shape his personality and character. The negative feelings of anxiety, fear, worry, and discontent have an adverse effect on the unborn, while the positive qualities of serenity, cheerfulness, gratitude, confidence, and contentment exert a very favorable influence on the developing life.

Very significantly, it was found that the father is designed to play a much more important role than has been afforded him. How he relates to his wife and expected child has a very decisive influence on the outcome, either for good or ill. This finding is strongly supported in the Spirit of Prophecy where it is written: "The father should study how to make the mother happy. He should not allow himself to come to his home with a clouded brow. If he is perplexed in business, he should not, unless it is actually necessary to counsel with his wife, trouble her with such matters. She has cares and trials of her own to bear, and she should be tenderly spared every needless burden.

"The mother too often meets with cold reserve from the father. If everything does not move off just as pleasantly as he could wish, he blames the wife and mother, and seems indifferent to her cares and daily trials. *Men who do this, are working directly against their own interest and happiness.* The mother becomes discouraged. Hope and cheerfulness depart from her. She goes about her work mechanically, knowing that it must be done, which soon debilitates physical and mental health. Children are born to them suffering with various diseases, and God holds the parents accountable in a great degree; for it was their wrong habits which fastened disease upon their unborn children, under which they are compelled to suffer all through their lives. Some live but a



**Fathers need to realize that a tremendous responsibility rests upon them to set the tone of the household. If ever there is a time when the head of the house needs to be loving, supportive, kind, protective, and generous, it is during the prenatal period. Failure to be so will have disastrous consequences on the future life of his unborn child.**

short period with their load of debility. The mother anxiously watches over the life of her child, and is weighed down with sorrow as she is compelled to close its eyes in death, and she often regards God as the author of all this affliction, when the parents in reality were the murderers of their own child.

"The father should bear in mind that the treatment of his wife before the birth of his offspring will materially affect the disposition of the mother during that period, and will have very much to do with the character developed by the child after its birth." *Selected Messages* 2:428.

This statement emphasizes the truth that the unloving treatment of the wife by the husband causes her to become discouraged, so that hope and cheerfulness depart from her. Now, inasmuch as the unborn child experiences what the mother feels, and is not insulated from the father's lack of love, understanding, and support, the father has robbed his infant of courage, hope, and cheerfulness. The little one perceives that the world waiting for him out there, is not a friendly or desirable one and it begins to build up a wall of self-protection between itself and the very ones with whom it needs to be most open and trustingly intimate. It realizes that the parents are not competent in coping with life's problems by mutually surrendering them to the Lord, and it then turns to itself as the only one it knows who really has its interests at heart. Thus, before it is even born, it is being trained to reject the Sabbath Rest principles of operation. What a tragic service for a father to render to his children. For them, he could not do worse.

Upon the father, more than upon any other member of the family, rests the responsibility for setting the tone of the household. A good woman who knows that her husband loves, appreciates, and wants her, is contented, trusting, loving, courageous, hopeful, serene, and cheerful. That is the only state of mind for a mother to be in when she is carrying an unborn life. Let husbands really understand how directly and extensively their behavior influences their children and they will be very diligent in spreading love and sunshine throughout their dwellings. Let the wives also understand the vital roles the Lord has assigned both her and her husband, and she will make herself as lovable as possible. When both the wives and their husbands achieve a loving, supportive relationship toward each other, what a wonderful start in life the children will receive; what control the parents will have over the formation of their children's personality and character!

This is precisely the conclusion drawn by Dr. Verny who observed that with this knowledge at our service, parents can so significantly and decisively manage the education of the unborn child as to ensure his happiness and success as a fetus, a newly-born, and a person for the rest of his life.

The Christian parent who realizes the marvelous educational potential of the prenatal period will see this, not only as an opportunity, but also as a weighty responsibility which he cannot shirk or lay upon another.

So far, we have considered the emotional and spiritual effects of good and bad husbandry and motherhood, but it must not be overlooked that this has a very serious physical effect as well. Consider this thought as it is stated in the quote above from *Selected Messages* 2:428. After speaking about the mother being oppressed by an uncaring husband, the statement describes the debility thereby induced as to be so serious that the child is afflicted with diseases which not every one of them survives.

Therefore, when a husband and wife have a true marriage relationship, and the home is filled with happiness and love, the offspring will not only be happy and secure; they will also be healthy, free from debilitating diseases.

To strengthen the conviction that the unborn child is aware of what is happening around him through his own senses and through the conduit of his mother's responses to her experiences, we will refer to one or two more cases reported by Dr. Verny.

A problem arose with a baby whom he calls Kristina for the purpose of the story. This child, though strong and healthy, refused to feed from her mother. Every time the milk was offered to her she actually turned away from it. At first, the doctor thought the child was ill, but when offered a bottle of baby formula a little later, she drank all of it quite hungrily.

The doctor then supposed that the child had a temporary aversion to its mother and would soon drink from her supply, but this did not prove to be the case. She continued to refuse her mother, though there was no hesitation in drinking formula from a bottle. The doctor then began to experiment in order to discover the cause of this strange behavior. He asked another mother who had given birth about the same time as Kristina's mother, if she would try to feed the baby. Though sleepy when the other mother clasped her to her side and offered the babe her breast, the little one did not refuse, but, without hesitation began to suck vigorously.

The doctor then began to gently question Kristina's mother to see if he could discover a cause for this unusual behavior. It was not long before he found the answer. The mother had not wanted to have this child and, when she found that she was expecting, decided to have the fetus aborted and would have gone ahead with the plan but for the husband's insistence that she carry the baby to full term. She unwillingly submitted to his wishes, but throughout the entire period of the pregnancy continued to resent the growing life within her, for nothing could persuade her that she ought to welcome this infant.

As events turned out, it was quite impossible to hide from the child as yet unborn, that its mother did not want it. It therefore emerged into the outside world aware that it was not welcomed by one of the two most important people in her life—her mother. It simply responded by a counter rejection. It would not urge its claims where it was not wanted.

What a sad beginning for a young life!

If, once this became apparent after the infant had been born, the mother had changed her attitude to the point where she loved, cherished, and wanted the child and really showed it, it might have been possible for this gulf to have been bridged and the barriers broken down. But, even so, there would never have been the mother-child bonding

that there should and would have been if the mother had possessed the right attitudes during the child's prenatal period. Once such a mother came to realize the nature and magnitude of the mistake she had made, she would have to work at her absolute best to convince the little one that she was loved and wanted after all. That too could be self-defeating if wrong procedures were employed. She would have to develop genuine, unfeigned love in her heart and would have to apply it with wisdom and skill, in order to achieve a true bond with her offspring.

Certain doctors, seeking to understand the extent to which the experience of the mother is shared by the child, set up the following experiment.

After successfully soliciting the cooperation of a number of expectant women, but without informing them as to exactly what they were about to do, the doctors assembled them in a large room, wherein they were each assigned a bed. To the abdomens of each subject, the researchers then attached sensors which, when connected to the appropriate equipment, enabled them to monitor the heartbeat and general activity level of the little ones.

They then directed the women to relax completely which they did. The doctors then observed, as they expected they would, that the babies in their mother's wombs also settled down to rest. Kicking ceased, and the heartbeat slowed down.

Then the doctors, with a concerned look on their faces advised each mother that her baby had stopped moving. The first thought which leaped into every woman's mind was the fear that the baby was dead or had lapsed into the unconsciousness preceding death. As the emotions of anxiety engulfed the women, the babies within them responded with frantic kickings, their heartbeat rate increased, and they demonstrated that they were very much aware of the fear experienced by their mothers. To the experimenters, this exercise furnished conclusive proof that the unborn infants were indeed more than little, nonparticipant beings preoccupied only with physical development while waiting for birth and a considerable lapse of time thereafter before they could devote their time and energies to the accumulation of knowledge and the development of skills.

The doctors found instead through this and other experiments that the unborn could interpret and respond to the messages transmitted to them through the medium of their mothers, that habit patterns could be established, that they could signal their likes and dislikes, and that they could learn lessons that were taught to them in a simple and primitive, but very positive way.

Thus it becomes evident that the intellectual and the emotional capacities of the child are developing as well as the physical.

Furthermore, in the cases of those who, through the loving ministry of their parents and the grace of Christ, are endowed with the new birth experience, the spiritual nature is also developing.

The purpose of this chapter has been to alert us all to the fact that the prenatal period is of the greatest importance in the salvation and training of the children. It affords opportunities which must be grasped and used to the highest advantage during that vital period. On no account can parents defer or neglect this work except at fearful cost to themselves and especially to their offspring, for what is to be done then can never be achieved later, the opportunity having passed away forever. It must be understood that if the parents fail to ensure the new birth and the right follow-up training, they leave the child exposed to the terrible works of Satan who will preoccupy the life and make it difficult or virtually impossible to rescue that individual from his grasp once he has firmly established his evil nature within him.

Therefore, let the young people who are contemplating parenthood make sure that they are truly prepared to fulfill their vital role during the prenatal period. For those who do their work as God would have them do it, the rewards are beyond imagination. For those who do not, the results are heartbreaking as the experiences of so many have demonstrated.



# Making the Most of the Prenatal Period

## Chapter 21

Once the conviction has been established that the prenatal period affords a critically indispensable opportunity for the salvation of the child, and that it is disastrous not to make the most of this, the question arises as to how we can turn the asset to the best account.

In answering the question we will assume by now that the student of this theme is fully persuaded that the first work to be done for the child itself, is to bring it the new birth endowment. So we can leave that point for the moment while we concentrate on what the parents are to do to make the prenatal period as effective as possible for their offspring once the new birth is achieved.

We will begin with the effect of the mother's and the father's physical state on the unborn. This is far more significant and far-reaching than many suppose, for a person's physical start is directly contributed by both parents, and determines the health and vitality levels for the remainder of his days. This is so serious a factor that "Many whom God would use as His instruments have been disqualified at their birth by the previous wrong habits of their parents." *The SDA Bible Commentary* 2:1005.

Any dedicated Christian parents who were brought to realize by the convicting power of God that their physical habits had destroyed their child's chances of filling the position the Lord had planned for him, would be appalled and heartbroken.

Think for instance of the mighty Moses through whom the Lord accomplished so critically important a work in separating Israel from Egypt and leading them to the promised land. If his father and mother had been intemperate in their living habits, Moses as a baby would have had such a bad start in life as would have left him weakened physically, mentally, and morally to the point where the Lord could never have used him as He did. The work would have had to have been done by someone else, but who was there to do it. While it is possible that the Lord might have had a second choice to turn to, no hint of this is given in the records of sacred history.

But Moses was fit for the task. Therefore we know that, among other equally important factors, the health habits of Amram and Jochebed were according to the laws God had revealed to them, and were the best that could be maintained under the circumstances of their bondage to the Egyptians.

No doubt, when we come to heaven and read the detailed records of human history, we shall be surprised at the number of individuals who might have been powerful and effective instruments in the Lord's hands but failed because of the bad habits of their parents before the children were even born. It will be a tragic picture to behold.

It seems to be commonly supposed that the Lord can use anyone in His service if they have truly repented of their sins, and if they are truly dedicated to Him, and this is true to a point. However, the service that we render is seriously limited by our capacities, and, because of this, there are responsibilities that the Lord will never lay on certain people who, by their evil course, have damaged their minds. Those who have fallen into spiritualism are in this category.

"God will not entrust the care of His precious flock to men whose mind and judgment have been weakened by former errors that they have cherished, such as so-called perfectionism and Spiritualism, and who, by their course while in these errors, have disgraced themselves and brought reproach upon the cause of truth. Although they may now feel free from error and competent to go forth and to teach this last message, God *will not accept them*. He will not entrust precious souls to their care; for their judgment was perverted while in error, and is now weakened. The great and holy One is a jealous God, and He will have holy men to carry His truth. The holy law spoken by God from Sinai is a part of Himself, and holy men who are its strict observers will alone honor Him by teaching it to others." *Early Writings*, 101, 102.

Once believers *realize* that, if bad enough, the damaging effects of wrong health habits on the part of parents will disqualify their children for life from rendering the level of service they might have provided, they will be very much more diligent in seeing that they do establish correct habits





At no time should parents ever be neglectful of living as healthfully as they can under their circumstances, but they should be particularly careful during the prenatal period. Improper eating and drinking, and the spirit in which life is lived during that period, have a very significant effect on the temper and disposition of the child for the remainder of its life.

before they even consider conceiving a child. It was for this reason that the Angel of the Lord twice stated his strict instructions to Samson's parents as to how they should live before and after his conception.

"When the Lord would raise up Samson as a deliverer of His people, He enjoined upon the mother correct habits of life before the birth of her child. . . .

"In instructing this one mother, the Lord gave a lesson to all who should be mothers to the close of time. Had the wife of Manoah followed the prevailing customs, her system would have been weakened by violation of nature's laws, and her child would have suffered with her the penalty of transgression." *The SDA Bible Commentary* 2:1005, 1006.

The lesson revealed in the stress laid on the habits of temperance and self-denial to be practised by Samson's mother, is emphasized again and again in the inspired writings. The truth is repeated in various references to ensure that the Lord's children in these last days will learn how important the mother's habits are.

"The carefulness with which the mother should guard her habits of life is taught in the Scriptures. When the Lord would raise up Samson as a deliverer for Israel, 'the angel of Jehovah' appeared to the mother, with special instruction concerning her habits, and also for the treatment of her child. 'Beware,' he said, 'and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing.' *Judges 13:13, 7.*

"The effect of prenatal influences is by many parents looked upon as a matter of little moment; but heaven does not so regard it. The message sent by an angel of God, and twice given in the most solemn manner, shows it to be deserving of our most careful thought.

"In the words spoken to the Hebrew mother, God speaks to all mothers in every age. 'Let her beware,' the angel said; 'all that I commanded her let her observe.' *The well-being of the child will be affected by the habits of the mother.* Her appetites and passions are to be controlled by principle. There is something for her to shun, something for her to work against, if she fulfills God's purpose for her in giving her a child. If before the birth of her child she is self-indulgent, if she is selfish, impatient, and exacting, these traits will be reflected in the disposition of the child. Thus many children have received as a birthright almost unconquerable tendencies to evil.

"But if the mother unswervingly adheres to right principles, if she is temperate and self-denying, if she is kind, gentle, and unselfish, she may give her child these same precious traits of character. Very explicit was the command prohibiting the use of wine by the mother. Every drop of strong drink taken by her to gratify appetite endangers the physical, mental, and moral health of her child, and is a direct sin against her Creator." *The Ministry of Healing*, 372, 373.

What a glorious thought is contained in this statement. ". . . if she is temperate and self-denying, if she is kind, gentle, and unselfish, she may give her child these same precious traits of character."

Each parent must realize that "... temperance alone is the foundation of all the graces that come from God, the foundation of all victories to be gained." *Temperance*, 201.

If temperance and self-denial are the foundation of all the graces that come from God, and of *all* the victories to be gained, then triumph over the enemy and the gaining of the heavenly inheritance are impossible without these principles being established in the life.

When parents understand this, they will make sure that they are physically and spiritually practicing the principles of true temperance and

self-denial, and that, in their minds, they find this to be a delight and not a legalistic burden. They will rejoice to know that they are thus imparting to their offspring the best possible start for time and eternity, and are laying the foundation for all other victories to be gained.

This is so because it is impossible to insulate the mental and spiritual natures from the effects that physical habits have upon them. Let it be clearly understood that "Nothing is unimportant. Every influence that affects the health of the body has its bearing upon mind and character." *Child Guidance*, 408.

It is true that the mothers are the ones who are specially advised to be very careful and responsible in this regard. "The carefulness with which the mother should guard her habits of life is taught in the Scriptures.

"The reform should begin with the mother *before the birth of her children*; and if God's instructions were faithfully obeyed, intemperance would not exist." *Child Guidance*, 407.

But the fathers are not to imagine that they can indulge their appetites without seriously affecting their children. They need to be just as careful and faithful as the mother. "And fathers as well as mothers are involved in this responsibility. *Both parents* transmit their own characteristics, mental and physical, their dispositions and appetites, to their children. As the result of parental intemperance children often lack physical strength and mental and moral power." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 561.

Extreme intemperance is found among the slaves of nicotine, alcohol, and hard drugs. These impart a fearful legacy to their offspring who, in turn, impart a still worse inheritance to their children.

"Liquor drinkers and tobacco users may, and do, transmit their insatiable craving, their inflamed blood and irritable nerves, to their children. The licentious often bequeath their unholy desires, and even loathsome diseases, as a legacy to their offspring. And as the children have less power to resist temptation than had the parents, the tendency is for each generation to fall lower and lower. To a great degree parents are responsible not only for the violent passions and perverted appetites of their children but for the infirmities of the thousands born deaf, blind, diseased, or idiotic." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 561.

When these things are realized and something is understood about the evil effects forced on helpless, dependent, trusting infants by the intemperance of both parents, Christian couples will be very careful to ensure that they do not initiate a conception before they have the victory in this field. This point cannot be overemphasized. It means that every person who has not gained the victory in this area and has not, in

consequence, established disciplined temperance in his or her life, must on no account initiate a conception even if this means that they never have children till the end of their time on the earth.

With many people, the desire to have children is intense, but this powerful instinct must not become the deciding factor, for, no matter how strong the desire may be, it will be impossible for the persons involved to give their children the inheritance and training so absolutely vital to their physical, mental, and spiritual health and prosperity, if the aspiring parents have not gained the victory over appetites, passions, and affections. Better by far to deny your feelings and longings to have children, than to launch a little one onto the busy, demanding river of life without giving it the necessary endowments and qualifications.

There is no reason for anyone to be discouraged in his or her battle to gain the victory over intemperance, for, by the grace of God, deliverance can be obtained and correct habits established. It is Satan and his servants who declare that it is impossible for men and women to gain the victory, but Jesus came to this earth to demonstrate among other things, that the law can be kept to perfection by mortals handicapped with fallen, sinful flesh and blood. Furthermore, His life demonstrates that perfect obedience brings nothing but blessings and enrichment to those who do obey. Living in harmony with the divine precepts does not, as so many imagine, rob the believer of the joys of life, nor does it shrink him mentally, physically, socially, and spiritually. On the contrary, it opens the doors of opportunity to unlimited achievements and personal development. However, it must ever be remembered that we cannot live righteously of ourselves. This is possible only through the grace of Christ.

"In our own strength it is impossible for us to deny the clamors of our fallen nature. Through this channel Satan will bring temptation upon us. Christ knew that the enemy would come to every human being, to take advantage of hereditary weakness, and by his false insinuations to ensnare all whose trust is not in God. And by passing over the ground which man must travel, our Lord has prepared the way for us to overcome. It is not His will that we should be placed at a disadvantage in the conflict with Satan. He would not have us intimidated and discouraged by the assaults of the serpent. 'Be of good cheer,' He says; 'I have overcome the world.' *John* 16:33.

"Let him who is struggling against the power of appetite look to the Saviour in the wilderness of temptation. See Him in His agony upon the cross, as He exclaimed, 'I thirst.' He has endured all that it is possible for us to bear. His *victory is ours.*" *The Desire of Ages*, 122, 123.

It is most fortunate that such a victory is available, for "His example declares that our only hope of eternal life is through bringing the appetites and passions into subjection to the will of God." *The Desire of Ages*, 122.

So then, the very first step on the part of the aspiring parents after they themselves are born again, is to ensure that they truly have the victory over their appetites, passions, and affections. Let them be inspired in their quest for victory in this field, by the knowledge that they will be endowing their offspring with these same vital foundations for all the victories to be gained, and which will open to the child a close walk with God and a place in the kingdom.

Let victory over appetite be accompanied by a well ordered, disciplined life, for the parents by their habits will certainly establish the same patterns in their unborn children. When the mother, after a night of sweet, undisturbed sleep awakens to the freshness of the morning, rises promptly without lazily lingering in bed, and methodically and efficiently accomplishes her work, she is giving to the child she is carrying, a very effective training in how to face life's responsibilities.

On the other hand, if she stays late in bed, arises at a different hour each morning, and is always struggling to get her tasks completed, the children will emerge into the world with these same shortcomings established within them.

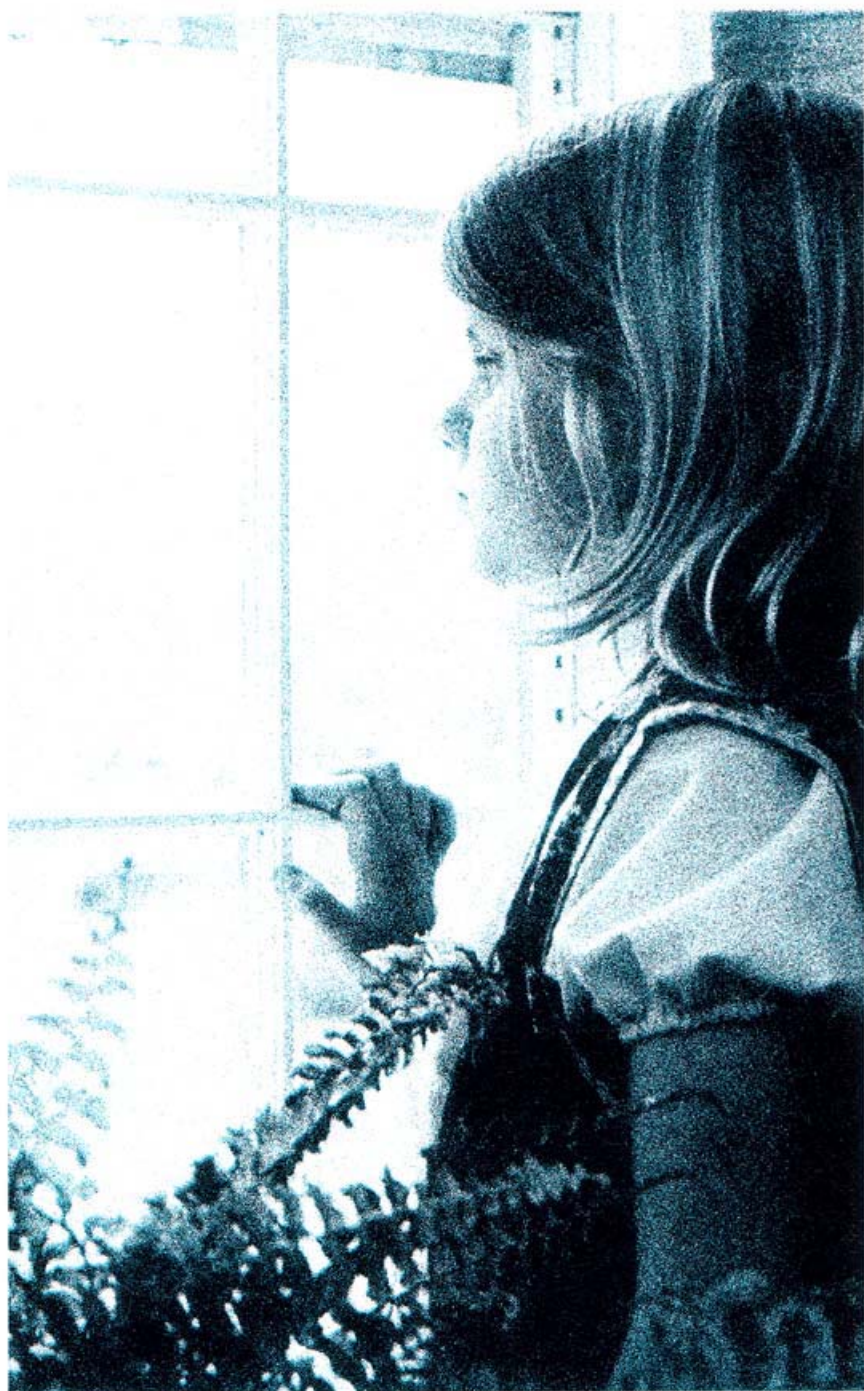
Never forget that the same undesirable influences which marked the life of the mother before the birth of her child will be continued thereafter unless a thorough reformation is initiated. On the happier side, it is also true that the influences which establish good patterns of behavior will also continue after the infant has been placed in its mother's arms for the first time.

This means that both the evil and the good education established in the prenatal period will be continued after birth unless there is a decided change for the better or the worse in the parents' lives.

I saw the truth of this demonstrated in the life of an elderly lady who was never on time for anything except when she had to catch a public transport vehicle such as a bus, train, ship, or plane. Otherwise, she was late arising in the morning, for meals, for shopping, and for everything else.

One day, without being asked, she made the observation that her mother had never done anything with reference to time, had not required her to complete her work by a specified hour, but had given her unlimited freedom to operate utterly oblivious to the discipline of making the best use of the minutes available. "Consequently," she stated, "the life-pattern of my failure to relate work and time was firmly established in

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** This young girl is looking out on what appears to be a brighter world than the one in which she is presently confined. This is symbolic of all children whose parents have not made the most of their prenatal period. They are locked into a world of limitations while beyond and out of reach are the wonderful possibilities of what they might have been.



my childhood and has not changed since. I have never learned to organize my time to the best advantage, have failed to master the discipline of economic and efficient productivity, and, on those infrequent occasions when I have kept an appointment, it has been the result of fortunate circumstances rather than successful personal management."

Anybody who today carefully compares his habit patterns with the life-style to which he was subjected in childhood, will readily see how it is that we are what we are as adults. This does not mean that our initial training has hopelessly imprisoned us within fixed and unchangeable patterns of behavior, for determined effort can and will effect valuable reforms. What it does mean though is that any work of reform will be difficult and, at times, decidedly discouraging.

We will learn the truth of the words: "Old habits, hereditary tendencies to wrong, will strive for the mastery, and against these he is to be ever on guard, striving in Christ's strength for victory." *The Acts of the Apostles*, 477.

"Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but of a lifetime. It is not gained by a happy flight of feeling, but is the result of constantly dying to sin, and constantly living for Christ. Wrongs cannot be righted nor reformations wrought in the character by feeble, intermittent efforts. It is only by long, persevering effort, sore discipline, and stern conflict, that we shall overcome. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. So long as Satan reigns, we shall have self to subdue, besetting sins to overcome; so long as life shall last, there will be no stopping place, no point which we can reach and say, I have fully attained. Sanctification is the result of lifelong obedience." *The Acts of the Apostles*, 560, 561.

Every child who aspires to eternal life but is born into a home, be it professedly Christian or otherwise, where strict temperance is not practiced, and where an ordered, disciplined life is not maintained, faces a bitter struggle before the battle is won. With all too many, the detrimental effect of the wrong habits acquired during both the prenatal and postnatal periods proves to be a handicap so great that they give up in despair. Never achieving victory over their hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong, they will find the gates of heaven closed against them, a tragedy for which their parents are to blame.

But it need not be so. What the husband and wife must do is to undertake a thorough reformation of their habit patterns before they initiate a conception, and they will give their child a tremendous advantage. In this world of sin, every such advantage that can be given to the child, increases his capacity to cope with the awesome pressures that temptation can bring upon him. Thus the wise, disciplined,

temperate parents will establish within their children, the priceless gifts of sound physical and mental constitutions, together with well-ordered, industrious habit patterns.

But, it is the divine intention that these things are not all that are to be fixed in the unborn infant. Much can be done to ensure that the prime and only interest of the little one when he emerges into the world will be in the things of God. This was so in the earthly life of Christ and the Lord designs that it will be so in the experience of every child that is born to Christian parents. Of the Saviour as a child it is written:

"His hours of happiness were found when alone with nature and with God. Whenever it was His privilege, He turned aside from the scene of His labor, to go into the fields, to meditate in the green valleys, to hold communion with God on the mountainside or amid the trees of the forest. The early morning often found Him in some secluded place, meditating, searching the Scriptures, or in prayer. From these quiet hours He would return to His home to take up His duties again, and to give an example of patient toil." *The Desire of Ages*, 90.

There was nothing Jesus loved so much as communion with God through nature and the written word. To spend time in such fellowship with the Almighty, the Creator of the universe, the Source of everything in existence, was what gave Him His greatest happiness, and satisfying fulfillment. While other children found their satisfactions in activities which pandered to the flesh, He turned uninterested from all that to seek communion with His heavenly Father. It is evident that He spent every spare moment of His time studying the written word, not because He was driven to it, but because that is where His supreme interest lay. That which others found boring, tasteless, and uninteresting, He eagerly devoured as the very bread of life to His soul.

"Since He gained knowledge as we may do, His intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures shows how diligently His early years were given to the study of God's word." *The Desire of Ages*, 70.

"In childhood, youth, and manhood, Jesus studied the Scriptures. As a little child He was daily at His mother's knee taught from the scrolls of the prophets." *Education*, 185.

As he grew into boyhood, youth, and manhood, He sought out the word of God for Himself. He found that, in Him, the love for, and interest in the truth became so great, so intense, that He literally watched for every opportunity to spend more time in the study of the word both in its written and created form. Nothing was permitted to distract Him from His determination to achieve the greatest possible knowledge of the sacred word, and the incredible mental, physical, and spiritual powers which result therefrom. "And since He gained knowledge as we may gain it, His wonderful power, both mental and spiritual, is a testimony to the value of the Bible as a means of education." *Education*, 185.



This single-minded interest on Christ's part is a living witness to where our interest is likewise to be directed even from our earliest moments. It is the parent's responsibility to achieve in the child this all-excluding preference for the study of the Scriptures which, when opened to the understanding by the omniscient wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit, unlocks every branch of worthwhile knowledge necessary in producing fitness for a life of effective service both for time and eternity.

There can be no doubt but that every Christian parent would love to see in the children, such an all-encompassing love for God's word that they would be found eagerly studying it at every opportunity, and that such a totally absorbing interest would leave them completely disinterested in the literature and television which so commandingly enslaves the attention of those who have not been born again and whose tastes have not subsequently been trained to appreciate spiritual things. But, how many Christian parents have been dismayed to find that, after they have been so careful to exclude novels, comic books, and television from their homes, and have earnestly taught their children how evil these things are, the little ones still show that their preferences for reading and viewing material lies in the very things from which their elders have sought to protect them. Such a discovery is a very discouraging one indeed. It generates a feeling of hopeless despair and encourages the erroneous conviction that it is quite impossible to establish in the children the same victory that manifested itself in Jesus.

As we look around us today, which is early 1987, we are almost certainly unable to find any children in either our own or other families in whom is such a love for the Scriptures that they seek, as Jesus did, every opportunity they can find to search the sacred pages, not for a short span of time somewhere in their childhood, but consistently and with increasing love and devotion during childhood and youth, and on into adulthood. I definitely know of none, though there could be some unknown to me.

Parents and Sabbath School teachers find that if they are to gain and hold the interest of the children, then they must make the lessons, not spiritual, but entertaining. If they cannot surpass the television's standard of entertainment, the children become bored and restless. It is also found that while the children remain under the parents' control, they will attend Sabbath School, but, in most cases, once they assert their freedom in early adolescence, they discard Bible study and spiritual things altogether.

But, it does not have to be that way and will not if the parents follow the correct procedures. It would be expected that every Christian parent would be eager to learn the practical procedures whereby it can be guaranteed that the child would find the Scriptures to be his supreme interest from infancy till the Saviour comes should he live that long.

The first step as has been iterated and reiterated throughout this book, is to ensure that the child has been given the gift of the new birth from his earliest moments. This protects his mind from the direct and destructive education of the devil and predilects him in the direction of righteousness. By this means he is provided with an affinity for the things of God and he will tend to naturally respond to the spiritual and the eternal.

But, vital as this first step is, it is not enough. The unborn as well as the freshly delivered from their mother's womb, have no capacity to discern what must be rejected and what must be absorbed. Furthermore, as every born-again Christian must realize, a person who, as a child of God, has the divine life formed within him, can cultivate a taste for the material and the worldly until he loses all relish for the things of eternity. Those who do will come to love and cherish the evil they once detested.

"The mind of a man or woman does not come down in a moment from purity and holiness to depravity, corruption, and crime. It takes time to transform the human to the divine, or to degrade those formed in the image of God to the brutal or the satanic. By beholding we become changed. Though formed in the image of his Maker, man can so educate his mind that sin which he once loathed will become pleasant to him." *Testimonies* 2:478, 479.

Let it be emphasized that a taste for anything in things physical, mental, and spiritual can be cultivated. Consequently, the believer in Jesus needs to be very careful to cultivate the good, the pure, and the holy, while turning his back on that which is evil, for, if he does not, then, just as mud will cling to the cleanest of clothes if we walk through the mire, so will evil besmirk the soul.

It is for this reason that Paul gave the counsel: "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things." *Philippians* 4:8.

There might come situations in which we are compelled to dwell in the midst of vice and impurity as were Joseph and Daniel. Then it becomes of particular importance to close the avenues of the soul against the corrupting influences of the evil world around as these and other worthies did. Joseph's preservation of his purity was certainly achieved by shutting out evil thoughts and fixing his mind on the truth.

"Arriving in Egypt, Joseph was sold to Potiphar, captain of the king's guard, in whose service he remained for ten years. He was here exposed to temptations of no ordinary character. He was in the midst of idolatry. The worship of false gods was surrounded by all the pomp of royalty, supported by the wealth and culture of the most highly civilized nation then in existence. Yet Joseph preserved his simplicity and his fidelity to

God. The sights and sounds of vice were all about him, *but he was as one who saw and heard not*. His thoughts were not permitted to linger upon forbidden subjects." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 214.

Both the Bible and the Spirit of prophecy repeatedly emphasize that the believer must diligently cultivate a taste for the spiritual and the eternal while steadfastly refusing to even sample the delicious temptings of the evil world.

When and how shall this work be done for the child, so that at the earliest possible time his tastes will have become established in the things that pertain to righteousness and truth, and so that, to him as it was with Jesus as a child, a boy, a youth, and a man, the Scriptures will be the great study attraction?

This work must begin during the prenatal period when every emotion and experience through which the mother passes will be likewise experienced by the child as yet unborn. As the mother's experience is greatly affected by her husband's relationship to her, he needs to share with her in the same work of surrounding the infant as yet unborn with holy influences. He will have less time for this work than the expectant mother, but let him make the most of his opportunities. This is the period when the father and mother exert more influence on the child's mind than at any other time in their parenthood of the little one. If parents could only be led to fully appreciate the power at their command to virtually unchangeably establish the character of God in their precious little ones before they are even born, then they would apply themselves to their sacred work with a dedication, depth, and intensity such as they have not yet dreamed of. An incredible provision has been made available to them, and they must not fail to cultivate this gift of God to the utmost.

The Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy must be their constant companions. They need to be read at every possible opportunity, preferably aloud and directed to the unborn. It is most important that these books be not merely read, but deeply loved to the point where the parents will return to their study with eagerness, and have to lay them down with reluctance. They need to plead for the ministry of the Holy Spirit to fill their souls with light and inspiration until, as they see the living beauty in the truth, and come into vital linkage with the life of God Himself in that word, their entire beings become radiant with praise to God.

When they develop such an experience, what a priceless start in life they are imparting to their precious little one. During the prenatal period, the powerful, living messages which mother and father have been transmitting to him have been charged with the life-giving current of faith, hope, love, and goodness. His whole being will respond to it; and, once



Parents who are great Christians, who have a vibrant walk with God, who are radiant with praise and thankfulness to Him, and from whom worldly thoughts have been banished, will produce the most powerful, spiritual, capable, and effective children. What blessedness and joy will be theirs!

he is born, he will naturally identify with and seek out this life, and, when he is old enough to actually understand the Bible stories, he will find only a deep love for the Scriptures, for they will be his familiar friends.

Parents who are great Christians, who have a vibrant walk with God, who are radiant with praise and thankfulness to Him, and from whom worldly thoughts have been banished, will produce the most powerful, spiritual, capable, and effective children. What blessedness and joy will be theirs!

It is unfortunate that the spiritual ambitions of so many are limited to so low a level, but the same problem is found out in the world where likewise two general classes exist. There is the majority who are content to drag through school with little more than minimal effort and expenditure. Never aspiring to anything, they never attain to any worthwhile levels.

Then there are the achievers who work at their very best to gain qualifications to fit them for service. Heading this class are the super-achievers who, by the utmost diligent efforts, become highly fitted to serve. Among them are the world's finest musicians, men and women who have invested endless hours of tedious practice playing scales, arpeggios, and exercises until they have reached a high level of perfection. Such people are few in number when compared with earth's masses. There would be more, except that some are so placed that they do not have the opportunity to rise.

But in the realm of Christian achievement, to every person the same powers and facilities are available. Yet how few exceptional Christians have appeared, but when they have, what mighty works the Lord has accomplished through them. See the incredible impact of Daniel and his three companions as they confronted the mighty king of the world, firstly over the crisis generated by the dream, and then before the fiery furnace. Those men caused history to change its course, as the greatest and proudest man on earth was converted to the Lord.

There are those who are able to appreciate the power in these men, but feel that they were especially endowed for their mission. This is not true. It was by the grace of God, and their own diligent effort that they became what they were. They really worked at becoming extraordinary Christians, not to be the best for the sake of being on top as the world aspires to be, but because they needed to be in order to reflect praise and honor to God.

So in this darkening, final hour of earth's history, mothers and fathers need to really work with all their powers to become outstanding Christians. They need to do this if they are to give their children the start in life that they fully need. When you think that you are putting your very best into the work of spiritual development, a careful survey of your unimproved time will reveal something of how far you are falling short of what would in fact be your best effort.

When the father and the mother join in the vital work of intense spiritual cultivation, and in the course of these essential exercises, go so far as to read aloud to their unborn as well as their born, we are not suggesting that the child is able to actually decipher the words, or to understand the message being absorbed by the parents. This would be too much to expect, for the child's capacities have not developed to the point where such things are possible. Christ Himself as a child was limited to the abilities of a child as it is written: "While He was a child, He thought and spoke as a child; but no trace of sin marred the image of God within Him." *The Desire of Ages*, 71.

But, though incapable of absorbing truth at that intellectual level where reasoning and discernment are required, the unborn child is blessed with a significant amount of light and power, the beneficial effects of which are beyond computation. No child can afford to be deprived of these advantages. He needs everything the Lord has made available to him during this vital period.

Specifically what he does obtain from his parents' spiritual exercises over this period is, firstly, living food, the Bread which comes down from heaven, to feed and nourish his divine nature. This ensures that his spiritual nature grows strong and robust. Let him then be well fed so that he will develop from strength to greater strength. The need to be diligent in doing this cannot be overemphasized.

The next acquirement is a marvelous energizing of his mental powers, for there is nothing to compare with the study of the Scriptures for the strengthening of the mind. Look again to the life of Christ for verification of this fact. There it is declared: "And since He gained knowledge as we may gain it, His wonderful power, both mental and spiritual, is a testimony to the value of the Bible as a means of education." *Education*, 185.

We do not know to what depth of detail Mary, the mother of Jesus, understood these principles of education, but we do know that she understood that hers was a fearful responsibility, for she had been informed of it by the angel, and we are aware that she was a very devout woman. Therefore, we would expect that she spent as much time in prayer and the intense study of the Scriptures as her demanding life would permit. Thus her devotional life during Christ's prenatal period, was His devotional life during the same period. Fed through His mother with the Bread from heaven, He daily grew in mental and spiritual power before and after He was born. As our children can gain knowledge exactly as Jesus did, they too can develop mental and spiritual strength before as well as after they are born if the parents will feed on the Word in their behalf. This is a wonderful period of opportunity which must not be overlooked.

Fathers need to be impressed as to the importance of their role during this time, for the success of these procedures depends more on them than it does on the mother. Some might tend at first to dispute this because what the mother is in her spirit and attitude, determines the character being built in the child within her. This is true, but what must not be overlooked is the fact that, in part, what the mother is, is determined by the husband's attitude toward her. If her husband is insensitive to his role, she can, by God's grace, rise above despondency, but she will still feel the loss, and Christ will not miraculously satisfy her needs in this matter for His will not usurp the position He has given the human agent to fill. Let it be understood that the behavior and attitude of the husband has a greater effect on the wife than does her behavior on him. The family is her whole life while his interests tend to be dominated by work or career responsibilities. What happens in the home will usually affect him less than what goes on in his business.

But, if he is a dedicated Christian, understands the child salvation message, realizes the critical importance of his role as the husband, and, seeing what wonderful results are available to him and his wife, rises to the challenge of the hour, then business pursuits and responsibilities will assume a much less important place in his thinking. His family will then most certainly be the all-important interest and work so far as he is concerned.

What the wife must have during the prenatal period and at all times thereafter, is the absolute security of knowing that her husband loves her with a deep, warm, and living affection to the exclusion of all others, just as she loves him in return. They both need to be very great lovers, bound together with that infinite love which transcends all human affection and has its source in the heart of God. This is love which is unchanging, unimpeachable, and unfathomable. It is not sentimental, emotional, and

fickle, but is deep, quiet, and enduring, a fountain of holy joy forevermore. Its establishment forms the one satisfactory environment for the salvation of the children.

Husbands, never forget that a wife who is loved deeply and enduringly, is a very secure, restful person especially if she has the capacity to return the same love to her husband. A mother in love and at peace imparts the same warmth of love to her unborn offspring. As she pours her love back to her husband, the child, who experiences every emotion through which the mother is passing, likewise is reaching out in love to his father. If so wonderful a being as his beautiful, peaceful mother, loves this man, he can do nothing else but love him too. How beautifully the family is thus bonded together; what a foundation is thus laid for a future life of trust and partnership. Thus the hearts of the parents and the children will be turned to each other in these last days, and not away from each other, as it is written:

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

"And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse." *Malachi* 4:5, 6.

Those parents who never understood how to bring salvation to their children, and who did not know how to really love their wives as they carried and raised their offspring, know the sorrow and bitterness of rejection by their teenage children. How they have longed for the bonds of sweet fellowship to be established between them and their beloved children.

Loving, Christian young people of today do not have to face this terrible prospect. The light is now shining which reveals that a sound physical, mental, and spiritual foundation can be so thoroughly laid in the infant before it is even born that, forever afterwards, the child, blessed with exceptional powers and with a taste only for that which is truly profitable in God's estimation, will walk in the ways of the Lord forever. Then the promise will be fulfilled: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." *Proverbs* 22:6.

But if the work which God has ordained shall be done during the prenatal period is not faithfully performed, there will be a lifelong deficiency, an enduring weakness, an abiding handicap which will prevent the victim of this neglect from reaching the high attainments the Lord had planned for him, and will make it more difficult for him to resist temptation.

There will be those who will object to the total molding of the child's life by the parents at a time when the little one is so completely unable to make any decisions for himself. To take this stand is to demonstrate an ignorance of what the alternative is.



**Rejection of their parents by teenage children is indeed a very heavy and bitter burden for the adults to bear. But it needs never to be. If the parents make the most of the prenatal period, they can be assured that their children will love and respect them eternally.**

If the parents are careless about being temperate in all things the child is cursed for life with physical disability, susceptibility to disease, and predilection for sin.

If the parents live an undisciplined and disorderly life, this is the habit pattern they will bequeath to their offspring.

If they do not cultivate a supreme interest in spiritual things, their minds will inevitably be attracted to the world and its fascinations, and thus they will sentence their little ones to the same taste for the cheap and the sordid.

The simple fact is that in the very nature of the case, it is impossible for the parents not to choose for their little ones. Therefore, it is good thinking and planning to give the absolute best that you can, and the prenatal period is the critically important time when it must begin. Let me close this chapter by repeating a statement quoted earlier.

"The effect of prenatal influences is by many parents looked upon as a matter of little moment; but heaven does not so regard it. The message sent by an angel of God, and twice given in the most solemn manner, shows it to be deserving of our most careful thought.

"In the words spoken to the Hebrew mother, God speaks to all mothers in every age. 'Let her beware,' the angel said; 'all that I commanded her let her observe.' *The well-being of the child will be affected by the habits of the mother.* Her appetites and passions are to be controlled by principle. There is something for her to shun, something for her to work against, if she fulfills God's purpose for her in giving her a child. If before the birth of her child she is self-indulgent, if she is selfish,



impatient, and exacting, these traits will be reflected in the disposition of the child. Thus many children have received as a birthright almost unconquerable tendencies to evil.

"But if the mother unswervingly adheres to right principles, if she is temperate and self-denying, if she is kind, gentle, and unselfish, she may give her child these same precious traits of character. Very explicit was the command prohibiting the use of wine by the mother. Every drop of strong drink taken by her to gratify appetite endangers the physical, mental, and moral health of her child, and is a direct sin against her Creator." *The Ministry of Healing*, 372, 373.



# The Older Child

## Chapter 22

So far, our considerations have been about the child blessed with parents who understand and apply the child salvation measures from the infant's earliest moments, but what of the children already born and still cursed with the presence of the old man, and the prisoner of many bad habits and wrong concepts? Is the message too late for them, or is there something that can still be done?

What we are looking at now is a situation in which we have graded conditions ranging from the very good to the virtually hopeless. The best that can be expected today is for the message to be accepted and applied before the marriage takes place. The worst situation is where the children of Christian parents have grown up, passed out of their parents' control, and renounced Christianity altogether. There is very little that the parents can do to bring salvation to those of their children who have wandered away, but there are some things which can be done for them, and they must not be regarded as being necessarily beyond the hope of redemption.

Whatever the children's ages, the first step to be taken by parents who have come to understand and accept the child salvation message, and who are determined to put it into operation, is to make a careful evaluation of the spiritual and mental condition and position of each of their children. The more candid, unemotional, and honest this estimation is, the more effectively the parents can set to work to remedy the evil situation in force.

The first conviction which must be faced is that the child has never been born again, is still therefore an evil tree incapable of producing

righteous fruit, and consequently has in him, not the spirit of obedience, but the spirit of rebellion and disobedience.

If the parents themselves have been truly born again, and have therefore experienced the power of divine grace to transform the soul, they will have no difficulty in acknowledging that their children are still unregenerate. Their judgment will not be colored by sentiment, wishful and superficial thinking, or by human affection. They will evaluate things as they really are, not as they would like them to be.

Remember, we are discussing a specific class of children here—the ones whose parents have just learned the child salvation principles, and therefore have not so far applied them to their own children. These children are not yet born again and need to be initiated into this blessing as soon as possible.

The next step is to recognize that the presence of Satan's seed in the little one from his conception till whatever age he has now reached, has been an agent of destruction of physical, mental, and spiritual power, so that his capacities have been considerably reduced. It must also be realized that this evil presence within him has developed a relish for the worldly and the transitory, and that an extensive pattern of wrong habits has been formed. There will be a tendency for these to assert themselves as life's crises are met.

Next, an attempt must be made to assess the degree to which the child can understand the gospel and can make decisions for itself. These things will depend on the child's age and intelligence level. The older he is and the better developed, the more the responsibility for making the right decision rests on him.

The parents must then clearly identify the form of government by which they have been operating in the home. This is not determined by the fact that they themselves are truly born again, love the Lord, and have the best interests of His kingdom at heart, but by the actual principles and procedures they have employed.

An honest survey of those principles and procedures will clearly show that, as outlined in Chapter One of this book, they have established and operated according to the satanic and not the divine order in their family. It is the way of Satan's government to use loving appeals at first and then, when this fails to produce the desired obedience, to employ forceful means by which the subject is compelled to render allegiance to the ruling power. The parents who are facing the problem of bringing salvation to their already growing children, must acknowledge that they have been operating by the principles of force, and that therefore, they have been managing a satanic kingdom in their homes. The fact that it was done in ignorance and with the best of motives and intentions relieves them of condemnation, but does not cancel out the evil effects.

Now that the light on divine government, God's character, and child salvation has come, the condemnation for the wrong course of the past will rest heavily on the parents unless they speedily repent and take as many measures as possible to correct the situation by establishing a home government on earth as it is in heaven.

True and effective repentance is always the fruit of the Holy Spirit's illuminating the soul with the light of truth. Therefore, the first step in the recovery of what has been lost is for the parents to make a comprehensive study of the child salvation message. Go over the principles again and again until they are thoroughly understood. In the meantime, let nothing be done to disturb the established order in the home. The great changes called for are to be undertaken only when the needed thorough preparation has been completed. The changes which must be made will result in the initiation of a whole new way of life, will not be easily enacted, and therefore require that no damaging steps be taken that will prejudice the outcome.

As you diligently and prayerfully study the child salvation message, let the Holy Spirit lead you into deep, effective repentance. With true sorrow for your past ignorance, for the wrong course followed, and for the fearful damage done to the children, confess your sins of ignorance, receive His loving forgiveness, and step out on a new way of life.

The next step is to explain the entire situation to the children, confess the fearful wrongs done, ask for their forgiveness, and offer them a new form of government, even Christ's kingdom, the one from which "... every carnal weapon, every instrument of coercion, is banished." *The Acts of the Apostles*, 12.

It must be remembered that the Sabbath rest principles must be applied in arranging the meeting with the child or children. If you are unfamiliar with this message, a comprehensive study of the book, *Entering into God's Sabbath Rest*, available from Destiny Press, will be very necessary. Those who know this message will understand that the Lord is the Plan-maker and thus to Him is left the critical task of arranging just when and where the meeting with the children will be convened. With infinite patience, the parents will await the time and place of God's appointment. In the meanwhile, they will seek to improve the waiting period by spending as much time as possible in communion with the Lord so that when the meeting does finally come, they will be truly ready for it.

The study given to the children will vary in depth and extent according to their capacity to understand and absorb the light. It should begin with an explanation of the truth that every family is a divine kingdom, a miniature reproduction of the kingdom of God in heaven. Then explain that that kingdom is not ruled by force in any sense of the word. Let them know that in the divine kingdom, "Rebellion was not to



**The older the child is, the greater the degree of responsibility which rests with him to accept the new form of home government and to become fit to be a part of it by being born again and becoming blessed with the spirit of obedience.**

be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power." *The Desire of Ages*, 759.

Confess to them that you have ruled them according to Satan's principles, according to the ways of compulsion and darkness. Tell them that you did this only because you did not truly understand the structure of the kingdom of light, truth, and freedom. Tell them you are sorry for the past, but the future can be very different. Advise them that you now offer them a new and better form of home government in which there will be no more punishments, no more coercion, no more employment of physical power to enforce obedience.

Without realizing the full implications of their answer, the children will joyfully welcome the new government as the Jews initially did when Christ first appeared among them. The children will tend to conclude that they will be free to do anything they feel like doing without fear of punishment.

They must now be delivered from this sad misconception. They must be shown that the new kingdom will only work if its subjects have the qualifications necessary to be a part of it. They must be so in tune with the spirit and character of the divine order that they obey, not because they are compelled to, but because it is in them to do so—because they have the very spirit of obedience embedded within their natures.

They will welcome the prospect of a home government from which force has been removed. Now invite them to qualify for membership in such a kingdom. Mercifully, children, at least until the entry into adolescence, seem wistfully eager to leave behind the spirit of rebellion and disobedience, and to take on the life of submission and obedience. It is much more difficult once childhood is left behind.

It will be with great gladness of heart that the parents will hear their commitment to serve their parents and the Lord according to righteousness. Once this glad moment has been reached, the parents become teachers of the gospel. Briefly, this involves their explaining to the children that, when Satan tempted Adam and Eve to sin, he implanted his evil seed in their hearts. This grew into the evil spiritual nature which is like a disease in the body. Stress the point that this evil presence within is a slave master who controls us against our wills. Remind them of when they were sick as an aid to their understanding of the workings of the old nature. Take them out into the garden where you can direct their attention to the good and evil plants. Demonstrate that the only possible solution to the thorn bush which cannot bear good fruit, is to tear it out by the roots and replace it with a new life altogether.

So the only hope for them is for the seed of Satan to be removed, and the seed of Christ to take its place. Make it plain that this is much more than a change in behavior; it is an exchange of natures. They are to become different people in themselves. Then their behavior will be righteous because they will have power to do what they know they should.

Once this is grasped, and the children are inspired with the desire to experience this change, impress upon their minds that it is utterly impossible for them to effect this transformation themselves. Take them to the zoological gardens, for instance, where the animal kingdom can be used to teach gospel truth. After introducing them to the leopard, ask them if either the animal or they can change or erase those spots. They know that no amount of washing will effect this, that only the Almighty Creator could accomplish such a change.

By these practical lessons they will truly learn that they cannot change their natures themselves, but will readily perceive that only the Lord can do this. Assure them that the Saviour is anxious to deliver them from the sin master, and fill them with the spirit of obedience, and has frequently and emphatically promised that He will do this vital work even for children if they will come to Him in simple faith and ask for the blessing.

The next step is for the children to make their personal commitment by confessing the presence in them of the old sinful nature, by surrendering it up to the Saviour, and by receiving the new life in Christ. The younger they are, the more assistance they will need from their parents, who, in most cases, will guide them through the prayer by putting the right words on their lips. But, even though the mother and father lead them in prayer, the convictions expressed must truly be the children's.

Once again, let the Lord nominate the time and the place. He knows when the ministry of the Holy Spirit has achieved the needed preparation as no mortal can do. The waiting time must not be spent in spiritual idleness. Let the parents and the children daily pray for the blessing to come upon them while, at the same time, they often meditate upon the promises of deliverance. Thus the faith of both the children and their parents will reach higher and still higher until the saving connection is made. Do not be anxious if the outreach of faith does not come immediately, for a waiting time is needed to ready them to receive initiation into the divine family.

At this point, it is necessary to sound a clear warning. Once the blessing comes, there will be a remarkable difference in the spirit and behavior of the children which will lead the parents to expect that, from this point on, virtually nothing can go wrong.

But there is a powerful and persistent factor of which the parents and the newly born-again children must be aware. It is this: Because the children were not being taught of God from their conceptions to their new births, they will have developed a strong and very definite habit pattern. These old habits are not the sinful nature, but are the product of it. After the evil nature has been removed and replaced with the divine nature, these old habits remain and seek to control the life as it is written: "Old habits, hereditary tendencies to wrong, will strive for the mastery, and against these he is to be ever on guard, striving in Christ's strength for victory." *The Acts of the Apostles*, 477.

While in their mother's womb, the children were not insulated from the world around, but were aware of problems, dangers, disappointments, perils, pleasures, and satisfactions. None of these things were as well defined or identifiable to them as to the mother, but the little ones nonetheless were conscious that there were problems calling for urgent solutions. The only way they could know how these dilemmas

could be solved, was by monitoring the way in which the mother dealt with them. They would then pattern their behavior after hers. After many repetitions, the mother's habits became the children's habits. By the time the children were born, the direction their lives would take and how they would respond to its pressures had been determined.

After the children have been born again, they will be put in what will seem to them to be life threatening situations for which they have known but one answer in the past. Naturally, they will tend to respond in the same way as previously, for it will take some time, much prayer, and patient training before the old habits are broken up and new ones are established in their places.

When the parents understand this and know what to expect, they will be able to cope with the situation in faith and confidence. They must put away the temptation to conclude that the children have not been reborn, while they understand that it is not the old evil nature that is now manifesting itself, but the education he left behind.

I witnessed a very illuminating example of this several years ago now. There was a young couple who had one child, a boy. At the parent's invitation, I stayed in their home for several days, but was very dismayed at the behavior of the two-year-old. He was perverse, rebellious, and diffused the spirit of disobedience wherever he went. When things did not please him, he would give an awful display of temper, throwing himself screaming onto the floor, jumping up after a short while to kick and throw things around the room, and running at his mother with flailing fists. The parents were absolutely impotent. They were utterly unable to control him.



**The child threw the worst temper tantrums I had ever seen, and, by the time my first visit concluded, there was no visible change in him whatsoever. He seemed a truly hopeless case, and, without the power of the gospel, he certainly was.**



Never was the child salvation message more needed than in this situation, but, as I presented it, my confidence in its working in this case was rather shaky.

There was no visible change in the boy by the time my short visit was over, and I thought little of him over the following year until I was once more a guest in the home for several days.

Never have I been more pleasantly surprised than I was when I came back, for the boy manifested an incredible transformation. Now he was cooperative, obedient, sweet, friendly, and patient. For the first three days of my stay there, not a cloud dimmed the sunshine which radiated from him. How I rejoiced at what I saw, and thanked the Lord for the message instructing us in the only way the children can be saved.

Then, with shocking suddenness, the storm burst with all the fury I had witnessed the previous year. I could see no difference between what I had observed twelve months before and then. What had happened, I puzzled? What could account for this terrible reversion to his old ways again? Was he not born again after all? But then, if he had not been delivered from the spirit of disobedience, how had he managed to behave so sweetly over the previous several days?

As I was striving to understand this problem, the mother quietly arose from her seat, took him by the hand and led him ever so gently but firmly out of the room while she quietly said, "We need to have a little talk with Jesus, you and I." I was amazed to see how calm and untroubled she was, an attitude which was a deciding factor in the victory she was about to gain.

Once she had arrived in the bedroom, she knelt in the attitude of prayer and invited him to pray, but he was too upset to do so. Quietly she talked to him, patiently she waited, and, every now and again asked the question, "Are you ready to pray yet?"

Finally, after about an hour, he submitted. Quietly, the mother spoke to the great Problem-solver on her child's behalf, giving Him the difficulty which had upset the child and accepting the divine solution to the problem.

The prayer ended, the two of them returned to the living room, and what a changed boy it was who came back. He was so radiant with love toward his mother, so gentle and calm in spirit, and he seemed to want his mother to give him directions just so he could have the exquisite pleasure of obeying her.

I have not seen the family since, but I know that, if the mother has maintained her approach to her son's problems, he will be experiencing deliverance from the old habit patterns and will be solidly united to the Lord as his perfect Problem-solver, Plan-maker, and Burden-bearer.

We have dealt with a situation where the children are still young enough to respond to the parent's leadership, but what of those young

people who have grown to manhood and womanhood and are perpetuating their own bad training at the hands of their parents, in the even worse training of their children.

All that can be done if these people will even listen, is to confess to them the wrong way which had been followed in their training, and ask sincerely for forgiveness. Once again, let it be emphasized that the approach must be preceded by much prayer, and the Lord must be permitted to plan the correct moment.

While on the one hand we can heartily rejoice that the Lord has seen fit to enlighten us with these truths, at the same time, as we who have adult children see the terrible results of our misguided efforts in the training of our children, we have the deepest regrets that we were ignorant of these principles when we needed to know them for the salvation of our children. We weep as we see the irreversible results of our ignorance.



# The Competent Educator

## Chapter 23

Once the basic objective of bringing the new birth to the infant has been accomplished, there follows the critical task of correctly training the little one in the way he should go. Two different, but equally essential responsibilities have to be discharged, and it must be stressed that it is only when both are faithfully and efficiently met, that the desired results can be expected. Revival, which is the resurrection to a new spiritual life, must be followed by reformation, which is a thorough and complete education in the way the child should go. Only when both of these divine provisions are applied in their correct order and relationship will the work of parents achieve the success that the Lord has promised.

There are two ineffective and therefore to-be-avoided alternatives which fail because they rely on one or the other of these balanced procedures to do what only both can do when applied in their correct order.

Firstly, there is the dedicated effort to train and educate the child without ensuring that he has been truly born again—the process whereby the old nature and its attendant spirit of disobedience has been replaced by the new nature and the spirit of obedience. This is the commonest approach of all. It is made mostly by those who do not truly understand what the new birth actually is, and suppose it to be nothing more than a realignment of loyalties and interests. This misconception leads them to concentrate on modifying and improving the existing life, but the end result can never satisfy the requirements for entrance into the kingdom.

Yet, without controversy, this method is to be preferred above the absence of any training at all, for, when skillfully and consistently administered, it does establish behavior patterns which are considerably

better than those displayed by the undisciplined. This seeming success is regarded by many as confirmation that the procedure is an acceptable alternative to anything else, but, those who understand that only the well-trained, born again child is truly being fitted for ministry in this life and that which is to come, know that it is not the kind of upbringing which will establish the child in the way he should go so that when he is old he will not depart from it. The failure of this method becomes painfully clear when the children reach the age at which they are no longer subject to the restraints imposed on them by the home government. Then, too late, it will be seen in their departure from their parents' principles, that they obeyed up till that time only because of fear of punishment or the incentive of attractive rewards.

As long as the youngsters are under the jurisdiction of their parents, the threat of punishment for misdemeanors, intellectual persuasion proving the validity of God's claims, along with the promise of eternal reward, and the fear of everlasting destruction, are sufficient to affect their behavior patterns for the better. Once this is achieved, comparison with the world and its ways, falsely assures the parents that their system is successful and they are encouraged to continue in it.

The second approach is to trust all to the new birth experience in the mistaken belief that a person in whom the life of Christ has been established can virtually do nothing wrong. To a certain point this has



So long as the children are under their parents' jurisdiction, the threat of punishment on the one hand and the offer of rewards on the other are sufficient to produce an obedience of a kind, but it will be found that once the young people reach the age where they assert their independence, this method of enforcing obedience will have proved to be a failure.

some truth to it, for the little one will have in himself the attractive disposition to love unselfishly and to obey willingly, but in many areas of daily living, he will have no idea of what is right and wrong until these distinctions have been specifically taught to him. He has, for instance, no idea of what words are indecent or obscene, and without discrimination, will tend to repeat what he hears. This is but one example of many areas where education alone can assure that the child learns to live righteously in thought, word, and deed.

Of the two extremes listed above, the latter is the lesser of the two evils and the one less likely to be a problem. Usually, those who understand the need for the new birth as the first objective to be attained, are aware that this must be followed with careful training.

The necessity for both the establishment of Christ's life within the child, and the subsequent careful and effective schooling is well illustrated from nature where the thorn bush growing in the soil is a picture of the evil nature thriving in a human body. It is at the point of conception that each of us receives this evil inheritance, and, while it remains within us, our lives are free from righteousness and bear only evil fruit. This sinful nature must be eradicated and replaced with the new nature before the person can commence to live righteously.

When confronted with the presence of a thorn bush in his garden plot, the gardener knows that his desire to produce good food can only be realized by his following certain inflexible procedures. He is fully persuaded that his first step must be the uprooting and destruction of the thorn bush. It cumbers the ground and he knows that, no matter how carefully and diligently he might care for it and train it, the time will never come when it will bear the good fruit he desires.

Next, he must replace the eradicated tree with one that will bear the fruit he wishes to eat. If apples are what he needs, then it is an apple tree that he must plant. If grapes, then a grape vine must be established where the evil tree was, and so on. No gardener would consider any other course of action.

In like manner parents must recognize that the very first work must be the eradication of the old, evil spiritual nature, and the implantation of the life of Christ in its place. Without this, all the effort expended on training and education only results in the development of the old, evil nature.

Once the gardener has established the good tree in the place of the thorn bush, his work has only begun. Imagine what would be the fate of a perfectly good grape vine that was left untrained after it had been planted. The branches would run along the ground where they would become entangled with the weeds and grasses that would spring up from the untended soil. Unfertilized, the plant would remain stunted, while lack of irrigation would further retard growth. The absence of pruning, so

vital to vigorous fruit production, would leave the plant expending much of its energies on useless wood from which no fruit would spring. Furthermore, the plant would be left defenseless against the ravages of foraging pests and plant diseases. Uncared for, it would present a sorry shadow of the splendid fruit-producing vine it might have been.

If it should survive all this, it would bear some fruit, but the crop would be very meager, the bunches few, the berries small, and probably very sour. If every farmer followed the practice of planting good seed and failed thereafter to husband the growing crop, mankind would certainly perish from starvation.

That which is true in the natural world is likewise correct in the spiritual. No parent can afford to leave his child untrained once he has been born again. If he does, then the end result will be very disappointing, and far below what the Lord intended to be achieved. This is a development that can and must be avoided.

Now that it is established that child salvation cannot be effected without the new birth *and* proper training, a large and difficult problem looms before the thoughtful reader: Where are to be found the young men and women already married or yet to take the step, who are truly competent to undertake the work of child training? Who among this class will confidently consider themselves able to really train up a child in the way he should go?

Successful child training calls for a very high degree of skill and competence. It is not a work to be undertaken by novices, yet this is the very kind of person who does become involved in these duties. That our society permits this is a reflection of the distorted sense of values which governs human decisions.

For instance, the authorities are fully aware that there are certain occupations which, if filled by the unskilled, would result in the loss of human life and property. In this category are included architects, design engineers, doctors, dentists, aircraft commanders, ship's captains, electricians, and so forth.

No one is permitted to practice any of these vocations unless he has satisfactorily completed an extensive course of training, has met stringent standards determined by searching examinations, and has gained valuable experience by serving under qualified leaders during a probationary period.

All this is as commendable as it is necessary. None of us would board a jet liner scheduled to fly to a distant or any destination if we knew that the pilot in command had received no flight training. We would know quite well that the aircraft would never arrive but would crash in flames on takeoff. Unless committed to suicide, we would decline to travel under those circumstances.

Nor would we care to enter a large, multi-storied building which had not been designed by an architect and structural engineer. We would fear to do so because of the high probability of becoming entombed. Because of these dangers, we rely on the authorities to administer the rules and regulations which protect us from the incompetent. Knowing how rigorously those safeguards are enforced, we walk with confidence into high performance passenger jets and large buildings, while millions trust themselves to doctors because they have complete confidence in their capacity to cure their ills without making the critical mistakes which would rob them of their lives.

It is most unfortunate that society does not recognize how vital it is that child training be undertaken only by truly competent people. The same rules applied to professions in which incompetence would be life threatening, need to be applied to entry into parenthood. A nation's future depends on the quality of its rising generation. Therefore an adequate investment needs to be made in the preparation of its children for their future work of nation building. This would require that parents-to-be spend time studying special courses in which they would be taught how to train their children successfully. Examinations would then determine if they had benefited by the instruction sufficiently to undertake the work. Only then would permission be granted for the young people to marry.

As it is now, of course, anyone can get married without measuring up to any standard of proficiency. Even mentally retarded couples are freely permitted to marry and reproduce.

Such is the nature of the problem with which humanity must grapple, and, on first consideration, it would seem to be a simple, straightforward



In all those areas where incompetency could be life threatening or uneconomic, the world rightly requires that those operating in these fields be thoroughly trained until they can meet high and exacting standards of competence, but the need for this principle to be enforced in the even more important work of parenting, is completely ignored. Young people can marry and have children without any qualifications being required whatsoever.

one requiring an easy, clear-cut solution. But, in fact, it is a complex situation that is far from easily solved so far as general society is concerned.

The first question to be faced is: Who will design the training courses and then administer them?

That question is not so easily resolved as in the case of architecture and medicine. In these and kindred fields, the requirements are technical and readily defined. Experience has revealed what information the practitioners need to know, what skills they must have developed, and how long an internship is needed to qualify them. This can be handled quite competently by the state, but with child training, it is a different matter.

In the first case, the state is led by men who, though in some cases are capable statesmen, are quite ignorant of the correct principles of child salvation. That knowledge is possessed only by God's true children and cannot even be known by anyone else, for "... the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." *1 Corinthians* 2:14.

Therefore, God has never given to the civil powers the responsibility of preparing a training course and administering it, for this is beyond their capacity and outside of their jurisdiction. It is on the church that the Lord lays this responsibility. It is left with all Christian parents to realize the wonderful possibilities open to them, and to take the necessary steps which will fit them to do their heaven-appointed ministry.

This is an individual matter which must not be established in the church through legislation. In the work of God there is no compulsion. Each is left perfectly free to do what the Lord requires or to choose an alternative course. While it is too much to expect that every one who professes faith in God and His truth will fulfill Jehovah's purposes in this matter, we can rejoice in the assurance that there will always be a faithful remnant who, when once enlightened, will do all in the power given them to become truly competent parents.

So, this brings us to another problem: Competent parents are not developed in a short time. Training for this work begins at their conception and, to be truly effective, must be given by parents who were themselves born again from the earliest possible moment, and, in turn, were trained by truly competent parents.

Now we know that there does not exist in this world today even a nucleus of men and women who have already become parents or who soon will, who have themselves received adequate training for competent parenthood. They just simply are not to be found!

In the light of the fact that child salvation cannot be implemented without competent trainers, what does this desperate dearth of able



educators mean to the future of this message? Does this indicate that it must fail, that it will never rise above being a wonderful but unattainable might-have-been?

If the message is to be a failure, the Lord would never have sent it to us. He does not work that way! He has promised to save our children and has guaranteed that if they are trained up in the way they should go, when they are old they will not depart from it. This means that, as surely as the Lord has stated that competent training is a condition of success in keeping children in the ways of righteousness, such training must be available. Jehovah never asks us to do what cannot be done. Therefore, He has solved the problem of incompetence in earthly parents. The question which every believer is to understand is just how He has done this.

The answer is an exceedingly cheering one and must come as a tremendous relief to every parent anxious to achieve the very best for the children. It is found in the way in which the Lord dealt with the problem in the past. Knowing that "the principles of God's dealing with men are ever the same," *The Great Controversy*, 343, we are assured that the way in which the Lord solved the problem in the past is the way in which He is solving it today.

When Jesus came into the world to provide, among other things, an example of what the children are to be, He needed skillful and adequate education just as much as any Christian child does today. But, where was to be found the truly capable couple to provide Him with that? An examination of the situation existing then reveals that it was no better than it is today. Both Joseph and Mary were very dedicated and truly sincere people, but neither of them were competently fitted to prepare Jesus for His mission. He needed a training of a far higher quality than they were able to give Him.

For instance, neither Joseph nor Mary were really clear on the true issues facing Israel at that time, for they both had great respect for their religious leaders and tried to induce Jesus to be equally respectful. Fortunately, the child was too well educated by that time to fall victim to their mistake. It is clearly evident that He had an education which surpassed that which either Joseph or Mary had or could have given to Him. In fact, it was not long before He was teaching them as the following statement shows:

"Mary often remonstrated with Jesus, and urged Him to conform to the usages of the rabbis. But He could not be persuaded to change His habits of contemplating the works of God and seeking to alleviate the suffering of men or even of dumb animals. When the priests and teachers required Mary's aid in controlling Jesus, she was greatly troubled; but peace came to her heart as He presented the statements of Scripture upholding His practices." *The Desire of Ages*, 90.

Mary loved her Son very dearly and sincerely endeavored to train Him in the very best way that she knew, but, in all kindness and sympathy, it must be stated that her efforts were faulty when she worked to persuade Him to "conform to the usages of the rabbis". Had she been successful in getting Him to conform, the results would have been disastrous for the plan of salvation which certainly would have failed. It would be impossible to conceive of more serious consequences than that. Submission to those men would have required the relinquishing of the pure principles of truth and righteousness He held, in favor of the darkness and error He had come to war against and eliminate.

How was it then that in spite of the misguided efforts of His devoted and dedicated mother, He was blessed with such powers of discernment that He was able to recognize and reject the sophistries of the religious leaders of His day? Did He bring these capacities with Him from heaven so that He had an inherent protection from Satan's agents and their devices?

This is not the answer! When the Saviour left the heavenly courts He brought nothing with Him to this earth. At the commencement of His learning processes, His memory banks were as empty as are those of all children at the beginning of their acquirement of learning. He did not even know who He was until the Holy Spirit taught Him this by opening His mind to the realization that He was fulfilling the Messianic prophecies and that He was the antitype of the sacrifices. It was on His visit to the Passover as a twelve-year-old, that the mystery of His mission began to open to the Saviour. Of that remarkable occasion it is written:

"For the first time the child Jesus looked upon the temple. He saw the white-robed priests performing their solemn ministry. He beheld the bleeding victim upon the altar of sacrifice. With the worshipers He bowed in prayer, while the cloud of incense ascended before God. He witnessed the impressive rites of the paschal service. Day by day He saw their meaning more clearly. Every act seemed to be bound up with His own life. New impulses were awakening within Him. Silent and absorbed, He seemed to be studying out a great problem. The mystery of His mission was opening to the Saviour." *The Desire of Ages*, 78.

Thus, at the age of twelve, He was seeing and understanding more than any other person in the entire world. Even John the Baptist who was called to herald the Messiah, was confused as to the real nature of Christ's mission. It was not until his own ministry had been concluded just before his death that the desert prophet realized the true character of the Redeemer's work.

So, it is evident that Jesus had a training superior to that received by anyone else in His day including Mary and Joseph. It was so much better in fact, that He knew much more as a child than anyone else in the entire world knew as adults. Therefore, even though there were some such as

Joseph and Mary who contributed to His learning to the limits of their capacities, Jesus must have had a remarkably competent educator to carry Him to the wonderful heights of knowledge so necessary for the successful execution of His work.

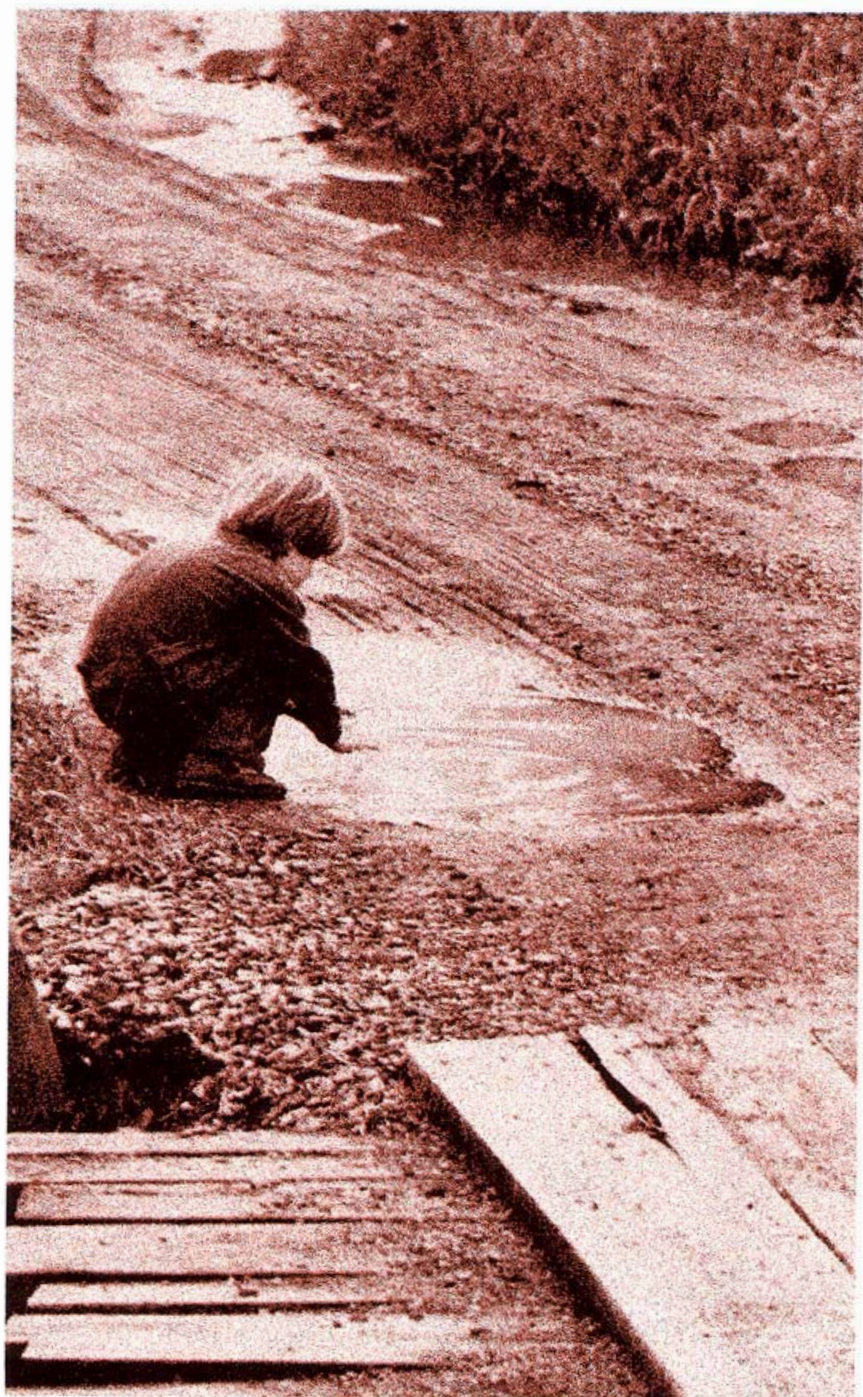
He did! That other Teacher was none other or less than His heavenly Father, God Himself!

"The child Jesus did not receive instruction in the synagogue schools. His mother was His first human teacher. From her lips and from the scrolls of the prophets, He learned of heavenly things. The very words which He Himself had spoken to Moses for Israel He was now taught at His mother's knee. As He advanced from childhood to youth. He did not seek the schools of the rabbis. He needed not the education to be obtained from such sources; *for God was His Instructor.*" *The Desire of Ages*, 70.

Careful consideration must be given to this paragraph so that the force of the declaration, "*for God was His Instructor*", is not reduced by the fact that Mary taught Jesus what she knew of the Old Testament Scriptures. It is true that "His mother was His first *human* teacher", but, it would be a mistake to conclude therefore that she was the actual teacher of her Son. She was but an instrument in the Father's hands. He was the real Instructor, a truth proved by the fact that His education of Jesus cancelled out any erroneous ideas which Mary innocently sought to transmit to her Son. Furthermore, God taught His Only-begotten, truths that Mary had never learned herself. In consequence, when Jesus entered His ministry, He had a flawless knowledge of the true nature of the scope and character of His work, and possessed accurate interpretations of the prophecies describing it. Such an education, given in a time when throughout the Jewish world there was a most serious misunderstanding of the Messiah's mission, could have come through no earthly channel. *God alone could have conveyed these truths to Christ and built into Him the wonderful powers of perception which He manifested during His ministry.*

At first this may come as a discouraging thought to parents, for there will be the tendency to feel that Jesus had special provisions made for Him which are not available to parents in general. But, this darkness is dismissed in the light shining in radiant glory from God's word: "Every child may gain knowledge as Jesus did," and "God is the Teacher of His people." *The Desire of Ages*, 70; *Testimonies to Ministers*, 478.

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** If this child is truly born again, then he is blessed with the only competent Educator—his heavenly Father. Literally, he would be alone with God as he studies the lesson book of nature where, under the divine tutelage, he is learning the mysteries of the science of the water in the little pool. Under the instruction of the divine Teacher, in such a classroom as this, he is obtaining the best education available.



In other words, exactly as God was the Teacher of His Son, Jesus, so He will be the Teacher of every child and adult who has, by being born from above, become a member of the heavenly family. Rejoice, for this is the full and perfect solution to the fact that it is impossible to find truly competent parents in this sinful world today. The Almighty faced the same problem in Christ's day and solved it by being the Teacher Himself, and marvelous were the results. The incredible breadths, depths, and heights of knowledge which had been developed in Christ together with His remarkable mental powers and acute perceptivity, are a revelation of that to which any child may attain when God is His Teacher. It was the direct training and education received from His heavenly Father that developed all His powers to the great heights of proficiency which He gained. Any child who is likewise educated will demonstrate the same excellence.

The life of Daniel proves this. God was his Teacher and the results were astonishing as it is written: "The wisdom which God had imparted to him [Daniel] was as far superior to the wisdom of the great men of the world as the light of the sun shining in the heavens at noonday is brighter than the feeblest star." *The Sanctified Life*, 46, 47.

So then, when God is truly the Teacher of the children, there will be manifest results vastly superior to what we have seen in this present period of human history. The fact that we are not witnessing anything among Christians today measuring with the lives of Christ and such men as Daniel, is clear proof that God has not truly been made the Teacher of His people from their earliest moments.

Yet, there are some who will claim that they have always understood that God must be the Instructor of their children, and that they have taken the steps necessary to ensure this. Such a claim is in fact a confession that they do not understand what is involved in instituting God as the Teacher in the lives of every member of the family. If this were so, where are the mighty and holy people that such a course would produce. The fact that they are not to be found is evidence enough that God has not been accorded His rightful place as the Teacher of His people from infancy up.

Before we proceed further, care must be taken to ensure that a misunderstanding does not develop as a result of a point made above. It was stated that, when in Christ's day, no competent human parents were to be found, God's solution was to fill the role Himself. It was correctly deduced from this that when today, the Lord is still unable to find competent parents, He will again fill the role Himself.

This could be taken to mean that God occupies the position of Instructor to His people only under emergency situations, and that, if there were truly competent humans available, He would leave the work to them. This however, is not true. No matter how well trained and

educated the earthly underteachers might be, God still remains the Teacher of His people, and, when His followers fulfill the conditions which enable Him to do His work, the results are truly wonderful.

What then must the parents do to ensure that God is in fact the Teacher both of themselves and of their little ones?

The first step is to really believe that God is the Teacher both of themselves and their children in a most direct and personal way. They are to recognize and accept His instruction through whatever channel He might send it, and also discern and reject Satan's counterfeits.

Then it must be understood that God can be the Teacher only of those who are His children. Unlike earthly parents, He will not waste His efforts on spiritual thorn bushes. Even if He would, He could not, for He cannot usurp the position of another. Until a child is born again, Satan is his father and, as such, has the right to be his teacher, a position he is quick to fill and determined not to relinquish. The only way in which God can lawfully gain the right to be the Educator is for Him to firstly become the Father.

His becoming that rests with the earthly parents taking the steps which will remove the satanic inheritance from the child and endow Him with the divine life. This gives his fatherhood to God who then becomes the supreme authority in his life.

However, this is not the authority of a dictator but of one who is there to render any service that the believer will accept. In the cases of the very young, the daily confirmations must be made by the parents, with the responsibility deferring to the child as the years provide him with the ever enlarging power to choose for himself.

Thirdly, it is most important that, every day, the child be sent to the school of which God is the Headmaster. Do not let the little ones miss a single day. The parents must never take it for granted that, because the child is born again, and because they, the father and the mother, recognize God as the Teacher of themselves and the children, the heavenly Headmaster therefore automatically assumes the role of Teacher. On the contrary, He will not unless, on a day to day basis, the parents positively send the child to school for that day.

An illustration of this procedure is supplied by what happens in state or public schools. Every morning the parents follow through a course of action resulting in their offspring arriving at the halls of learning. They arouse the little ones by a certain hour, see that they are washed, dressed, and fed, after which they are put on the school bus, driven to the school in the family car, or in some other way conveyed to the classrooms. This procedure is repeated with unflinching consistency morning after morning. If it were not, then the children would not arrive,

and would miss the lessons for those days. Of course, because it is man's way to compel, the state, noting the repeated absences of the pupil, would take forceful steps to terminate the absenteeism.

In like manner, apart from the force, parents need to establish a ritual whereby the child is positively and directly handed over to the heavenly Teacher every single morning. This is to begin as soon as it is known that a conception has taken place. Already, in their own lives, the mother and the father need to be established in the practice admonished in the directive: "Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee.' This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ." *Steps to Christ*, 70.

Sending the little one off to school each day is but an extension of this procedure. At the beginning of the day, when the daily consecration is being made, add words such as these in the presence and hearing of the child no matter how young he is: "We recognize that you are the spiritual Father of our child and therefore you are his Teacher. Once again, for this day, we commit him to You. Take him. He is yours. Educate him throughout this day according to Your infinite wisdom, and we know he will be molded more and more into the likeness of Christ. We submit ourselves to the role of underteachers and will instruct the child under Your direction as You see fit."

If this consecration is made in true faith morning by morning, then the Almighty will be the child's Teacher as effectively as He was Christ's when He was but a child in Bethlehem, Egypt, and Nazareth. The same remarkable achievements will be realized. The promise will surely be fulfilled which reads: "Even the babe in its mother's arms may dwell as under the shadow of the Almighty through the faith of the praying mother. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth. If we will live in communion with God, we too may expect the divine Spirit to mold our little ones, even from their earliest moments." *The Desire of Ages*, 512.

This daily service of committal of the elders and their children into the custody of the divine Teacher, does not release the parents from their work of teaching the children, but it does establish a correct relationship between the family on earth and the family in heaven. Earthly parents, *under the personal direction of the Master Teacher*, are to teach the children the best they know just as Mary instructed Jesus in the Old Testament Scriptures.

An encouraging feature of this arrangement is that, when Mary unwittingly sought to teach Jesus to respect the sophistries of the religious leaders, the child was protected from this evil. This is a most encouraging aspect of the case. Parents have confessed very real concern that they will inevitably transmit the misconceptions which they hold in error, on to their children. Now they can rest assured that, if they fulfill the simple conditions in true and living faith, the Headmaster will see to it that the children are protected from such errors, even as Jesus was, for "Every child may gain knowledge as Jesus *did*." *The Desire of Ages*, 80.

Then at last we will see the fulfillment of the promise: "With such an army of workers as our youth, *rightly trained*, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world! How soon might the end come—the end of suffering and sorrow and sin! How soon, in place of a possession here, with its blight of sin and pain, our children might receive their inheritance where 'the righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever;' where 'the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick,' and 'the voice of weeping shall be no more heard.' *Psalms* 37:29; *Isaiah* 33:24; 65:19." *Education*, 271.





# **The Parents' Part as Educators**

## **Chapter 24**

The total and vital awareness that God is the Educator of His people must not be interpreted to mean that parents can simply hand the entire work of child training over to God and forget about the matter. To do this would be to deprive the children of proper training, for the plan of salvation depends for its success on the co-working of the divine and the human. While man's part in the program is small compared to the mighty work the Lord must do, it is so vitally necessary that, without it, the work would fail.

What then are the particular responsibilities facing parents? What must they teach children who will become what they will make them, so that they measure up to their divine calling? How are parents to fill the role of co-workers with the Most High?

There is a work the Lord has appointed to mankind, and, no matter how incompetently the human agent might do this work, or even fails to do it altogether, the Lord will not step in and undertake the work Himself. It is for this reason that much of what the Lord purposed to achieve down through time has been left undone. But, when He had a mighty man of faith and prayer such as Elijah, He was able to effect wonderful things in the earth as it is written: "It was because Elijah was a man of large faith that God could use him in this grave crisis in the history of Israel." *Prophets and Kings*, 156.

This principle of the Lord's respecting the work and position He has given to the human agent, is strongly taught in the way that He operated in the conversion of Saul, who then came to be known as the Apostle Paul. Once the Saviour had arrested this terrible persecutor on the Damascus road, He did not instruct him in the message as He was perfectly capable of doing, but sent him to the church for this work to be done.

"Thus Jesus gave sanction to the authority of His organized church and placed Saul in connection with His appointed agencies on earth. Christ had now a church as His representative on earth, and to it belonged the work of directing the repentant sinner in the way of life.

"Many have an idea that they are responsible to Christ alone for their light and experience, independent of His recognized followers on earth. Jesus is the friend of sinners, and His heart is touched with their woe. He has all power, both in heaven and on earth; but He respects the means He has ordained for the enlightenment and salvation of men; He directs sinners to the church, which He has made a channel of light to the world.

"When, in the midst of his blind error and prejudice, Saul was given a revelation of the Christ whom he was persecuting, he was placed in direct communication with the church, which is the light of the world. In this case Ananias represents Christ, and also represents Christ's ministers upon the earth, who are appointed to act in His stead. In Christ's stead Ananias touches the eyes of Saul, that they may receive sight. In Christ's stead he places his hands upon him, and, as he prays in Christ's name, Saul receives the Holy Ghost. All is done in the name and by the authority of Christ. Christ is the fountain; the church is the channel of communication." *The Acts of the Apostles*, 122.

That which is true of soul-saving outside of the home, is of equal force in the same work in the home. Child salvation is the result of the harmonious, coordinated work of the divine and the human. It is required of parents to ensure that they understand exactly what their work is, to do it with great faithfulness, and not make the mistake of either trying to do any part of God's responsibilities, or of expecting the Lord to do that which He has appointed the human agent to do. "Many never attain to the position that they might occupy, because they wait for God to do for them that which He has given them power to do for themselves. All who are fitted for usefulness must be trained by the severest mental and moral discipline; and God will assist them by uniting divine power with human effort." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 248.

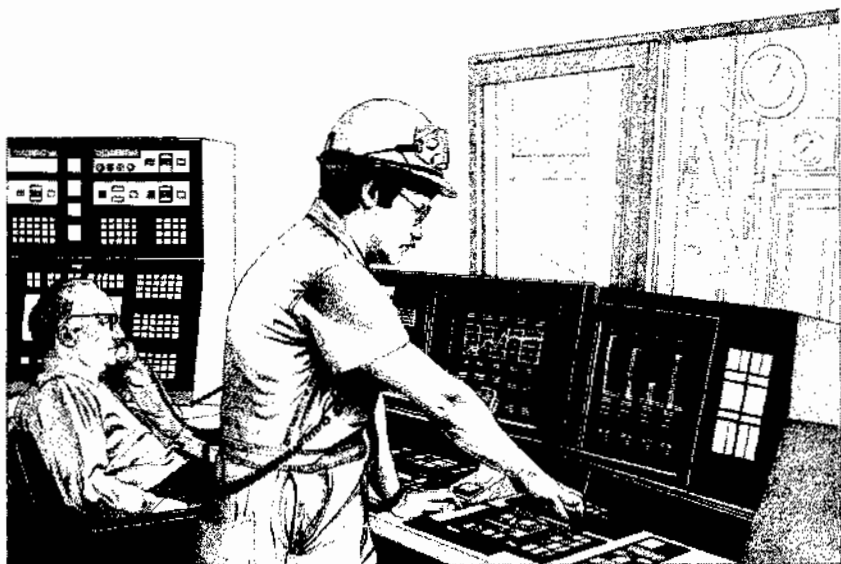
The training in life's disciplines without which the individual can never attain to his true potential of usefulness, must begin before the child is even conceived, for it is only as the parents themselves have achieved victory in this field that they can in turn establish a home environment which will institute mental and moral discipline in the little ones. This truth has already been surveyed in the chapter, "Making the Most of the Prenatal Period", so we will not repeat the material presented there, except to reiterate and reconfirm some of the salient points.

When we speak of disciplining a child, the average person thinks in terms of punishing him for an act of disobedience, but that is not the sense in which the word is used here. Here we are talking of a training in discipline whereby all the powers of body, mind, and soul are cultivated

to very high degrees of usefulness and power. Jesus Christ's life is a demonstration of the heights to which a correctly disciplined life can be elevated, not for the glory of the individual himself, but so that he can more effectively serve both God and man.

There are at least two ways in which this training can be achieved. One is more or less military style, the authoritarian method in which the word of the parent is absolute law, and strict obedience is enforced, if necessary, by the administration of severe penalties. Usually, in this system, the parents require a higher standard from the child than they are prepared to render themselves, a factor which is not well received by the children, and tends, as well might be expected, to generate in them a spirit of rebellion.

Naturally, the true Christian who understands the structure of God's kingdom from which every instrument of coercion has been banished, will reject the authoritarian method of child training. They know that there is a better way, in which the parents are not drivers, but leaders. These enlightened individuals will understand that, before their children are even conceived, they must establish a well-ordered home, while at the same time avoiding strict regimentation.



**No business organization can succeed in reaching its objectives unless it is efficiently organized. A family is a business organization designed to produce noble Christian men and women fit for the Lord's service through time and eternity. To successfully achieve these objectives, it must, among other things, be properly organized. If it is not, it will come far short of reaching its goals.**

A well-ordered home is one in which everything is done with reference to time and on time, just as it is throughout the entire universe. By this we do not mean the extreme situation in which every activity during the day is pegged to an inflexible time schedule which has been carefully typed out, duplicated, and attached to various vantage points around the house. That is regimentation and makes a person an absolute slave to the clock.

This is one extreme. The other is when everything is done in a haphazard manner. There is no efficient sequence of coordinated operations and the family members are never quite certain when mealtime will arrive, when to arise in the morning, tidy their rooms, take their baths, or go to bed at night.

In between these two extremes lies the desired situation in which regimentation does not intrude, yet, at the same time, there is order and organization; where work is efficiently done and there is a sense of the family members being in command of their lives.

To establish such an order, begin by appointing a time for those activities in which the entire family joins, such as the family worship periods in the morning and the evening, and the assemblies at the meal table. The times chosen for these convocations must be in reference to other important appointments such as father's departure for work. Once these critical elements have been accorded their place in the family schedule, the more flexible items such as meal preparation, house cleaning, and laundry can be apportioned their places.

An efficient parent will find himself or herself thinking ahead and so arranging the tasks that the most will be done in the time available. A very simple illustration of this is in the organization of a meal involving tomato and lettuce salad, cooked vegetables, and the preparation of a protein dish called in Australia, "The Savory". The inefficient way in which to handle this task is to think about and work on only one of these courses at a time, without ordering the work to the best advantage. The thought that the salad will be eaten first is enough, in some cases, for it to be allocated the first position in the line whereas, in fact, it would be better to leave it till last.

Instead of preparing the salad first, choose whichever, between the savory and the vegetables, will take the longer to cook, and start with that. If it is the savory, and is to be prepared by baking, your disciplined, ordered mind will direct you to turn on the oven so that it is heating up to the right temperature while you are mixing the recipe. Thus two things are happening at once and not one after the other.

Good timing will have the oven at the correct temperature about the time the savory is ready to start cooking. Still leave the salad in favor of the preparation of the vegetables. Soon these are simmering merrily away on the hot plates where they can be left to themselves for the time being

while work is commenced on the salad at last. Now, three things are all happening at the same time, and not one after the other. The savory is baking, the vegetables are cooking, and the salad is coming together. There should be just enough time left to set the table before the family members present themselves for the meal. A sign of a well-ordered home is that there will be no need to call the family members to the meal, for they know just when it will be ready and have been trained to come on time.

An effective way to achieve this is to do the training quite early in life when the child first begins to sit in a high chair and joins with the family for the meal. When the appointed time comes, carry the child into the eating room and set it down in its high chair. As one, the rest of the family which is father and mother in the case where they have only one child as yet, move into their places. Without delay, the Lord's blessing on the food is invoked, and the meal begun. The smooth, quiet, unspoken efficiency of the entire operation surrounds the little one with an atmosphere of purposefulness. The only conclusion that he is permitted to draw is that he and his parents have come to the table to eat, not to make a mess of the food, or to waste time. Yet, at the same time, the tempo and conversation are relaxed, friendly, and unhurried.

Of course there will be situations in which unexpected emergencies will suddenly intrude into the well ordered home and adjustments will have to be made. A carefully disciplined family will reorganize themselves to accommodate the problem and then swing right back into the established order as soon as the trouble is passed.

The success of this system of training depends largely on the power of example, for children naturally tend to copy their parents. This is fortunate if the elders provide a good example, but tragic if they do not. Here, for instance, is what all too often happens. Mother has worked hard to supply the meal on time while father is working busily on repairs to the car. Junior is riding his tricycle up and down the driveway. Mother steps onto the back porch and calls father and child to the meal. The child now looks to the father to see what is the appropriate action to take under these circumstances.

Father acknowledges the call, but makes no move to stop his work which he continues even though it could be laid aside and be picked up later. He is motivated by a perverse determination to show his wife that he does not move at her beckoning. He will come when he is ready, not when she calls. In the meantime the child has studied the entire situation and has concluded that if that is the way dad treats his mother, he will do the same. Thus he is being very effectively trained in disorder and disrespect. Eventually, when he marries, he will treat his wife the same way; his son will copy him; and so the evil will be perpetuated from generation to generation.

For the man of the house to employ such moves as this to establish his authority in the home is childish, selfish, and self-defeating. His true responsibility is to work together with his wife and every member of the family to produce a well ordered home in which no one exercises authority over any other, but rather everyone works harmoniously together as a loving team.

Let there be a reformation in which the sad situation depicted above is replaced by another such as this. It has become the established order in another home that the evening meal is served quite promptly at 6:00 p.m. This is not by the imperial decree of the wife or the husband but by the mutual agreement of both. As the appointed hour approaches, father and son are occupied with their activities as described above. But the husband does not allow himself to become so absorbed that he forgets the time. Instead, he has made a reliable calculation of how long it will take him and the lad to prepare for their appearance at the table, and, when that number of minutes remains, he calls his son once and once only and heads for the wash basin, his child right at his heels.

Now, if the meal is going to be late because of some unexpected development, then the mother will announce the amended appointment early enough for the pair outside to select a new moment for dropping work and coming indoors.

In either case, there is always the possibility that the child's interest will be so captivated by what he is doing that he will not come on the first and only call. When this happens the crucial opportunity has arrived to reinforce family order and discipline. Let those members of the family who have arrived at the table, proceed with the meal. Junior, engrossed in his activity and undisturbed by any further calls, will continue to ignore the first call until his interest in whatever he is doing is satisfied, and he then becomes aware of hunger pangs.

But when he arrives in the dining room, he finds it empty of people, and the table cleared of food. In response to his query as to what has become of his meal, mother or father, gently but firmly, should state the situation prevailing in this home, with that positive finality which leaves no room for protest or argument.

Their declaration will run something like this: "Son, in this house supper is served at 6:00 p.m., and you know that. You were called to come but you indicated by continuing what you were doing that you were not going to present yourself for the meal at the time it was served. We accepted that and left you to your choice.

"Now, this is like missing a train. You have to wait until the next one comes, which, in some parts of the world, could be days or even weeks later. You have missed the evening meal by your own choice; the next meal will be breakfast, which, as you know, will be served at its

appointed hour in the morning. We understand that you will be feeling hungry, but we also know that you will learn obedience by these sufferings."

Some will judge this to be harsh treatment, but this is not a fair or just evaluation. Missing a single meal in order to learn a vital lesson is a very small price to pay. Is an airline considered harsh in its treatment of the passenger who was left behind when he arrived ten minutes late for departure? Of course not! The complex system of air transport cannot be disrupted because of one passenger. Next time, the sadder but wiser traveler will discipline himself more closely so that he does arrive in good time.

When the child learns by practical experience that the home order is a reliable operation by his being obliged to miss a meal, in future he will come at the appointed time. A lifelong habit pattern will be in the process of establishment. I know this to be true, for my mother taught me that she only called me to a meal once, and, if I did not come when called, I simply went hungry until the next meal unless I was kept unavoidably late. Certainly, parents will go the second mile in providing a late meal if the tardy one is delayed through circumstances beyond his or her control.

To this day, after my mother's valuable, resolute, loving, and patient training, I naturally respond immediately when called to a meal or any other appointment. I never need to be called a second time unless I am detained by uncontrollable circumstances. I feel a deep thankfulness for this inbuilt habit. It is the result of excellent training on my mother's part.

For a home to operate in an orderly fashion, there must be respect for the system on the part of every member of the family. Accordingly, the organization must not be designed and imposed by one person in the home, but must be the fruit of mutual agreement and planning on the part of the father and the mother, who, in their comprehensive understanding of the divine order, have patterned their home in harmony with heaven's principles of operation. They seek to obey the counsel of Jesus to establish in their homes the will of God as that same will is obeyed in heaven.

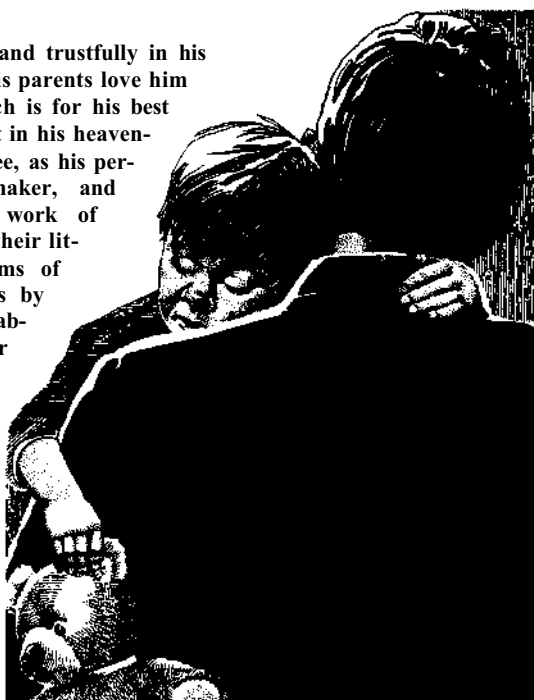
The Lord has no desire to be served by an enforced obedience, but will accept only that allegiance which is intelligently, lovingly, and willingly given as it is written: "Since the service of love can alone be acceptable to God, the allegiance of His creatures must rest upon a conviction of His justice and benevolence." *The Great Controversy*, 498.

Likewise, true Christian parents will accept only that obedience which, unforced, comes from the heart.

A statement which really helps in the understanding of how this operates reads as follows:

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

This child is resting totally and trustfully in his father's care knowing that his parents love him and will give him that which is for his best good. Thus he learns to trust in his heavenly Father whom he cannot see, as his perfect Problem-solver, Plan-maker, and Burden-bearer. It is the work of fathers and mothers to lead their little ones to rest in the arms of Jesus. They accomplish this by firstly establishing the Sabbath rest principles in their own life practices. The wonderful rest that their living faith then brings will surround the children with an atmosphere that will reproduce faith and rest in them and will make it an easy matter to teach them these saving principles and how to apply them.



When a person really believes that God truly loves him, he will then have the unshakeable conviction that the Lord will require nothing from him except it be for his best good. Therefore, he will gladly and willingly become a working element in the divine order. This is the natural outworking of this kind of faith as it is written: "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." *Education*, 253.

This same government of trusting obedience is to be reproduced in every Christian home. When this is realized and the parents understand the essential role that mutual love plays in the success of home government, they will better appreciate the care they took during the prenatal period to really love each other. As they did this, the unborn child was deeply involved in loving both father and mother, and emerged into the world with that love and trust already implanted in him.

The parents stand in the place of God to the children and they are to represent the lovely character of their heavenly Father. How they relate to the children provides these little ones with their first and most enduring impressions of God's character. If they are authoritarians who enforce



obedience by the administration of severe penalties, then that is the way the children will see the Lord as being, no matter how much the parents might assure them that Jesus is loving and forgiving.

On the other hand, if the father and mother have established the divine order in their home, are loving, tender-hearted, kind, understanding, forgiving, and just, then this is how the children will visualize their heavenly Father. Such a view of things will lead them quite naturally to put their whole trust in both the earthly and the heavenly parents. The spirit of obedience gained at the new birth will operate with confidence and power.

"Happy are the parents whose lives are a true reflection of the divine, so that the promises and commands of God awaken in the child gratitude and *reverence*; the parents whose tenderness and justice and long-suffering interpret to the child the love and justice and long-suffering of God, and who by teaching the child to love and trust and obey them, are teaching him to love and trust and obey his Father in heaven. Parents who impart to the child such a gift have endowed him with a treasure more precious than the wealth of all the ages, a treasure as enduring as eternity." *Prophets and Kings*, 245.

The glorious truth contained in this statement can be realized when the children are trained in the way the Lord has designed they shall be. When they are, then ". . . the promises and commands of God awaken in the child gratitude and reverence."

That the training methods of the past have been, not merely inadequate, but decidedly of the wrong order, is confirmed by the fact that the promises and the commands of God have not awakened reverence and gratitude in the children. Among the parents and the children making up God's people at the present time, reverence is a quality difficult to find. Children are restless during meetings, spend their time looking at books, coloring in pictures, and making trips to the bathroom. Parents seem to regard this as the best that can be expected and tolerate this as such. But the child Jesus is the standard by which all other behavior patterns are to be measured, and could you imagine Him behaving in such a manner in the family worships or in the synagogue on the Sabbath day?

Parents generally accept far too low a standard, feeling that that is the very best that can be achieved when it is in fact far below what is really possible. All too often those parents who have failed to establish divine order, love, respect, and reverence in their children at home, bring them to the weekly church services where they hope to see the lack made up, and when this fails, as it certainly will, they look to a highly organized camp meeting to do the work.

But, the child who has never learned to so reverence his Maker that he will sit quietly and attentively through fifteen or thirty minutes of family

worship twice a day, will not sit through two one-hour sessions once a week at church. Much less will he manage to sit reverently during a week of camp meetings.

Yet there are those who will plan elaborate camp meeting programs for the children in an effort to save their souls for the kingdom, when the place where the victory is to be gained is right in the home. There the little ones are to be educated to reverence the Lord in the sacred hour of family worship. There they are to learn to sit quietly and very still, for they are in the very presence of the Creator of the universe. There they learn to listen and to concentrate on the service of the hour. They are to be taught to understand that they are to arrange their trips to the bathroom before and after but not during the worship hour.

When they have learned to achieve at this level, then they are ready to do the same in the weekly church service, and from there move on to the annual camp meetings. There is no possibility of a child's being reverent and attentive at church or a camp meeting, if he has not developed this capacity in family worship. Let not the parents relax until the victory has been truly gained in these things.

It is of course one thing to talk about these ideals, but it is another thing to put them into practice. No doubt the standard described in the past few paragraphs has dismayed rather than encouraged some parents at least. But, there is no need to be disheartened over the fact that "God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' " *The Desire of Ages*, 311.

God never requires the impossible. Instead, He sent Jesus to this earth to demonstrate what might be achieved, and He provides the power by which it can be attained.

"Many whom God has qualified to do excellent work accomplish very little, because they attempt little. Thousands pass through life as if they had no definite object for which to live, no standard to reach. Such will obtain a reward proportionate to their works.

"Remember that you will never reach a higher standard than you yourself set. Then set your mark high, and step by step, even though it be by painful effort, by self-denial and sacrifice, ascend the whole length of the ladder of progress. Let nothing hinder you. Fate has not woven its meshes about any human being so firmly that he need remain helpless and in uncertainty. Opposing circumstances should create a firm determination to overcome them. The breaking down of one barrier will give greater ability and courage to go forward. Press with determination in the right direction, and circumstances will be your helpers, not your hindrances.

"Be ambitious, for the Master's glory, to cultivate every grace of character. In every phase of your character building you are to please

God. This you may do; for Enoch pleased Him though living in a degenerate age. And there are Enochs in this our day.

"Stand like Daniel, that faithful statesman, a man whom no temptation could corrupt. Do not disappoint Him who so loved you that He gave His own life to cancel your sins. He says, 'Without Me ye can do nothing.' *John* 15:5. Remember this. If you have made mistakes, you certainly gain a victory if you see these mistakes and regard them as beacons of warning. Thus you turn defeat into victory, disappointing the enemy and honoring your Redeemer.

"A character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next. Those who are under the instruction of Christ in this world will take every divine attainment with them to the heavenly mansions. And in heaven we are continually to improve. How important, then, is the development of character in this life.

"The heavenly intelligences will work with the human agent who seeks with determined faith that perfection of character which will reach out to perfection in action. To everyone engaged in this work Christ says, I am at your right hand to help you.

"As the will of man co-operates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings." *Christ's Object Lessons*, 331-333.

These words contain the divine and therefore utterly reliable assurance that the highest standards of excellence can be reached in our work for the Lord, and this certainly includes the parents' work of bringing salvation to their children.

This leads to the question as to how the children are to be taught to reverence their Creator in the home, the church, and the camp meetings. In reality, this has already been set forth in these pages. As a reminder, a summary will be made at this point.

Firstly, the parents, through communion with God, must establish His actual presence in their lives until they become shining revelations of His glorious character. This will bring them into such close contact with the Lord that they will have a reverent sense of His perfection and power.

The children, in their intimate contact with their parents, will be aware of the presence of God in their elders and this will create gratitude and reverence in them.

To strengthen the children's trust in both their parents and the God whom they serve, let the parents surround the little ones with a well ordered home, organized after the similitude of the divine. Then let them instruct their offspring in behavior that is appropriate for mere mortals



There is always something to complain about if we desire to. The beautiful rose designed to reflect the beauty of the Creator and His works, is supported by thorny stems which can cut and tear the flesh. Either we can feel grateful and praise the Lord for the beauty of the flower, or murmur and complain over the thorns. But, the truth is that even the thorns have a ministry for which we should be eternally grateful. Every Christian whose faith is in the knowledge of God's goodness, will praise the Lord for what comes to him, be it pleasant or painful. He will never be guilty of murmuring—the curse of Israel.

when they come into the presence of the Omnipotent One. Set the standard higher than you previously thought possible and by God's grace you will attain to it.

When the parents set their hearts to this work, there will be developed a wonderful spirit of reverence in both the children and their fathers and mothers, the like of which we never thought possible and which will open the doors to the mighty inflow of the Holy Spirit. It will be a new and wonderful day for the church of the living God.

Another aspect to child training is that reverence and respect for God are manifest in uncomplaining submission to His divine will no matter what suffering and loss might be caused thereby. With Christ, "The one law of His life was the Father's will." *The Desire of Ages*, 486. So it will be with every true Christian. This spirit is the offspring of faith and love for "Faith is trusting God—believing that He loves us and knows best what is for our good." *Education*, 253.

When we really know that the Lord truly loves us with an infinite and undying ardor, then we are absolutely sure that He will never do anything other than that which is for our best good *even though it might seem otherwise at times*. It was difficult for John the Baptist and impossible for his disciples to discern the manifestation of God's love toward him when the Romans were permitted to imprison him, but the Lord knew that, under the circumstances, this was the most loving thing that could be done for him.

Since nothing is permitted to come to the Christian and his children other than what is for their best good, including the times when God permits them to bring suffering upon themselves by their own waywardness, then it is manifest that there is no place for murmuring, complaining, or expressions of discontent among true Christians. It is for this reason that the spirit of murmuring is described as being "... the curse of Israel". *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 380.

It truly is a fearful thing for the believer to murmur against the Lord. Those who do, reveal that they do not really believe that the Lord loves them with an infinite love; that He cares for them as the apple of His eye; that they must learn obedience through the things which they have suffered. Complaining against God is the worst possible sin for it is an act of self-exaltation above God. It is your declaration that your wisdom transcends that of the Omniscient One in that you think that you know better than God does, what is for your best good. This is precisely what the devil did when he began his rebellion in heaven. He was the first murmurer, and every person since who has raised his voice in discontent, is exhibiting the very spirit of the greatest of all rebels. That is how serious this thing is.

For a sobering appreciation of the fearful peril of expressing discontent with the Lord's dealings with us, study the list of statements

under the heading, "Murmuring", in the *Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White*. Pay special attention to the sin as it manifested itself in the experience of Israel and the hatred with which Jehovah regarded this evil. Consider the fearful losses that this sin cost Israel, including an incredible expenditure of life. By this means we may learn to likewise dread the appearance of this sin among us.

The reason for my stressing the evil of this error is because parents so frequently permit its manifestation in their children and fail to train their little ones to overcome it. They will be motivated to undertake such a task only when they understand the evil nature of this sin, and recognize its presence when they see it.

The recognition of the manifestation of this disposition in children is not difficult. When the little one finds that its will is frustrated, it will commence to weep and wail as an expression of its discontent and disappointment, and will keep this up in the hope that thereby it will break down the parents' will and be given its heart's desire. All too often the procedure succeeds, the parents being prepared to secure peace at any price.

This is extremely bad child training, and intelligent Christian parents will immediately go to work to correct the evil. They will begin this work by ever being on the alert for its manifestation, both in themselves as well as in their children, for it can appear in the most mature Christians; in the lives of those who have walked and talked with the Lord. The experience of Moses, the meekest man who ever lived, verifies this. After eighty years as a dedicated Christian whom the Lord specially called to be His messenger to Israel; after seeing the mighty works of God in Egypt; after spending two forty-day periods in face to face communion with the Lord on Mount Sinai, at the end of which his face so glowed with the glory of God that he had to wear a veil else the people could not look at him; after all this and much, much more, Moses indulged "... the spirit of murmuring that was the curse of Israel". *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 380. See *Numbers* 11:10-15.

If so great and experienced a Christian as this mighty servant of God was, could so lose faith as to indulge the spirit of murmuring which had taken the lives of thousands in Israel, then every parent needs to be very much on guard against the appearance of this sin in their children. They must diligently educate the little ones to accept life's frustrations with a sweet, patient, and submissive spirit. Firstly, this must be done by example, for, if the parents indulge a complaining spirit, then be assured that the little ones will not be helped by any instruction the parents might give them. But, when the father and mother exhibit a patient, uncomplaining spirit in the face of adversity, then they will be leaders of their children in the same pathway.

As the child becomes old enough to understand the Bible stories, they should be diligently taught to him as revelations of the way a loving heavenly Father takes care of His children. Demonstrate from these lessons the truth that the Lord at times *appears* to forsake His children, and, in those hours of trial, it is difficult to see Him, but He is always there. Show how those who murmured and complained separated themselves from God's protection and were destroyed, while those who patiently endured the severest trials, devastating disappointments, and terrible sufferings, with cheerfulness and trust, were delivered and blessed. Let them learn the beautiful submission expressed by Job in the darkest hour of his life: ". . . Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." *Job* 1:21.

There are times when the child is faced, as are also the parents in their various experiences, with seemingly insoluble problems, and his cries are, in reality, not the expression of discontent and murmuring, but pleas for help, a prayer for deliverance. In the case of an infant, this is the only way he can pray, but, as the years enlarge his capacities for communication, the child who is rightly trained will quietly and confidently bring the problem to his parents, who will, together with the child, present the matter to the Lord and leave it to Him to supply the solution which He has already worked out.

Parents need to become skilled in the recognition of whether a child is crying rebelliously, complainingly, or in genuine distress. Whatever it is, it is a form of communication which the child expects the parents to read correctly, and the parents must do so if they are to successfully train the children.

When the mother or the father discern that the baby's cries are a statement that it is confronted with a problem which it certainly cannot handle, then the only appropriate step is to apply the Sabbath rest principles. These must be understood and practiced by both the father and the mother even before they are married. If you are not familiar with this message, then secure from Destiny Press, a copy of *Entering into God's Sabbath Rest*, and study it very carefully.

Because that book covers the subject and the correct procedures to be followed so thoroughly, there will be no need to repeat the message here. All that will be done is to emphasize the essential features which make this message a success.

Firstly, there must be in both the parents and the children, a living connection between Christ the Head, and the human instrument. This requires that both the elders and their offspring have been born again. Both must also be dedicated to living a life of obedience so that their one

desire is to execute the Father's will. Then there must be a sure conviction that the Sabbath rest principles are the only way in which things are to be done.

Already, during the prenatal period, the foundations have been laid for the successful establishment of God as the child's Problem-solver, Plan-maker, and Burden-bearer, if, during that period, the parents have given all their problems to the Almighty and waited with perfect patience for Him to solve them. Within the mother's womb, the child has thus received its initiation into the Sabbath rest procedures. How fortunate such a child is!

A truly Christian child in whom is the spirit of obedience will be genuinely repentant when it does wrong and will welcome parental leadership into the waiting arms of the almighty Problem-solver. As he sees the difficulties melt away, his confidence in both God and his parents is immeasurably strengthened.

The work of bringing the children to God with their problems cannot be commenced too early, though parents might wonder what are the specific steps they must take in order to apply the Sabbath rest message to very young children such as newly born infants. Certainly such little ones cannot actively and intelligently participate in choosing to rest their problems in the hands of the all-wise Problem-solver, because they have not reached the age level where they have the capacity to discern the problem and give it to the Lord.

This is a work that the parents must do for them. It is a work which will be entirely successful if the parents are qualified by new birth, a total committal to the practice of the Sabbath rest principles, and a living faith in God's ways.

When the child communicates the fact that it has a problem which requires urgent attention, the parents' first task is to determine, if possible, the cause of the difficulty. Naturally, they will ask the Lord to direct them in this effort.

The distress may be caused by something very minor such as a dirty diaper, a bit of wind pain in the stomach, or the like. The mother or the father must then take such steps as they can to supply the child's need with thankful hearts that the Lord has provided them with such means.

Despite the parents' best efforts, the little one might continue crying for no apparent reason. Nothing that is done for it seems to have any effect upon it at all. It is right here that mothers and fathers must develop the capacity to correctly interpret the language of the baby's cries. Is it communicating a genuine need, is it giving vent to an evil temper, or is it seeking to assert itself over its parents?

The correct procedure is for the parents to take the matter wholly and solely to the great Problem-solver. I would suggest that firstly the parents speak audibly to the child in the following terms: "My child, you have a



problem which is beyond either your or our ability to solve, but there is a wonderful Problem-solver who has the capacity to deal with these difficulties, and it is to Him that we shall take them right now."

The little one will not understand the words themselves, but he will recognize the tone of confidence expressed in the words, and will be influenced by them.

Then let the parents kneel beside the cradle or even with the baby held firmly in mother's or father's arms, and in a firm, clear voice, ringing with quiet confidence, deliver the problem into the Lord's hands just as they do with their own personal difficulties. Then thank the Lord that He has the matter in hand and will take good care of it.

Provided that the parents are born again, are blessed with a living faith, are maintaining a close and effective connection with their divine Head, Jesus Christ, and are successfully practicing the Sabbath rest principles, and provided that, through its parents the same had also become true of the child's experience, it will be found that, through these procedures, the child will find rest and will cease from crying.

If the child continues crying, then the parents must immediately ask God if there is anything in their own hearts that has not been made right and is blocking the way for Him to solve the child's problem. Every idol on the part of the parents is a declaration to God that He is not completely wanted as their only Source and Problem-solver. If any idols are revealed by the Holy Spirit, they must be confessed and removed immediately before God can work.

Another thing parents must realize is their own real need to develop a capacity to be co-workers with God in solving their children's problems. They also must realize that this capacity must increase as time goes by since, as is often the case, problems increase in intensity as the children grow. In other words, it is not just a matter of kneeling down and "saying a prayer" when the child has a problem. It is not even enough to be really serious about your prayer, though this is essential. Earnestness is necessary, but it does not take the place of capacity, rather it helps develop it.

A promise concerning future trials is found in *1 Corinthians* 10:13. "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

But remember, as with all promises, there are conditions. In this case, in order to be assured that you will have the capacity to cope with future trials, you must be practicing the Sabbath rest principles at every step on life's pathway. Only if God is in complete control of your life, is it possible

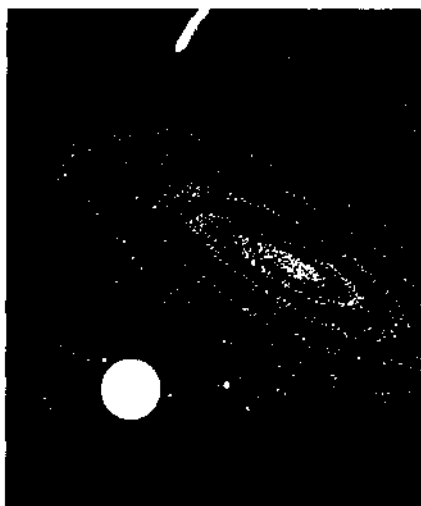
for you to develop the traits and abilities necessary to cope with those future trials which He alone can foresee and the nature of which He alone understands.

It is safe to say that people cannot be truly successful parents unless they have made the Sabbath rest message their personal, undeviating way of life and train their children accordingly. It is only when this is done that God is truly made to be the Teacher of His people. Then will be fulfilled the words: "Even the babe in its mother's arms may dwell as under the shadow of the Almighty through the faith of the praying mother. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth. If we will live in communion with God, we too may expect the divine Spirit to mold our little ones, even from their earliest moments." *The Desire of Ages*, 512.

When the vast and wonderful study of child training as the complement to the child's being reborn is adequately understood, parents will see before them the most wonderful possibilities. They will rejoice in the Lord's way and will continually praise His holy name that He has seen fit to deliver such wonderful light to us before it is forever too late. Then they will understand the true significance of statements such as this one:

"With such an army of workers as our youth, *rightly trained*, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world! How soon might the end come—the end of suffering and sorrow and sin! How soon, in place of a possession here, with its blight of sin and pain, our children might receive their inheritance where 'the righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever;' where 'the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick,' and 'the voice of weeping shall be no more heard.' *Psalms* 37:29; *Isaiah* 33:24; 65:19." *Messages to Young People*, 196. Also *Education*, 271.

Since that statement was written in 1903, there have been a number of armies of our youth who have been "trained to quickly finish the work", but it has not been speedily accomplished. It is because they are not to be trained according to what men might believe to be the training required, but rather, they must be *rightly* trained. Then, we will see the work finished quickly.



# Perfect Obedience is the Objective

## Chapter 25

In their divinely-appointed role of educators co-working with the Master Teacher, parents need to have very clear objectives in mind, so that they know just where they are going in the training of their children. Hazy uncertainty in this work is self-defeating and will guarantee failure.

Paramount among the lessons to be fixed forever in the mind of the child, and established as the one practice of his life, is that of immediate, implicit, unquestioning, and uncomplaining obedience. The parents need to be very clear on this point and must work with untiring patience and skill to achieve this objective in the sure knowledge that the quality of obedience their children are trained to give them as parents, will be the same quality of obedience they give to God. This truth is confirmed in these words written to a self-caring minister. "Children who feel under no more obligation to their earthly parents than you have done, but can so easily step out from the responsibilities upon them, will not have due respect for their heavenly Father; they will not reverence or respect the claims that God has upon them. If they disrespect and dishonor their earthly parents they will not respect and love their Creator." *Testimonies* 3:232.

We are living in an age of incredible disobedience against God and His righteous directives on the part of the adult population, but this is but the extension of the same disobedience the same individuals rendered their parents when they were children. All of this is but the fulfillment of prophecy as it is written:

"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:

"For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, *disobedient to parents*, unthankful, unholy,

"unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,

"traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

"having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!" 2 *Timothy* 3:1-5.

This fearful apostasy is caused by a lack of understanding of the message on child salvation, which includes training on the part of the parents, for their children are what they have made them to be. "Children are what their parents make them by their instruction, discipline, and example." *Testimonies* 5:37.

Parents seeking to understand the true character of the prevailing epidemic of disobedience, need to study the behavior patterns of modern children at all levels from the cradle up. It will then be found that the obedience for which heaven calls is almost impossible to find.

Children flatly refuse to carry out parental directives until compelled to. Then they perform their assigned duty with a rebellious spirit, complaining all the way. All too common is their habit of challenging the parent's wisdom in requiring them to perform a designated service. The youngsters incessantly ask why that which they are being asked to do needs to be done at all. To respond immediately and without question or complaint is totally unknown to them.

There are those parents who tend to encourage the child's questioning of every command as indicative of a quest for knowledge, the exercise of the powers of reason, and the manifestation of a healthy individuality. Let those who think this way behold, as it is developing in this present evil world, the end result of this behavior pattern, which is in reality a challenge to the parents' authority, an attempt to evade obedience, and an expression of the spirit of disobedience. All the lawlessness, violence, corruption, and selfishness which are the deep concern of law-makers, church leaders, and people generally, are but the harvest of the seeds sown by parents who had no knowledge of child salvation, and therefore no capacity to administer it.

Against this sorry background of disobedience and its attendant woes, stands the great and wonderful example of Christ. He revealed for all to see, the quality of obedience which is to be developed by the parents in every child. As He related to His heavenly Father, so each child is to be taught to relate to his earthly parents. This truth cannot be too strongly expressed or too positively emphasized. To whatever extent the parents fail to achieve in their offspring, the same trusting, unquestioning, implicit, immediate, and uncomplaining obedience no matter what the cost might be, to that extent they have fallen short of achieving their

responsibilities as parents. They are to recognize the obedience of Jesus as the one standard by which they are to assess their own righteousness and that of their children. No other ideal is worthy of consideration.

Obviously then, to become qualified as educators in the quality of obedience which Christ revealed, parents must be deep students of His life so that they will understand what true obedience really is. Otherwise, it would be impossible for them to know what they are to really aim for.

With Jesus Christ, there was only one thing which mattered; the only question which He ever considered. It was not: Why am I required to do this? Nor was it: Can I safely evade this responsibility? Nor was it: Could this not be deferred till later?

The only question which concerned Him was: What has My Father directed Me to do?

"The one law of His life was the Father's will." *The Desire of Ages*, 486.

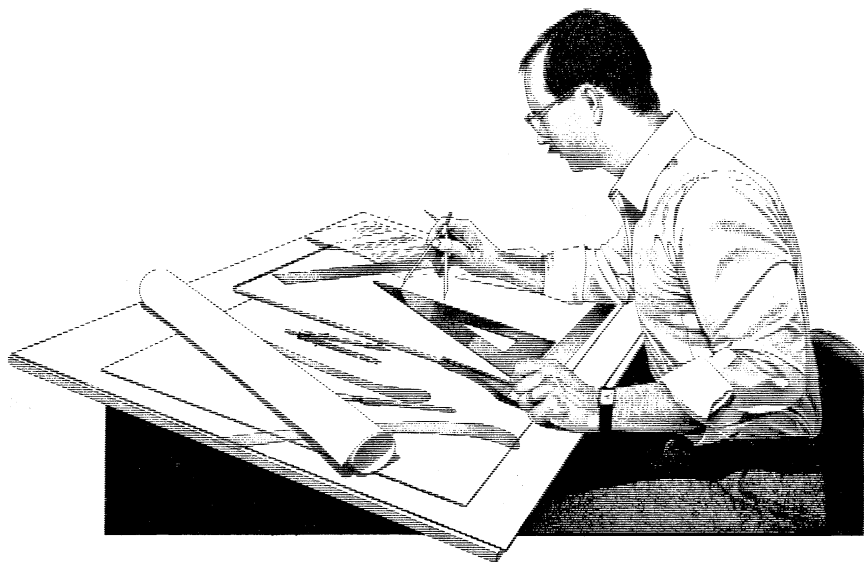
What a wealth of marvelous truth is contained in that statement. "The one law of His life was the Father's will." This principle swept away the arguments of personal comfort and convenience; it ignored the costly threat of danger and suffering; it laid aside even the claims of loved ones, friends, and followers; and responded only to God's directives.

"In the visit to the temple in His boyhood, He had said to Mary, 'Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?' *Luke* 2:49. At Cana, when Mary desired Him to reveal His miraculous power, His answer was, 'Mine hour is not yet come.' *John* 2:4. With the same words He replied to His brothers when they urged Him to go to the feast. But in God's great plan the hour had been appointed for the offering of Himself for the sins of men, and that hour was soon to strike. He would not fail nor falter. His steps are turned toward Jerusalem, where His foes have long plotted to take His life; now He will lay it down. He set His face steadfastly to go to persecution, denial, rejection, condemnation, and death." *The Desire of Ages*, 486.

As Christ obeyed the Father in every single detail, so children are to render the same absolutely implicit obedience to their parents, while adults are to obey God in the same way. "Christ's workers are to obey His instructions implicitly." *The Desire of Ages*, 369.

As we meditate upon the marvelous life of our Saviour in the light of these and other statements, we begin to realize that we have much yet to learn of what true obedience really is. We are led to appreciate the fact that, as parents we have aimed far too low, and have accepted a level of obedience from our children that fails to even approach what the Lord expects to see.

Every moment of Christ's life was an example of flawless obedience, but one of the truly great revelations of His total submission to the



**While there is a place for human plan designing, the predominant human practice is to assume the role of plan-maker which belongs only to God. Men even go so far as to attempt to build God's kingdom by human methods, planning, and procedures as did Abram and Sarai when they planned the marriage of Abram and Hagar in order to produce the promised child. When Christ was in the desert being tempted of the devil, the enemy placed tremendous pressure on Him to resort to His own plan making in order to save God's work from what appeared to be certain disaster. But, fortunately, the Saviour utterly refused to come under the dominion of this temptation. He demonstrated that it is less a calamity to suffer whatever may befall than to depart in any manner from God's will.**

Father's will was given in the wilderness immediately after His baptism. Let us look briefly at some of the main points in this thrilling demonstration of perfect submission to the will of the Eternal One.

It was in direct response to His Father's summons that Jesus presented Himself at the Jordan to be baptized. There the Father accepted His Son's consecration to be the Redeemer, and then, contrary to what one would expect, He directed Him by the Holy Spirit to spend time in the wilderness instead of calling Him to begin His ministry. At first, Jesus was surrounded with the glory of God which sustained and assured Him, "But the glory departed, and He was left to battle with temptation. It was pressing upon Him every moment. His human nature shrank from the conflict that awaited Him. For forty days He fasted and prayed. Weak and emaciated from hunger, worn and haggard with mental agony, 'His visage was so marred more than any man, and His

form more than the sons of men.' *Isaiah* 52:14. Now was Satan's opportunity. Now he supposed that he could overcome Christ." *The Desire of Ages*, 118.

Exceedingly specious and terrible were the devil's temptations as he marshaled all his power and cunning to defeat the Saviour. He appeared as the angel of light sent to stay the hand of Abraham from slaying Isaac. Now that Jesus, the great antitype of Isaac, had demonstrated that He was prepared to die rather than see man perish, the Father accepted this intention for the deed, thus releasing Christ from further suffering and the actual crucifixion.

That was the message brought by this shining messenger who had seemingly descended directly from the Father's presence. It was the introduction to Satan's masterful attempt to turn aside the Redeemer from the Father's will, and lead Him to enter instead into paths of the devil's and His own choosing.

Jesus was literally dying from hunger, an eventuality which must not be permitted to develop at that point of time, for, if it had, the plan of salvation would have been destroyed. There was an appointed time and location for the sacrificial death of Jesus to take place. It was still more than three years distant, and was not scheduled to occur in that lonely, desolate place. Therefore, under no circumstances must the world's Redeemer die before that time arrived, nor in the place where He then was.

Yet, vital as was Jesus' need to stay alive at this point of time, He was rapidly approaching death's door in consequence of His obeying the Father's will, while Jehovah seemed utterly unconcerned that His presence appeared so far away as to be totally inconsequential. This *seemingly* placed Christ in the position where there was no one to save Him from death but Himself. Every witness of sight and circumstance declared that He had been forsaken by both God and man, leaving Him with no one to turn to but Himself. The pressures upon Him to take matters into His own hands, preserve Himself alive, and thus save the plan of salvation, are beyond the power of humanity to describe, or the capacity of the human mind to comprehend.

But it was not in the will of God for Christ to save Himself. That was the Father's responsibility, not the Saviour's. Therefore, no matter how great the pressure upon Him; and irrespective of the threat to the salvation of man; He would ask only one question: "What is My Father's will? What would He have Me to do?"

This is why He said: "... Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." *Matthew* 4:4.

That is how Jesus lived during His earthly sojourn, and how He will continue to live throughout the coming eternity. It was in living by every word that proceeded from His Father, that is, by moving exclusively

within the framework of His Father's will, that He triumphed over the confederacy of evil. There is no other way to conquer. As He overcame, so we are to overcome.

"When Christ said to the tempter, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,' He repeated the words that, more than fourteen hundred years before, He had spoken to Israel: The Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness. . . . And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.' *Deuteronomy* 8:2, 3. In the wilderness, when all means of sustenance failed, God sent His people manna from heaven; and a sufficient and constant supply was given. This provision was to teach them that while they trusted in God and walked in His ways He would not forsake them. The Saviour now practiced the lesson He had taught to Israel. By the word of God succor had been given to the Hebrew host, and by the same word it would be given to Jesus. He awaited God's time to bring relief. He was in the wilderness in obedience to God, and He would not obtain food by following the suggestions of Satan. In the presence of the witnessing universe, He testified that it is a less calamity to suffer whatever may befall than to depart in any manner from the will of God." *The Desire of Ages*, 121.

Parents need to give the most prayerful, thoughtful, and earnest consideration to the final sentence in this paragraph, for this is what they, after having thoroughly learned the lesson themselves, must faithfully teach their children. Every believer in Jesus must aim to become as established as Jesus was in the conviction that while suffering, loss, and death are indeed great calamities, they are nothing compared to the calamity of departing from God's will even in the least particular.

Once these principles are understood, the Christian's life becomes wonderfully simplified, for he has only to concern himself with learning the promises and commands of God, and then believing the former and obeying the latter. After that, he leaves everything else in God's care, for he knows that all this is God's responsibility, not his.

To live this way by faith in and obedience to every word which proceeds from God, is to live a life of true holiness. This is the aim of every true Christian, and of every Christian parent. Let none who read these pages miss this vital point. Rest not until your children are giving you the same unflinching, perfect, loving, immediate, unquestioning, uncomplaining, and implicit obedience that Jesus rendered to His Father while on earth. Achieve in this field in the sure knowledge that only as



children are taught to obey their parents, will they, in turn, lovingly obey God by living holy lives of faith and obedience. Let it be stressed once more that:

"Holiness is not rapture: it is an entire surrender of the will to God; it is living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; it is doing the will of our heavenly Father; it is trusting God in trial, in darkness as well as in the light; it is walking by faith and not by sight; it is relying on God with unquestioning confidence, and resting in His love." *The Acts of the Apostles*, 51.

This statement tells what holiness is not. It is not rapture; not a joyous flight of feeling.

Just as importantly it also details what it is, the active co-working of obedience and faith. The first half of the paragraph describes holiness as total obedience in these words: ". . . it is an entire surrender of the will to God; it is living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; it is doing the will of our heavenly Father."

That is obedience of the kind that God can and does fully accept. But it can be rendered only when mixed with living faith. This second element of holiness is detailed in the second half of the paragraph: ". . . it is trusting God in trial, in darkness as well as in the light; it is walking by faith and not by sight; it is relying on God with unquestioning confidence, and resting in His love."

That is the faith which lays hold upon the living power of God and makes obedience possible. Then, "When we learn the power of His word, we shall not follow the suggestions of Satan in order to obtain food or to save our lives. Our only questions will be, What is God's command? and what His promise? Knowing these, we shall obey the one, and trust the other." *The Desire of Ages*, 121.

There are those who object to this total surrender of the will to our wonderful heavenly Father, claiming that it denies the believer the opportunity to exercise the decision making powers with which the Lord has endowed us. Knowing that capacities which are not brought into active use, shrink and die, they see in the acceptance and application of these principles, their degeneracy to mere automatons eventually losing the power to think and choose.

While human logic, based on the witness of sight and circumstances, might appear to confirm that these fears have substance, there is abundant evidence to allay all such concerns.

In the first case, Satan is the author of these arguments, which he first advanced in this world when, at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he declared to Eve that the reason for God's demanding they believe in Him only and obey Him implicitly by leaving the fruit untouched, was



The work of establishing perfect obedience in the children begins with the parents. Only happy, obedient parents can produce and successfully train children to be happy and obedient.

that God could forever restrict their development and keep them enslaved to His will. Satan urged Eve and then Adam through her to break these bonds and thereby attain to their true destiny.

Adam and Eve believed the devil, rejected God's formula for holiness, and put Satan's ideas into practice. If the argument that living by every word which proceeds from God is stultifying to human development, a new and glorious era would have begun for the race, but the exact opposite has been the case. Mankind still rejects the divine way in favor of Satan's, and, in consequence, is plunging headlong into deeper and deeper degradation.

It was into the midst of this incredible loss that Jesus came to verify that to live totally and implicitly obedient to God was the only way by which men could reach the highest ideals. "He glorified His life by making everything in it subordinate to the will of His Father." *The Ministry of Healing*, 19.

His entire life is a convincing testimony to the truth of these words. Jesus verifies the fact that those who live by every word from God; who would rather die than depart from the divine will; who ask only two questions: What is God's command and what is His promise? obeying the one and trusting the other; are the ones who really attain to the heights of achievement.

Christians need to really become deeply convicted about this and determine that they will develop a perfect life of holiness. Then, as parents, they should rest not until they have achieved in their children the obedience that springs from a sanctified heart and reveals the glory of God.

But how is this to be trained into the little ones? That is the question to be addressed once the believer is convinced about the quality of obedience to be established in the children.

As always, the work begins with the parents, for they must in themselves attain to this spirit of obedience before they can train it into their children. This is achieved in them firstly by being truly born again.

This will remove the spirit of rebellion and disobedience, and will replace it with Christ's beautiful spirit of obedience.

Follow this with a deep and thorough study of Christ's life as the model, obedient One, until deeply convicted that ". . . it is a less calamity to suffer whatever may befall than to depart in any manner from the will of God." *The Desire of Ages*, 121.

Once this has been learned to the point where it becomes a fixed operating principle in the life, the parents are ready to have children, while at the same time realizing that parenthood is indeed a high calling requiring capacities to which the average person gives little if any thought.

Knowing that only the child who has been born again can possess the spirit of obedience, it is essential that this endowment be imparted at the earliest possible moment. Then, if this gift has been delivered to the infant at conception or soon after, during the prenatal period, the mother and the father must maintain an undeviating behavior pattern of obedience toward the Lord and each other so that the infant emerges into the world knowing nothing but an obedient life-style. With such a start as that, the parents will find little if any difficulty in teaching the child implicit obedience thereafter. In the cases of those children who have not had the foundations laid as thoroughly, the task will be proportionately harder to accomplish even though the spirit of obedience has been instituted within their offspring.

What then does the parent do when the child, especially if he is one who has not had a good foundation, chooses not to obey because he deems the cost to be too great?

Under none but possibly very exceptional circumstances is the matter to be allowed to pass unnoticed or unattended. One such circumstance is where the situation may be so located that the parent feels that he or she could not cope successfully with the problem at that time and place. In that case the matter must be taken up at the first opportunity and settled once and for all time. The child must learn that it is literally impossible to get away with anything, a lesson more easily learned at the parent and child level than at the God and adult level, where, even though men think they are sinning with impunity, in reality no transgression is undertaken without serious loss to the violator of the law. The child who learns this lesson at the hands of his parents, becomes the adult who knows that he cannot sin and escape the remorseless retribution.

It is critical that the parents undertake this work filled with divine love and wisdom, while they remain in complete control of their spirits. No trace of indignation and anger is to be found in them, but rather a great and wonderful calm born of a living faith in the Lord and His methods of

operation. If they do not find themselves in this state, then they must spend such time with the Lord as is needed to establish this peace before they dare enter into the work of meeting the child over his misdemeanor.

When these preparations are completed, draw the little one aside into a private place. Then lay his sin before him, outline before him the serious implications of his behavior, show him from an actual life experience of Jesus Christ what would have been the right thing to have done under the circumstances, and lead him to abhor and repent of the evil. Then have him willingly pray with you confessing the sin in specific terms, and asking the Lord to forgive and cleanse away the stain so that the life is clean again.

Make sure and certain that this procedure is not a mere form. Do not rest content until you know that the child has really experienced a true repentance, and honestly wishes that he had never done wrong. Stay with the transgressor until he ceases his resistance and truly surrenders. Be kind, loving, tender, understanding, and forgiving, but, at the same time, firm, uncompromising, and unrelenting. You must emerge from every such encounter with your objective accomplished, for, every victory gained makes the next one more certain, but, should you fail to lead the child into true repentance, it will be much more difficult next time.

Another problem to watch and be ready for is the time when the child begins to meet every directive from the parent with the query, "Why?"

This is not, as some may argue or imagine, the expression of a questing mind seeking knowledge. Rather, it is a challenge to parental authority, the denial of the way of faith and obedience. Remember, that the objective is to establish unquestioning obedience in the child so that he will be blessed with the same capacities and responses when he becomes an adult. It is not God's way to provide all the reasons for His commands to us. He simply gives the orders and looks for us to obey without question. Later, if we faithfully obey in the meantime, the reason for the command will become apparent.

So, when the little one takes the first step of questioning why, which will soon become a habit if not checked, then you should decline to answer the question. Instead, draw the child aside and explain to him that he must simply believe in and trust his mother and father, and obey for no other reason than that the instruction has been given. Tell him that obedience will bring knowledge in its own time as it certainly will.

Obviously, when God gives us commands, they are faultless and totally trustworthy. Earthly parents are not blessed with the same infallibility. Nevertheless, there rests upon them the need to give their children directives that are wholly and always just and reasonable and for which they will never need to apologize. Knowing that to achieve this is

beyond the capacity of humanity, parents must learn to look to and lean upon the arm of Omniscience to ensure success in this area as in all other aspects of child salvation.

Along with obedience, a child must be taught to be reliably truthful even under great pressure. Of Christ as a child it is written: "He manifested a patience that nothing could disturb, and a truthfulness that would never sacrifice integrity. In principle firm as a rock, His life revealed the grace of unselfish courtesy." *The Desire of Ages*, 68, 69.

When parents discover that their children have been guilty of falsehood and deceit, they are understandably very disappointed, but they would be more startled were they to realize that they themselves have educated their little ones to be little liars.

A typical situation develops along the following lines. Some misdemeanor has been committed—a window has been broken, paint has been spilled on the driveway, a garden bed has been trampled, some money has disappeared, the gate has been left open and the horse has escaped, the garden hose has been left running, draining the tank, and causing the car to bog down, or someone has climbed the fruit tree and caused one of the fruit-laden branches to break. These are some of the mischievous things in which a child can become involved. None of them register in his mind with the same seriousness with which they are viewed by his parents.

The adults are frustrated, inconvenienced, and irritated by this "inexcusable" behavior. They do not know for certain who is actually responsible, but their suspicions are leveled at the one whom they consider to be the prime suspect, and, this time at least, they feel they are correct. However, they lack positive evidence that their judgment is right, and resort to a tactic that mixes interrogation and condemnation.

So, they address the suspect in a voice charged with the menace of both suspicion and accusation: "Johnny, did you leave the gate open so the cow could escape and trample on the neighbor's prize vegetable garden?"

Cold fear naturally grips the child's mind as he looks into the stern faces of his parents. He knows he is in deep trouble, and, like a cornered animal, he seeks any way of escape. The only one that seems to offer deliverance is to deny any involvement even though he is the very one who did the deed. This is the route children and even older people will choose when forced into this kind of situation.

The lone possible exception would be the first time that it happened. The confrontation was sudden and therefore unexpected. The youngster had not yet learned to recognize the threat in the parents' attitude and did not know that to tell the truth was to invite painful punishment. So he admitted his guilt and was rewarded with chastisement to be remembered.

From that point on he would understand the relationship between frank and honest confession and the dire consequences that it would produce. Obviously, he emerged from the experience a sadder but "wiser" boy. He now knows that telling the truth brings suffering, whereas resorting to a lie will provide him a means of escape. Thus the parents have followed a course of action which actually educates the youngster to be a liar. This is the worst thing they could do.

How then should parents handle a situation where the child has done wrong?

Firstly, they must resolve never to require the child to condemn himself and then punish him for what he has confessed. It must be realized that this is the sure and certain method of training him to practice deception as a means of escape from the penalty for wrongdoing. It would be much better never to know who actually did the wrong, and better to leave the offender undetected, than to put such pressure on him as will drive him to be a habitual liar.

A situation can develop in which the child practices mischief which he thinks that he has carefully and successfully concealed from his parents. However, they become aware that something is amiss, and, quite naturally wish to bring the matter to a speedy and satisfactory conclusion. But, they are hampered by their lack of sufficient evidence enabling them to deal with the case. As with every problem which arises to undermine the family government, the mother and the father must submit the difficulty to the divine Problem-solver, and then patiently wait till things mature to the place where the trouble has become fully self-evident, and there is no need to require the child to witness against himself.

Then, when the parents have come into possession of all the necessary facts, they can deal with the difficulty intelligently, compassionately, and successfully. The Holy Spirit will respond to the prayer of faith to bring conviction, repentance, and confession to the child who will be discouraged from lying when it is seen that this is no refuge at all.

There will be no need to administer punishment which is an ineffective measure anyway. It will deter a wrong act only while the offender feels that he is unlikely to escape detection.

Before the parents is a great and rewarding task to be achieved. They are to firstly establish the newly born life of Christ in their little ones. Thereafter, by diligent and successful training, they are to fix in them and develop to the heights of excellence, reliability, and effectiveness, the qualities of obedience, faith, honesty, purity, industry, discipline, reverence, gratitude, integrity, truthfulness, love, and every other virtue to be found in holy living. Happy indeed will be the parents who are successful in fulfilling their divinely-appointed responsibilities. They will have the joy of seeing unbroken families in the kingdom.



# Teaching the Purpose of Life

## Chapter 26

One of the most undesirable attitudes that can be developed in a child is the belief that the world owes it everything it wants; that it is a little king or queen; a person to be served rather than to be an instrument of self-sacrificing service to others.

The incredible prosperity of the present era certainly is conducive to the formation of this problem. Not so long ago, the inhabitants of new and developing countries were rugged pioneers who, with their own hands, hacked a home and a living from a resistant land. It was a tough struggle to achieve this, but it produced strong men and women who understood that they gained nothing without personal effort. The idea that the world owed them a living was far from their thoughts. The living was there, they knew, but they had to go out and wrest it from the forests, mountains, plains, and seas.

The children of these rugged pioneers had to bear their share of the burdens of the home. They had to gather firewood, light the wood stove, help prepare meals, sometimes managing the entire task themselves, milk the cows, work in the fields, care for the garden, fetch the water from the well or the creek, assist with the house keeping, mind the baby, and walk barefoot over a mile to school. In addition, there were often times when some of these tasks had to be done in driving rain, freezing cold, or blistering heat.

City children were not so burdened with work as were their country cousins, but, fortunately, they did not escape entirely. In those days, practically every home had a backyard garden and there were the lawns



In modern western society, the needs of the individual are so totally cared for that there is very little if any opportunity for the children growing up to develop a real appreciation of that for which life has been given to us. Instead of being trained by the environment to understand that each individual is a part of the wonderful scheme of things in which each person has a vital part to play, they are more apt to grow up believing that the world owes them everything and that it should be delivered to them cost free.

to be mowed, not with a modern motorized machine, but with hard-to-push implements which forbade your letting the lawn get away in length, for those one-person-power mowers handled only short grass.

So there was work to be done by all and the young people realized that they were there to build a nation to which they owed whatever contribution they could make.

What a different situation exists today. There is so little actual pioneering done now that it is completely unknown to the majority of people in the modern world, which is flooded with every labor saving device imaginable. Gone for almost everyone are the wood stoves, in favor of gas or electricity. Hence there is no firewood to cut, gather, and carry to the woodbox. Household vegetable gardens are few and far between and becoming more rare all the time. In any case, it is virtually impossible to enlist the services of the average young person of today to care for them.



If the family lives in an apartment building, there is not even a lawn to water and mow, the school bus stops close by, while the supermarket and other shops are but a few blocks away. There, everything needed can be bought more conveniently than you could make or grow it yourself. Of course, few walk to the market no matter how close it is.

Modern man from his childhood up is so totally provided for, that he naturally develops the attitude that society owes all this to him. It came free and post free for the first sixteen or more years, so why should he accommodate himself to anything different when the age of responsibility arrives? This is the attitude which is naturally educated into him from his childhood up by virtue of the structure of modern life.

It is an education which is completely opposite from the principles of service which are the laws of life for both heaven and earth. These must be taught to the little one, even from his earliest moments, by his being called upon to make an ever increasing contribution to his family and society. Let the lesson be untiringly and deeply inculcated that, in God's kingdom, no one lives to himself, and that no one receives except to give. He must be led to understand that to hoard is to die. It is the law of Satan's kingdom and therefore the ministration of death to serve one's own self at the expense of others. On the other hand, the law of life for heaven and earth is the law of service to all creatures great and small no matter what the cost to themselves might be.

Nowhere in eternity's history is this better revealed than at the cross of Calvary. The revelation unfolded there is so beautiful, so convincing, and so comprehensive that the angels, the inhabitants of the unfallen worlds, and the redeemed will spend eternity pondering its magnificent mysteries.

"Our little world is the lesson book of the universe. God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which 'angels desire to look,' and it will be their study throughout endless ages. Both the redeemed and the unfallen beings will find in the cross of Christ their science and their song. It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus is the glory of self-sacrificing love. In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven; that the love which 'seeketh not her own' has its source in the heart of God; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the character of Him who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto." *The Desire of Ages*, 19, 20.

The law of self-sacrificing, self-renouncing love is the law of life which operates with equal force in heaven as it does on earth, both for time and throughout eternity. It found its greatest exemplification in the cross, which instrument of sacrificial death became the symbol of self-denying ministry. These principles of operation were not introduced as an emergency measure to combat sin, but are as eternal as God Himself. It

was when Lucifer denied the principle of the cross, and began to gather to himself, that the law of life was broken for the first time, and sin was established.

Many professed Christians have failed to grasp this truth, supposing that the cross is a heavy burden to be borne only so long as our earthly journey lasts, after which it will be laid down in exchange for a glorious crown, as expressed by the hymn writer, George Bennard in his famous hymn *The Old Rugged Cross*.

"So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,  
Till my trophies at last I lay down;  
I will cling to the old rugged cross,  
And exchange it someday for a crown."

The thought here is that we will cherish the cross only as long as this life on earth continues. Then, upon our arrival in heaven, the bearing of the cross will be ended, and the wearing of the crown begun. See the same thought expressed by Thomas Shepherd in his hymn *Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone?*

"The consecrated cross I'll bear  
Till death shall set me free,  
And then go home my crown to wear,  
For there's a crown for me."

This is not an effort to criticize these two hymn writers who were, no doubt, very dedicated men and wrote according to their best understanding. I quote them only because they provide excellent examples of the limited view of the principle of the cross. The redeemed will not bear the consecrated cross only until death shall set them free. Rather, it will be their way of life throughout eternity.

To some, this may sound like an odious existence, but the saved will find in the cross, both their science and their song. As their science, it will portray to them the way they will live, the revelation of the procedures by which they will perform loving service in the heavenly society forever. So beautiful and effective will this science be that they will find it to be the perpetual subject of their song, the expression of their rapturous praise of the wisdom, justice, and righteousness found in the principle of the cross.

It will be when, once again every creature and all of creation shall be tuned to the way of the cross which is the way of righteousness, that there will be no destroying blight of sin to mar the happiness of God's kingdom. Yet, even during the reign of sin, all nature testifies to the

institution of the beautiful law of life—self-sacrificing, self-renouncing love. To whatever extent we can see this law operating in nature today, we shall see the promise of its perfection in Paradise restored.

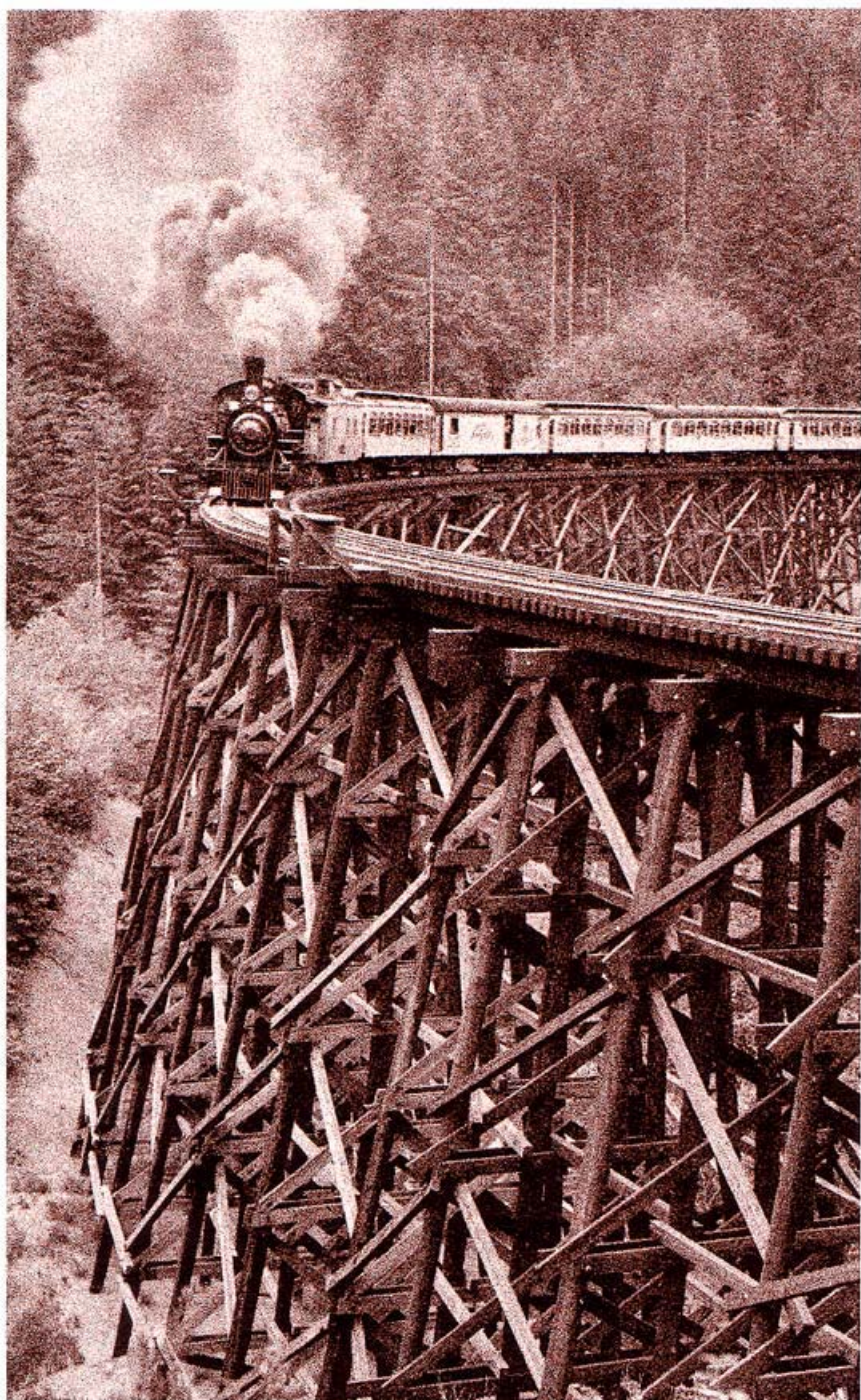
"Now sin has marred God's perfect work, yet that handwriting remains. Even now all created things declare the glory of His excellence. There is nothing, save the selfish heart of man, that lives unto itself. No bird that cleaves the air, no animal that moves upon the ground, but ministers to some other life. There is no leaf of the forest, or lowly blade of grass, but has its ministry. Every tree and shrub and leaf pours forth that element of life without which neither man nor animal could live; and man and animal, in turn, minister to the life of tree and shrub and leaf. The flowers breathe fragrance and unfold their beauty in blessing to the world. The sun sheds its light to gladden a thousand worlds. The ocean, itself the source of all our springs and fountains, receives the streams from every land, but takes to give. The mists ascending from its bosom fall in showers to water the earth, that it may bring forth and bud.

"The angels of glory find their joy in giving,—giving love and tireless watch-care to souls that are fallen and unholy. Heavenly beings woo the hearts of men; they bring to this dark world light from the courts above; by gentle and patient ministry they move upon the human spirit, to bring the lost into a fellowship with Christ which is even closer than they themselves can know.

"But turning from all lesser representations, we behold God in Jesus. Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give. 'I do nothing of Myself,' said Christ; 'the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father.' 'I seek not Mine own glory,' but the glory of Him that sent Me. *John* 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. In these words is set forth the great principle which is the law of life for the universe. All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, the law of life." *The Desire of Ages*, 20, 21.

The failure to implant these principles of loving service within the children is to fail to train them aright. They must be taught that to give is to live, while to selfishly retain is to die. They are to understand that:

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** When a train such as this sets out on a journey, it proceeds to a predetermined destination and never comes to a permanent stop until the goal has been reached. Likewise, children must be brought to understand that they must have clearly defined goals to pursue. There must be no turning off onto branch lines leading nowhere, no stopping short of the objective, and no slacking of diligent effort in pursuit of the high calling set before them.



"Love for souls for whom Christ died means crucifixion of self. He who is a child of God should henceforth look upon himself as a link in the chain let down to save the world, one with Christ in His plan of mercy, going forth with Him to seek and save the lost. The Christian is ever to realize that he has consecrated Himself to God, and that in character he is to reveal Christ to the world. The self-sacrifice, the sympathy, the love, manifested in the life of Christ are to reappear in the life of the worker for God.

" 'Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.' Selfishness is death. No organ of the body could live should it confine its service to itself. The heart, failing to send its lifeblood to the hand and the head, would quickly lose its power. As our lifeblood, so is the love of Christ diffused through every part of His mystical body. We are members one of another, and the soul that refuses to impart will perish. And 'what is a man profited,' said Jesus, 'if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' " *The Desire of Ages*, 417.

Much, much more could be written on the objective of implanting in the child the principles of self-abnegation, and the love of self-sacrificing service to others, but we will turn now to the question of how these things are to become so established in the life that they will be the only course of action followed.

Once again, only those parents in whom these principles are implanted can possibly teach them to their children. Therefore, as ever, the work must begin with the prospective father and mother. Let them make certain that they have been truly born again, and then let them spend some time every day in the most earnest contemplation of the law of self-renouncing love as it is revealed in the Saviour's life, and, by beholding, the change will be effected.

"It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.

"As we associate together, we may be a blessing to one another. If we are Christ's, our sweetest thoughts will be of Him. We shall love to talk of Him; and as we speak to one another of His love, our hearts will be softened by divine influences. Beholding the beauty of His character, we shall be 'changed into the same image from glory to glory.' 2 *Corinthians* 3:18." *The Desire of Ages*, 83.

By these measures, let the entire atmosphere and influence of the home both during and after the prenatal period be charged with the presence of Jesus through the Holy Spirit, and the divine principles of loving service will be established in the child from its earliest moments.

It is extremely important that the child never be made the center of attention in the home. In violation of this principle and as a powerful and all too effective an education in the exaltation of self, parents unthinkingly reorganize the household around the infant especially when it first arrives. The regular household noises are suppressed; voices are hushed; music is muted; doors are not allowed to shut noisily; and so on.

The little one who is far more perceptive than parents even begin to realize, correctly deduces that there is an atmosphere of restraint in the house and it is in deference to him. Unable of himself to form a true assessment of himself, he depends on the messages coming to him from the family members to settle that question. When every one of them is acting in such a way that his presence is continually deferred to by all, and that everything is being done around the house with reference to his needs and interests first and foremost, he judges himself as being a very important person. He has not come to live with this family! They have come to live with him!

What a disastrous start to give a child! What an education in self-importance!

When the newly born takes up residence in the home, everyone already living there should let him know that he is most welcome, but that he has come to live with an already established system of home government and way of life, and it is for him to fit in with them and not they with him. Of course, some accommodation must be given him such as is necessary to fit him in and care for his needs, but apart from that, let life proceed as normal. Talk in your usual voices, walk around the house with the same firm, confident footfalls used before the babe entered the world, close the doors as definitely as ever, and play your music at the usual sound levels.

The little one will prefer it that way. He will welcome and sleep through sounds and movements which tell him that this family is in command of itself and therefore knows how to take care of him. Being blessed with the spirit of obedience, he will gladly accept his place as a humble member of this Christian family.

As the child grows, study to find ways by which he can share in the sacrifices made by the rest of the family members. It is important that the little one does not feel forced to accept sacrifices that he does not understand and in which he has no desire to participate, and never should he be called to make a sacrifice that the parents are not prepared to make. It is much better to firstly secure his dedication to a life of self-

sacrificing service, and then explain to him when the time comes for a sacrifice to be made, that this is his opportunity to enter into the reality of it, to experience a little of what it cost the Saviour to die for him.

As early as he is capable, the little one should be introduced to such tasks as he is able to execute. Naturally, these will become more demanding as time goes by and he develops in skill, strength, and understanding. The child who is required to perform no home duties whatsoever, but has everything done for him, grows up believing that it should always be that way. He is being deprived of one of the most valuable aspects of the education available to him, and will be incapable of fulfilling the work which the Lord would have him do. As a child, Jesus bore His share of the work needed to keep the home, garden, and workshop.

"Jesus lived in a peasant's home, and faithfully and cheerfully acted His part in bearing the burdens of the household. He had been the Commander of heaven, and angels had delighted to fulfill His word; now He was a willing servant, a loving, obedient son. He learned a trade, and with His own hands worked in the carpenter's shop with Joseph. In the simple garb of a common laborer He walked the streets of the little town, going to and returning from His humble work. He did not employ His divine power to lessen His burdens or to lighten His toil.

"As Jesus worked in childhood and youth, mind and body were developed. He did not use His physical powers recklessly, but in such a way as to keep them in health, that He might do the best work in every line. He was not willing to be defective, even in the handling of tools. He was perfect as a workman, as He was perfect in character. By His own example He taught that it is our duty to be industrious, that our work should be performed with exactness and thoroughness, and that such labor is honorable. The exercise that teaches the hands to be useful and trains the young to bear their share of life's burdens gives physical strength, and develops every faculty. All should find something to do that will be beneficial to themselves and helpful to others. God appointed work as a blessing, and only the diligent worker finds the true glory and joy of life. The approval of God rests with loving assurance upon children and youth who cheerfully take their part in the duties of the household, sharing the burdens of father and mother. Such children will go out from the home to be useful members of society.

"Throughout His life on earth, Jesus was an earnest and constant worker. He expected much; therefore He attempted much. After He had entered on His ministry, He said, 'I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.' *John* 9:4. Jesus did not shirk care and responsibility, as do many who profess to be His followers. It is because they seek to evade this discipline that so many are weak and inefficient. They may possess precious and amiable traits,

but they are nerveless and almost useless when difficulties are to be met or obstacles surmounted. The positiveness and energy, the solidity and strength of character, manifested in Christ are to be developed in us, through the same discipline that He endured. And the grace that He received is for us." *The Desire of Ages*, 72, 73.

We are not in this world to please ourselves, to build all-absorbing business enterprises, and to settle down in fine homes. We, as Jesus was when He was here, are in a foreign land of which the devil is the present ruler. We are here to mind the affairs of God's kingdom and for no other purpose. These matters are to receive from us our entire attention, all of our time, and every particle of strength we have. To accomplish our divinely-appointed mission we are to become diligent workers and our children likewise. Only hard, efficient work will see the victory gained.

This does not mean that every believer is to disengage himself from his secular work and then devote his entire time and resources to preaching the gospel. When the Lord leads you into a vocation, then that is where you are to serve Him and your fellow men, but, care must be taken to ensure that this work does not become an end in itself, but is forever seen as a means of revealing the character of God and of furthering the cause of truth and righteousness.

To some, the preaching of the cross is foolishness and, consequently, to them the following of a life of self-sacrificing service is self-defeating and non-productive. They believe that it takes you nowhere and rewards you with nothing.

These thinkers could not be more mistaken. Even though those who truly serve the Lord are not motivated by hope of reward, there are rich returns for those whose quality of service is such as the Lord can accept.

"The one who stands nearest to Christ will be he who on earth has drunk most deeply of *the spirit* of His self-sacrificing love,—love that 'vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, . . . seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil' (*1 Corinthians* 13:4, 5),—love that moves the disciple, as it moved our Lord, to give all, to live and labor and sacrifice, even unto death, for the saving of humanity. This spirit was made manifest in the life of Paul. He said, 'For to me to live is Christ;' for his life revealed Christ to men; 'and to die is gain,'—gain to Christ; death itself would make manifest the power of His grace, and gather souls to Him. 'Christ shall be magnified in my body,' he said, 'whether it be by life or by death.' *Philippians* 1:21, 20." *The Desire of Ages*, 549.

There is no greater joy, no deeper satisfaction, no more enduring fulfillment, no mightier facility for the achievement of every quality and grace, no more valuable riches than to stand nearest to Christ in the kingdom. May this be the sacred privilege of you and your beautiful, born-again, and perfectly trained children.



# Appendix A

## Pantheism

Paul, under direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote that "Christ *in* you", is "the hope of glory." Here are his words:

"To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." *Colossians* 1:27.

The pronouncement of so wonderful and essential a truth as this naturally set in motion commendable efforts on the part of many down through the centuries to rightly understand and apply these words. Earnest Bible students recognized that they needed to know in what specific sense Christ enters into the believer, and how, in practical terms, they could become the recipients of this blessing by which they are assured of eternal life.

Unfortunately, not all who set out on this quest discovered the saving truth resident in this statement. Satan, by exercising those minds which were responsive to his influence, succeeded in introducing theories which, though they *appeared* to be the truth, were far from it. Pantheism is one such misleading error which successfully achieves its intended purpose of completely separating those who subscribe to it from the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is utterly impossible for salvation to be received and experienced by anyone while he remains locked in this error. He must be delivered from its sophistries, for, if he remains in them, he will never receive the fitness necessary for admission into heaven. Of course, as is always the way with Satan's devious philosophies, in a very clever way, Pantheism denies the gospel of Jesus Christ while professedly upholding it. Therefore, it runs counter to the mighty messages which the Lord sent through Waggoner and Jones, and which messages in turn have subsequently been taught in this, the fourth angel's movement. As this study progresses, these facts will be established beyond any reasonable doubt, and it will be clearly demonstrated that no one can believe and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ and, at the same time, believe in Pantheism.

"Both 'pantheism' and 'panentheism' are terms of recent origin, coined to describe certain views of the relationship between God and the

world that are different from that of traditional Theism (q.v.). As reflected in the prefix 'pan-' (Greek *pas*, 'all'), both of the terms stress the all-embracing inclusiveness of God, as compared with His separateness as emphasized in many versions of Theism." *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th. Edition, Volume 13:948.

In Adventist Church history, Pantheism emerged as a significant force to be reckoned with in the first decade of the present century. Dr. J. H. Kellogg of Battle Creek fame, was the leading exponent of this terrible error, which he spelled out in his book, *The Living Temple*, published in 1903. God certainly regarded this book as being totally incompatible with the third angel's message, the message of Christ and His righteousness in verity, and moved upon Sister White to warn against this dangerous deception in very strong, clear terms. For verification of this read *Selected Messages* 1:199-208.

But this was not the first occasion when she was called upon to war against this subtle counterfeit. At the very beginning of her career as God's personally delegated messenger, she was confronted with the teaching that the works of God were in fact God Himself, and was called upon to war against it. Sister White recalled the experience in these words.

"But to take the works of God, and represent them as being God, is a fearful misrepresentation of Him. This representation I was called upon to meet at the beginning of my work, when in my youth the Lord commissioned me to go forth and proclaim what He should command me to proclaim. And as the Lord shall direct me, I must now do what I can to counteract all such teaching, and the theories which lead to such views. Those who hold these theories do not know whither their feet are tending." *Medical Ministry*, 94.

Specifically then, what is this error that we must reject? It is "the theory that God is an essence pervading all nature," and "is one of Satan's most subtle devices. It misrepresents God and is a dishonor to His greatness and majesty." *Testimonies* 8:291. In other words, it is the teaching that the Deity in person is actually and literally in all created things.

It is not difficult to understand how minds worked by Satan could come to such an extreme position. Remember that all error is a development of truth to extreme or deviant conclusions, yet the counterfeit thus formulated is so like the real that it is difficult to discern the difference. Therefore, care must be taken not to label the truth, Pantheism, or Pantheism, the truth.

As Pantheism is a theory about the relationship of God to His created works, consideration will now be given to the facts on which the error is built. These begin with the truth that God existed eternally before He

commenced His creative work, when, apart from the Godhead, nothing existed in the most absolute sense of that word, "nothing!" Spend a moment thinking about this before you read on. Imagine a universe in which was no light, only the deepest possible darkness; absolute cold without a single calorie of warmth in billions of cubic light years of space; no atmosphere, no worlds, no suns, no vegetation, animals, insects, people, or anything at all. The universe was an infinity of darkness and emptiness.

It had to be so, for if, before God commenced His creative work, there had been anything at all, even if it had been but a single speck of finest dust, then, before the One we know, there would have had to have been another creator to have done this preparatory work. But there was no other being who could and did fulfill this mission. Therefore, when God purposed to call billions of galaxies into existence, there was nothing with which to work outside of Himself, because there was nothing existing outside of Himself.

The evolutionist cannot believe that a Being could exist who could and did create a universe from nothing outside of Himself. It is for this reason that they always begin with existing raw material, even though they offer no explanation as to how it got there in the first case. They are not prepared to admit that their position also needs the Creator to explain how matter came into existence and was formed into heavenly bodies and peopled with myriad forms of life.

If God had no available energy and life apart from the infinite supplies within Himself, then that is what He had to use in order to achieve His purpose to fill the universe with inhabited planetary systems. So "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. . . .

"For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." *Psalms* 33:6, 9.

Energy in the form of sound thundered forth from God who then changed this into matter. Men have limited power to reverse the process as they do when they convert matter back into sound. They do this most effectively when they set off a nuclear explosion.

Therefore, all things issued and came forth from God and are of God.

Now the Pantheist takes this too far by teaching that everything which emanated from God is God Himself. He makes the fatal mistake of not making a distinction between God the Person, and that which came from Him in the form of creation. This is to seriously misrepresent God as it is written: "But to take the works of God, and represent them as being God, is a fearful misrepresentation of Him." *Medical Ministry*, 94.

The real nature of the case is not difficult to determine, for it is a simple matter to prove that God is not an essence pervading all His created works. The key Scriptures which confirm that a distinction must be made between the Creator and the created are those which aver that God never changes.

"For I am the Lord, I do not change . . . ." *Malachi* 3:6.

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever." *Hebrews* 13:8.

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." *James* 1:17.

If it were true that God is an essence pervading all nature as Pantheism teaches, then, in effect, nature would possess all the attributes of God and would be as unchanging as He is. It could be no other way. But, if it is found that God's created works are subject to changes no matter how minor they might be, then we can know that specific distinctions must be made between the Creator who spoke all things into existence and the things spoken into existence. It will be evident that a gulf of separation exists between the two on account of sin.

Now no honest student of God's word needs to be persuaded that very great changes have taken place in nature since the fall. For instance, there were no carnivorous animals in the Garden of Eden, nor were there fading flowers and falling leaves, as there certainly have been since Adam's and Eve's sins caused their loss of righteousness and immortality. Death found no place in the original creation. As soon as the fall took place, there were striking changes in the atmosphere and marked extremes of heat and cold were experienced for the first time. Further great changes took place at the flood, the drastic effects of which remain with us till today.

Of these changes it is written: "In humility and unutterable sadness they bade farewell to their beautiful home and went forth to dwell upon the earth, where rested the curse of sin. The atmosphere, once so mild and uniform in temperature, was now subject to marked changes, and the Lord mercifully provided them with a garment of skins as a protection from the extremes of heat and cold.

"As they witnessed in drooping flower and falling leaf the first signs of decay, Adam and his companion mourned more deeply than men now mourn over their dead. The death of the frail, delicate flowers was indeed a cause of sorrow; but when the goodly trees cast off their leaves, the scene brought vividly to mind the stern fact that death is the portion of every living thing." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 61, 62.

Think of the changes which have occurred in every form of life. Adam "... was more than twice as tall as men now living upon the

earth, and was well proportioned." *Spiritual Gifts* 3:34. This means that the first man was over twelve feet in height. The greatly reduced stature of men now living testifies to the transition from what human beings were when God created them to what they are now. Nor are the differences limited to man's physical proportions. Consider too the incredible range of alterations manifest in skin color, racial features, and behavior. Note how from day to day, the mood of the individual will fluctuate. One day his patience will be quite reasonable, the next or even sooner he will manifest the shortest and vilest of tempers.

But what is more changeable than the weather patterns of the present. It has become a common saying: "If you are not pleased with the weather, just wait around for a few hours." A day will commence with the promise of pleasant conditions, but a few hours later a wild storm may be destroying houses, shops, and vehicles.

So one might go on listing change after change because there is nothing in this sinful world which is not changing all the time. The very fact that these alterations are continually taking place is positive proof that God is not in nature as an all-pervading essence. Let it be repeated that, if He were, then changes and deterioration would be impossible.

This lesson is forcibly taught in the experience of Elijah who witnessed the great and strong wind, the earthquake, and the consuming fire, but the Lord was not in any of these. See *1 Kings* 19:11, 12. If He had been, then there would have been no wild wind, jarring earthquake, or raging fire.

So then, it is clear that the God who changes not, is not nature which has and continues to range from one terrible extreme to another. God is a Person who dwells in light which no man can approach, and whose throne is in the heaven of heavens above. He is not an essence pervading all nature. The simple, conclusive, unavoidable truth of this cannot but be clear to any honest mind.

But now we come to the most important part of this study where it will be conclusively demonstrated that it is impossible to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ and Pantheism at the same time. The truth is beautifully summed up in these words:

"If God is an essence pervading all nature, then He dwells in all men; and in order to attain holiness, man has only to develop the power that is within him." *Testimonies* 8:291.

That sentence certainly says it all. Consider it carefully! What it is saying is this: If, as the Pantheists believe, God is an essence pervading all nature, then he dwells in all men, whether they are professedly Christian or avowedly heathen, whether they are attempting good works or are abandoned to sinful practices, and whether they love God or hate Him. This means that, inasmuch as God is holy, His presence in them is

holy, and they are themselves holy by virtue of this. Therefore, the procedure whereby they hopefully expect to reach Christian maturity is to develop the beautiful, latent goodness which is supposedly already within themselves. Tragically for them, they will be utterly disappointed in their quest, for salvation cannot be received by these procedures.

Compare this with the real truth on the matter. When Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden, he was endowed with righteousness and life, but this was replaced by iniquity and death the moment he decided to accept Satan's sophistries. Instead of his soul temple being occupied by the divine Spirit, it became the abode of Satan's evil nature as is stated in these words:

"From eternal ages it was God's purpose that every created being, from the bright and holy seraph to man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator. Because of sin, humanity ceased to be a temple for God. Darkened and defiled by evil, the heart of man no longer revealed the glory of the Divine One." *The Desire of Ages*, 161.

This statement reveals the true condition of humanity once it had ceased to be a temple in which were to be found the life and attributes of God. Instead, the darkness and defilement of evil reigned within. Compare this with Pantheism which views the problem in a different light altogether. Its exponents claim that the presence of God remains in every individual so that all men, both Christian and non-Christian, have goodness as a natural inheritance.

So then, the exponents of Pantheism project a decidedly different view of the problem into which sin plunged men, from that which Inspiration reveals as being the actual complication. As surely as they do, so certainly will they develop a theory of salvation which cannot harmonize with the truth, for the two are directly opposed to each other.

Consider this point very carefully. To the person who understands that the seed of Adam has lost God's life, and who knows that that life can be recovered only through the process of reproduction, the new birth is absolutely essential. They can understand why Jesus repeatedly said to Nicodemus, "... Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." *John* 3:3. They know that the essential first step in their recovery is the eradication of the evil nature which has ruled over them for so long, and the implantation of the seed of Christ in its place.

But the Pantheist believes that he already has God within. Therefore, he sees no need for the process whereby the life of God is implanted in him. Therefore, he never seeks this blessing and so never finds it, for Jesus made it very plain that only those who seek find, and to those alone who knock it shall be opened. Instead, he concerns himself with developing the goodness which he falsely imagines is within him. Satan is

pleased to permit him to have some seeming success in his efforts, for religionists in this category certainly produce a better outward performance than the uncaring godless. However, the results achieved are but the modified improvements of the old life which are proudly paraded as the real thing, but which are not the Christian life, for "The Christian's life 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." *The Desire of Ages*, 172.

No matter to what level of perfection the old life may be elevated, it can never be taken to heaven for the simple reason that it already is forfeited to the broken law. "The broken law of God demanded the life of the transgressor." *The Great Controversy*, 418. Make no mistake, what that broken law demands, it will get. There is now no hope for the old life. It is doomed no matter what modifications or improvements may be made to it. Only the life which came down from heaven can return thither as Jesus said: "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of man who is in heaven." *John* 3:13.

Those who have that life will eventually ascend into heaven. All others will find this an impossibility.

From the very beginning of the sounding forth of the fourth angel's message, we have undeviatingly declared that the unconverted man is unholy in himself and separated from God. It has been stressed with equal consistency that no matter how diligently or successfully the one questing a place in heaven works at perfecting the old man, he cannot enter into eternal life. We have clung to the correct position that there must be an eradication of the evil nature, followed by the implantation of Christ's life in its place. We have ever taught that it is only as this life within develops, that the believer grows in grace and righteousness. Therefore we have been true to the gospel of Jesus Christ as a living, working, transforming power in the life.

It would be impossible for us to stand for these principles if we believed in the Pantheistic theory that God is an essence pervading all His created works. We would then have to teach the utter error that man is intrinsically good in himself and has only to choose to serve God and with His assistance develop the good that is within him.

One needs to be exceedingly careful about laying on anyone the charge of teaching Pantheism. It is a counterfeit lying so close to the truth in many respects that its identification cannot be achieved by reference to an odd statement here and there. It is not so much what is said that is the proof, as what is meant by what is said.

Satan is the author of the theory called Pantheism. He skillfully designed the teaching so as to rob men of any sense of need for the new

birth, knowing full well that, by so doing, he would destroy any possibility of their gaining eternal life. We have not seen the last of this attractive but deadly teaching. The version which appeared at the turn of the century was described as ". . . the alpha of deadly heresies. The omega will follow, and will be received by those who are not willing to heed the warning God has given." *Selected Messages* 1:200.

In this time of peril, safety lies in a thorough understanding of the gospel as God has given it to His people. Only those who know it in its power and truth will be secure. Beware, and let no man take your crown.



# **Appendix B**

## **Child Salvation Does Not Require an Immaculate Conception**

Every time we teach that the believer in Jesus can be blessed with the eradication of the old sinful nature and have implanted within him the actual life of Jesus thus fulfilling the Scripture: "Christ in you, the hope of glory", the groundless charge is laid against us that we are teaching holy or immaculate flesh.

In like manner, since we now understand that this same wonderful transformation can be wrought in the freshly conceived child, the charge is leveled that we are teaching that the child has had an immaculate conception.

Obviously, if the message on child salvation teaches that an infant must have an immaculate conception in order to experience salvation and grow up as Christ did, it is papal error, will not in fact bring its professed blessings, and must be discarded as deadly poison. All that is needed to demonstrate that child salvation does not involve an immaculate conception is to compare the doctrine as taught by the Roman Catholic Church with the message we bear.

It needs to be stressed that we are not concerned with simply defending ourselves against an accusation. That is a pointless exercise, but it is of specific value to compare the living truth with an insidious error so as to remove all confusion as to what the real light actually is.

The papal position on the immaculate conception is not a doctrine of Christ, but a clever and persuasive counterfeit. It is a subtle attack on the real truth about our wonderful Saviour who, while He was upon earth as well as eternally thereafter, was both God and man, two persons in one, the divine and the human. These two natures, though mysteriously blended, nevertheless remained distinct entities as it is written:

"Was the human nature of the Son of Mary changed into the divine nature of the Son of God? No; the two natures were mysteriously blended in one person—the man Christ Jesus. In Him dwelt all the

fullness of the Godhead bodily. When Christ was crucified, it was His human nature that died. Deity did not sink and die; that would have been impossible." *The SDA Bible Commentary* 5:1113.

If the two natures had not remained distinct entities, it would have been impossible for the human to die while the divine lived on. The ability to see that Christ did in fact have a sinless, unfallen, immortal, *divine* nature and, at the same time, a sinful, fallen, mortal, human nature, is the key to understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ and to detecting the deadly error contained in the papal doctrine of the immaculate conception.

Now, on the divine side, as the Son of God, He did have an immaculate conception. The divine nature which He received from His heavenly Father was sinless, immortal, and perfect. It was, in short, flawless, immaculate. Because it came from the eternal Father, it could not be anything else, for God can only give what He has—sinless, immaculate perfection. The law of heredity applies here as Jesus said, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' John 3:6.

There are many texts in Scripture and statements in the Spirit of Prophecy that testify to the perfect sinlessness of the divine nature of Jesus. Said John, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." *John* 1:1. "And Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.'" *Matthew* 16:16.

To recognize and acknowledge that Christ is God, is to teach that He is sinless, holy, and immaculate, for God cannot be anything else.

Apart from modernists, skeptics, and unbelievers, no one seems to have any difficulty recognizing that Christ was God and that, on the divine side, He was sinless and immortal. Even the papal church understands this. There will be no need therefore to quote extensively to establish this point.

This brings us to the human nature of Christ, and here the controversy arises. The truth is that Christ came tabernacled in the same sinful, mortal flesh and blood with which every human being is burdened and handicapped. He was born of a woman according to the laws of heredity. She could only give Him what she herself had. Therefore it was impossible for Him to have had an immaculate conception on the human side.

This truth is established beyond all contradiction by the Lord through Paul: "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, [flesh and blood as the children] that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." *Hebrews* 2:14.

We should have no difficulty understanding what kind of flesh the children have, for that is our flesh—we are the children. It is sinful, mortal, and far from immaculate. That is the same as Jesus took, for "Therefore, in *all things* He had to be made like His brethren . . . ." *Hebrews* 2:17.

Now the immaculate conception as taught by the Roman Catholic Church denies that Christ came in the same sinful, fallen, mortal flesh and blood as the children, or that He was made in all things like His brethren. This doctrine as taught by the papacy, is not concerned with the divine nature of Christ as the Son of God, *but with His human nature as the Son of man*. Please keep that distinction well in mind in order to avoid confusion on this vital question.

But, and this is an important part of papal theology, the papists do not teach that Christ was given the immaculate conception directly, but that it was given to His mother, so that Christ, by the laws of heredity, was guaranteed the same immaculate physical birth as she supposedly had. In order to confirm that we are correctly representing the Catholic Church's beliefs, reference will be made to one of her authoritative, representative writings.

"It is to be noted that the Immaculate Conception does not refer to the miraculous conception of Christ in the womb of the Virgin Mother without the intervention of a human father, as many non-Catholics imagine, but to the conception of Mary in the womb of her mother without the stain of original sin." *The Faith of Millions*, by John A. O'Brien, 368. Published by Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., Huntington, Indiana, USA., 1974.

The 1962 edition is described on the inside of the cover as an "authoritative" work which bears "the imprimatur of the Catholic Church", and "As a summary of what the Catholic Church stands for, there is probably no better book for the general reader. At the same time, it is a book that can be recommended even to an authority on the subject."

John A. O'Brien states unmistakably that the supposed immaculate conception of Mary purportedly delivered her from the fallen, sinful, mortal flesh and blood with which every other person since Adam is encumbered.

"The third prerogative of the Blessed Virgin is her Immaculate Conception. Not only was she free from the slightest stain of actual sin, but by a singular miracle of divine grace she was free also from original sin, with which all the other children of Adam are born into this world. It was eminently fitting that she who was destined to be the Mother of Christ, who was to give Him flesh of her flesh and blood of her blood,

should be undefiled by even that slight shadow of Adam's fall. To her alone, among all the members of the race, was granted this singular immunity." *The Faith of Millions*, 367, 368. 1974 edition.

It is made plain by this same author that the purpose of Mary's receiving this "singular immunity", was that Jesus Christ would therefore inherit from her a like exemption in His flesh and blood nature. Thus the Roman Catholic Church denies that Christ was burdened and handicapped with the same flesh and blood as the children or that he was made in all things like unto His brethren. Note the following assertions:

"When we say that Mary is the Mother of God, we assert implicitly two truths. First, that Jesus Christ, her Son, is true man; otherwise, Mary could not be His Mother. Second, that her Son, the Incarnate Word, is also true God; otherwise, Mary could not be the Mother of God. 'In other words we affirm,' as Cardinal Gibbons points out, 'that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the word of God, who in His divine nature is from all eternity begotten of the Father, consubstantial with Him, was in the fullness of time again begotten, by being born of the Virgin, thus taking to Himself, from her maternal womb, a human nature of the same substance with hers.' " *The Faith of Millions*, 366.

"In like manner, as far as the sublime mystery of the Incarnation can be reflected in the natural order, the Blessed Virgin, under the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, by communicating to the Second Person of the Adorable Trinity, as mothers do, a true human nature of the same substance with her own, is thereby really and truly His Mother." *The Faith of Millions*, 367.

No one could ask for clearer statements on what the Roman Catholic doctrine of the immaculate conception teaches. It provides Mary, the human mother of Jesus, with total deliverance from any sinfulness whatsoever. Therefore, if this teaching were actually true, she was blessed with sinless, unfallen, immortal flesh and blood. This was so that, when Christ was born of her according to the laws of heredity, He could only receive of her what she was and had—sinless, immortal flesh and blood; "... a true human nature of the same substance with her own . . . ."

The only conclusion which can be drawn from these assertions is that Jesus Christ came to this earth with a sinless, immortal, divine nature tabernacled in sinless, immortal, human nature. It is the teaching that Christ had an immaculate conception on *both* the divine and the human sides, whereas the real truth is that He had an immaculate conception on only one side, namely, the divine.

Now that we know for certain what the Romanists teach in respect to the incarnation of Christ, let us examine the message on child salvation to see if it is the papal teaching of the immaculate conception or not.

The teaching on child salvation is not the papal error of the immaculate conception of the physical nature. We neither believe nor teach that anyone, at any time from his conception to his old age and death, can receive immaculate flesh and blood prior to his or her being taken to heaven. Thus the only human beings who at the present time have holy, immaculate, sinless, immortal flesh and blood are those such as Enoch, Moses, Elijah, and the resurrected ones who accompanied Jesus to His home on high. None of these were blessed with this endowment while they lived out their earthly probation. Only when the time came for their departure from this earth and admission into Paradise, did they experience this marvelous change. So it will be with the rest of those who will be changed to incorruption and immortality when the Life-giver shall return in the clouds of heaven.

"When human beings receive holy flesh, they will not remain on the earth, but will be taken to heaven. While sin is forgiven in this life, its results are not now wholly removed. It is at His coming that Christ is to 'change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.' (*Philippians* 3:21) . . . ." *Selected Messages* 2:33.

"... while we cannot claim perfection of the flesh, we may have Christian perfection of the soul." *Selected Messages* 2:32.

"To those who have tried so hard to obtain by faith so-called holy flesh, I would say, You cannot obtain it. Not a soul of you has holy flesh now. No human being on the earth has holy flesh. It is an impossibility." *Selected Messages* 2:32.

In other words, an immaculate physical conception or change is an impossibility because the Lord has made no provision for it this side of the second advent.

Furthermore, there is no need for a person to have sinless flesh and blood in order to live a holy life. Jesus Christ, by living a sinless life in sinful flesh, has demonstrated that, provided a person has become a partaker ". . . of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust", 2 *Peter* 1:4, he can live the same sinless life in sinful flesh that Jesus did.

"The Saviour took upon Himself the infirmities of humanity and lived a sinless life, that men might have no fear that because of the weakness of human nature they could not overcome. Christ came to make us 'partakers of the divine nature,' and His life declares that humanity, combined with divinity, does not commit sin." *The Ministry of Healing*, 180.

In simple terms, the message on child salvation points out that there is no time when the child is too young to receive the blessing of the new birth. There is no difference between the conversion of an adult and a child. Neither of them are or can be delivered from sinful flesh in this life,

and cannot therefore have an immaculate conception, but both must be delivered from the sin master, the devil, and both must be endowed with the implanted life of Christ Himself. Child salvation is the same preaching of the everlasting gospel as is adult salvation.

God does not have one way of redemption for the adults and another for the children. Nor do children have to grow to a certain age before they can be admitted into the family of God. This privilege is open to them from their earliest moments and, the earlier they experience the wonderful transformation called the new birth, the better it is for them. They can then develop without the debilitating effect of sin destroying them physically, mentally, and spiritually. Only the true gospel can save. The papacy does not have that gospel. Its error must be rejected in favor of God's truth.

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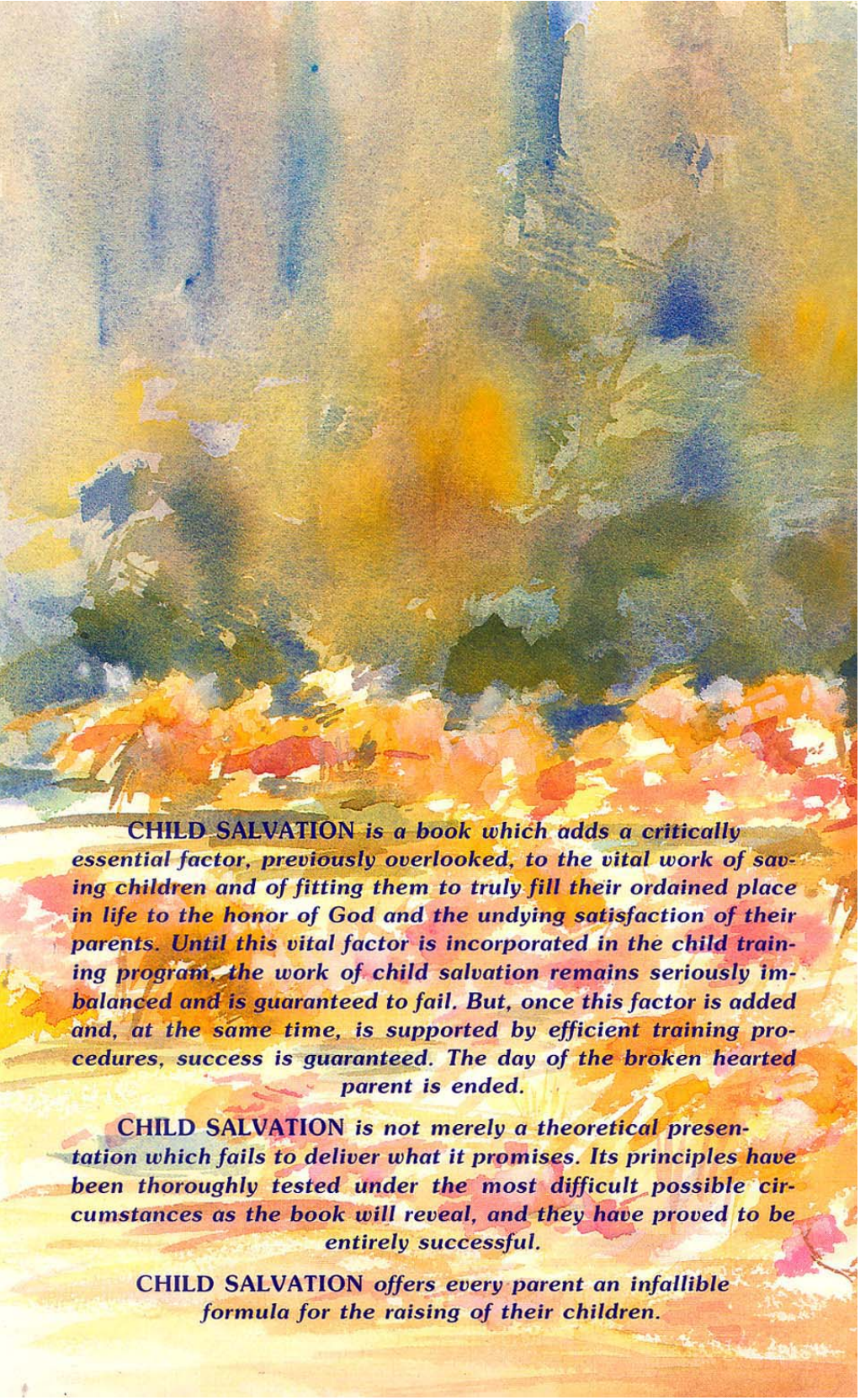
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