Sit Guests for the Wedding

See page 8
**Editorial**

**THE curse of Meroz is a warning to every Seventh-day Adventist leader, pastor and layman. Consider this warning: “Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” Judges 5:23.**

Meroz was a section of Israel, God's church, who decided to stay neutral until the battle was decided. They refused to come to the help of the Lord in a very strategic time. Because of their neutrality, God cursed them.

God speaks through His last-day prophet: “A bitter curse is pronounced on those who come not to the help of the Lord.” Testimonies, vol. 2, 166.

“What astonishing deception and fearful blindness had, like a dark cloud, covered Israel! This blindness and apostasy had not closed about them suddenly; it had come upon them gradually as they had not heeded the word of reproof and warning which the Lord had sent to them because of their pride and their sins. And now, in this fearful crisis, in the presence of the idolatrous priests and the apostate king, they remained neutral. If God abhors one sin above another, of which His people are guilty, it is doing nothing in case of an emergency. Indifference and neutrality in a religious crisis is regarded of God as a grievous crime and equal to the very worst type of hostility against God.” Ibid., vol. 3, 280–281.

The church members in Meroz were determined not to be on the losing side, but they committed a grievous crime against God, and they were cursed. God tells us, “There is more hope of an open enemy than of one who is neutral.” Review and Herald, vol. 4, 386.

Many today are staying neutral. They do not want to be involved. In the controversy over truth, they are not prepared to give an answer for the hope that is in them with meekness and fear. They have no experience in victory over their hereditary and cultivated weakness to sin. They have not a daily personal relationship with Jesus. Because they do not, they misinterpret the straight testimony to be criticism. They look at those who are crying out against the apostasy in the church as troublemakers. They may even consider themselves conservative, historic Seventh-day Adventists in their beliefs. But because they remain silent they are under the curse. To stand for truth, we must know the truth, and then by the power of the Holy Spirit live the truth. Thus we become witnesses for Jesus.

The prophet of the Lord tells us that the majority of Seventh-day Adventists will reject the straight testimony and join the ranks of the enemy. See Testimonies, vol. 5, 136, 477; vol. 8, 41; Selected Messages, book 1, 122; The Great Controversy, 608.

We are also told that the apostasy will continue to increase until Jesus comes: “Satanic agencies in human form will take part in this last great conflict to oppose the building up of the kingdom of God. And heavenly angels in human guise will be on the field of action. The two opposing parties will continue to exist till the closing up of the last great chapter in this world’s history. Satanic agencies are in every city. We cannot afford to be off our guard for one moment. The true, staunch believers will pray more and more, and will talk less of matters of little consequence. More and more decided testimonies will come from their lips to encourage the weak and the needy. This is no time for the people of God to be weaklings, neither one thing nor the other. Let all be diligent students of the Word. We must be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. We cannot live hap-hazard lives and be true Christians.” Review and Herald, vol. 5, 532.

As I travel the world preaching the everlasting gospel, the sanctuary message and the three angels’ messages, I have talked to many people who are either under censure or have been disfellowshipped for believing the historic doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which have been so clearly defined by our prophet and the pioneers. These people are considered divisive because they continuously stand for truth and oppose the error being preached from their pulpits. They are being brought before church business meetings and told that they must not attend meetings conducted by so-called independent ministries. Many times others, who believe themselves to be historic Seventh-day Adventists, will not speak out in their defense. They are then preparing themselves to receive the curse of Meroz. They are departing from the faith, and by their neutrality they are rising up against the straight testimony that God says must come to the Laodicean church in this final crisis hour.

Again, God speaks to us in 1993: “According to the light that God has given me in vision, wickedness and deception are increasing among God’s people who profess to keep His commandments. Spiritual discernment to see sin as it exists, and then to put it out of the camp, is decreasing among God’s people; and spiritual blindness is fast coming upon them. The straight testimony must be revived, and it will separate those from Israel who have ever been at war with the means that God has ordained to keep corruptions out of the church. Wrongs must be called wrongs. Grievous sins must be called by their right name. All of God’s people should come nearer to Him and wash their robes of character in the blood of the Lamb. Then will they see sin in the true light and will realize how offensive it is in the sight of God.” Testimonies, vol. 3, 324; see also Early Writings, 270.

Let us not remain silent when the truth is under attack, lest we appear to remain neutral and commit a grievous crime against God. May we not receive the curse of Meroz because we have refused to come up to the help of the Lord.

Ron Spear—EDITOR
It is the mission of Hope International and the editors of Our Firm Foundation to clearly present Christ and His truth. The days that yet remain of this world are few, and what we do we must do quickly. We must boldly proclaim the historic truths of Adventism that place us on so firm a foundation in the midst of this troubled world.—Edmonds

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Associate Editors—Bob Bresnahan, Clark Floyd, Kenneth Hodges, Preston Monterrey, Vernon Sparks, Harvey Steck
Production Manager—Harvey Steck
Editorial Secretary—Mary Floyd
Contributing Editors—Colin Standish, Russell Standish
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Hope International is a special ministry assisting in the God-given work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We believe this Remnant Church of Bible prophecy has been brought into existence by the calling of the Lord, and we look for its final triumph in purity at the second coming of Christ. That the church does not now perfectly reflect the will of our Lord is cause for sorrow, but not for discouragement. The Word of God stands pledged that all within her borders will be sifted and tried, and though the greater portion will fail the test, there will yet remain a remnant to honor the Lord by their obedience to all His commands. Therefore, Hope International urges upon all the duty of supporting the Seventh-day Adventist Church in every way possible, insofar as is consistent with the principles of the government of God and the leading of His Holy Spirit upon the heart.
Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” James 5:16. If these words of inspiration were obeyed, they would lead to such results as are set forth by the apostle Peter: “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.” 1 Peter 1:22.

All are fallible, all make mistakes and fall into sin; but if the wrongdoer is willing to see his errors, as they are made plain by the convicting Spirit of God, and in humility of heart will confess them to God and to the brethren, then he may be restored; then the wound that sin has made will be healed. If this course were pursued, there would be in the church much more childlike simplicity and brotherly love, heart beating in unison with heart.

The ministers of the Word, and others who fill responsible positions, as well as the body of the church, need this spirit of humility and contrition. The apostle Peter writes to those who labor in the gospel: “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God risetheth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” 1 Peter 5:2–7.

The prophet Daniel was drawing very near to God when he was seeking Him with confession and humiliation of soul. He did not try to excuse himself or his people, but acknowledged the full extent of their transgression. In their behalf he confessed sins of which he himself was not guilty, and besought the mercy of God, that he might bring his brethren to see their sins, and with him to humble their hearts before the Lord.

But I am now speaking of actual mistakes and errors that those who really love God and the truth sometimes commit. There is manifested on the part of men in responsible positions an unwillingness to confess where they have been in the wrong; and their neglect is working disaster, not only to themselves, but to the churches. Our people everywhere have great need of humbling the heart before God, and confessing their sins. But when it is known that their ministers, elders, or other responsible men, have taken wrong positions, and yet excuse themselves and make no confession, the members of the church too often follow the same course. Thus many souls are endangered, and the presence and power of God are shut away from His people.

The apostle Paul exhorts, “Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.”

Ellen G. White
Those who acknowledge reproof and correction as from God, and are thus enabled to see and correct their errors, are learning precious lessons, even from their mistakes. Their apparent defeat is turned into victory.

Who has turned the lame out of the way? My brethren, if you have thus placed a stumbling stone in the path of others, your first duty is to remove it, by doing justice to your brother. You have thought evil of him, you have said things untrue, because you have gathered up hearsay; you worked in blindness of mind, and now, if you would cure the wound, confess your mistake, and seek to be in complete harmony with your brother. This is the only way to correct your errors. Confess to your brother, and bind him close to your heart, so that you can labor together in love and unity. The rules are plainly laid down in God's Word. Whether you have been a minister, the president of a Conference, the superintendent of a Sabbath school, or a teacher in the Sabbath school, or have held important positions in any branch of the work, there is but one right course for you to pursue.

If you have misjudged your brother, if you have in the least degree weakened his influence, so that the message which God has given him to bear has been made of little or no effect, your sin does not rest merely with the individual, but you have resisted the Spirit of God; your attitude, your words, have been against your Saviour. Jesus says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matthew 25:40. He identifies His interest with that of every human soul, believer or unbeliever. That God who marks the fall of a sparrow, marks your deportment and your feelings; He marks your envy, your prejudice, your attempt to justify your action in the least matter of injustice. When you misconceive the words and acts of another, and your own feelings are stirred, so that you make incorrect statements, and it is known that you are at variance with your brother, you lead others, through their confidence in you, to regard him just as you do; and the root of bitterness springing up, many are defiled. When it is evident that your feelings are incorrect, do you try just as diligently to remove the erroneous impressions as you did to make them? In these matters the Spirit of Christ has been grieved. The Saviour accounts these things as done to Himself.

Now God requires that you who have thus done the least injustice to another shall confess your fault, not only to the one you have injured, but to those who through your influence have been led to regard their brother in a false light, and to make of none effect the work God has given him to do. If pride and stubbornness close your lips, your sin will stand against you on the heavenly record. By repentance and confession you can have pardon registered against your name; or you can resist the conviction of the Spirit of God, and, during the rest of your life, work to make it appear that your wrong feelings and unjust conclusions could not be helped. But there stands the action, there stands the evil committed, there stands the ruin of those in whose hearts you planted the root of bitterness; there are the feelings and words of envy, of evil-surmising, that grew into jealousy and prejudice. All these testify against you. The Lord declares, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." Revelation 2:4-5.

The question is not whether you see as your brother does on controverted points; but what spirit has characterized your actions? Have you an experience in close self-examination, in humbling the heart before God? Have you made it a practice of your life to confess your errors to God and to your brethren? All are liable to err; therefore the Word of God tells us plainly how to correct and heal these mistakes. None can say that he never makes a
mistake, that he never sinned at all; but it is important to consider what disposition you make of these wrongs. The apostle Paul made grievous mistakes, all the time thinking that he was doing God service; but when the Spirit of the Lord set the matter before him in its true light, he confessed his wrongdoing, and afterward acknowledged the great mercy of God in forgiving his transgression. You also may have done wrong, thinking you were perfectly right; but when time reveals your error, then it is your duty to humble the heart, and confess your sin. Fall on the Rock and be broken; then Jesus can give you a new heart, a new spirit.

The words of David are the prayer of the repentant soul: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. ... Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” Psalm 51:1–3, 9–17.

Whatever the character of your sin, confess it. If it is against God only, confess only to Him. If you have wronged or offended others, confess also to them, and the blessing of the Lord will rest upon you. In this way you die to self, and Christ is formed within. Thus you may establish yourself in the confidence of your brethren, and may be a help and blessing to them.

When, under the temptations of Satan, men fall into error, and their words and deportment are not Christlike, they may not realize their condition, because sin is deceptive, and tends to deaden the moral perceptions. But through self-examination, searching of the Scriptures, and humble prayer, they will, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, be enabled to see their mistake. If they then confess their sins and turn from them, the tempter will not appear to them as an angel of light, but as a deceiver, an accuser of those whom God desires to use to His glory. Those who acknowledge reproof and correction as from God, and are thus enabled to see and correct their errors, are learning precious lessons, even from their mistakes. Their apparent defeat is turned into victory. They stand trusting not to their own strength, but to the strength of God. They have earnestness, zeal, and affection, united with humility, and regulated by the precepts of God’s Word. Thus they bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. The Lord can teach them His will, and they shall know the doctrine, whether it be of God. They walk not stumblingly, knowledge of the truth, the greater is their responsibility. If they are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, they will have a humble estimation of themselves. In the worship of God, and in confession of sin, they will be as the lowliest of His creatures, while at the same time they will take the lead and set the example in everything that is pure and noble. They will be despised by many for their piety, humility, and conscientiousness. They will be a byword and a hissing to those who, while they profess godliness, are not connected with God. But they will be honored by Heaven, and by men whose hearts have not been hardened by rejection of light.

Brethren, I see your peril, and again I ask, Do you who err make any effort to correct the wrong? Souls may be stumbling along, walking in darkness, because you have not made straight paths for your feet. If you are in positions of trust, I appeal the more earnestly to you, for your own souls’ sake and for the sake of those who look to you as guides, repent before God for every mistake made, and confess your error.

If you indulge stubbornness of heart, and through pride and self-righteousness do not confess your faults, you will be left subject to Satan’s temptations. If when the Lord reveals your errors you do not repent or make confession, His providence will bring you over the ground again and again. You will be left to make mistakes of a similar character, you will continue to lack wisdom, and will call sin righteousness, and righteousness sin. The multitude of deceptions that will prevail in these last days will encircle you, and you will change leaders, and not know that you have done so.

I ask you who are handling sacred things, I ask the individual members of the church, Have you confessed your sins? If not, begin now; for your souls are in great peril. If you die with your mistakes concealed, unconfessed, you die in your sins. The mansions that Jesus has gone to prepare for all who love Him, will be peopled by those who are free from sin. But sins that are not confessed will never be forgiven; the name of him who thus rejects the grace of God will be blotted out of the book of life. The time is at hand when every secret thing shall be brought into judgment, and then there will be many confessions made that will astonish the world. The secrets of all hearts will be revealed. The confession of sin will be most public. The sad part of it is that
confession then made will be too late to benefit the wrongdoer or to save others from deception. It only testifies that his condemnation is just. He gained nothing by his pride and self-sufficiency and stubbornness, for his own life was embittered, he ruined his own character so that he was not a fit subject of heaven, and by his influence he led others to ruin.

To your friends you may now so represent your course of action as to make a pretty fair showing for yourselves. To one who does not know the objectionable features of your character, it may be an easy matter for you to present plausible excuses for your indecision, your unwillingness to confess your sins. But how will these excuses stand with Him who judgeth righteously? Will you present the same reasoning when you are brought before the tribunal of God, when the eye of the Lord is fixed upon you, and the angels of heaven are looking on? It is thus that every man's account must be yielded up. What, then, can any of you gain by being untrue to himself, giving to others a representation which you could not in any case lay before God?

The Lord reads every secret of the heart. He knows all things. You may now close the book of your remembrance, in order to escape confessing your sins; but when the judgment shall sit, and the books shall be opened, you cannot close them. The recording angel has testified that which is true. All that you have tried to conceal and forget is registered, and will be read to you when it is too late for wrongs to be righted. Then you will be overwhelmed with despair. Oh, it is a terrible thing that so many are trifling with eternal interests, closing the heart against any course of action which shall involve confession!

You who have erred and have made crooked paths for your feet, so that others who look to you for an example have been turned out of the way, have you no confession to make? You who have sowed doubts and unbelief in the hearts of others, have you nothing to say to God or to your brethren? Review your course for years in the past, you who have not formed a habit of confessing your sins. Consider your words, your attitude, you whose influence has counteracted the message of the Spirit of God, you that have despised both the message and the messenger. After seeing the fruit borne by the message, what have you to say? Weigh your spirit, your actions, in the balance of eternal justice, the law of God: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and . . . thy neighbor as thyself." Matthew 22:37, 39. Unless your sins are canceled, they will testify against you at that day when every work shall pass in review before God.

Confession would break up the fallow ground of the heart; it would rid you of your pride and self-complacency. While you neglect this work, wonder not that the Holy Spirit has not softened your heart and led you into all truth. God could not have blessed you without sanctioning sin and confirming you in unbelief. You have been deceiving yourselves and deceiving others, and the Holy Spirit will never by its work or witness make God a liar.

It is not now too late for wrongs to be righted. Christ invites you to come and take of the water of life freely. Let no man deceive you with the sophistry that excuses sin. Tell every man who makes light of the warnings and reproofs of the Spirit of God, that you dare not do this yourself any longer; that although the eyes of your understanding have been blinded, and you have been misled, and have come to wrong decisions, you will not be deceived.

God could not have blessed you without sanctioning sin and confirming you in unbelief. You have been deceiving yourselves and deceiving others, and the Holy Spirit will never by its work or witness make God a liar.

and blinded longer. Come out of the cave, and stand with God on the mount, and see what the Lord has to say to you. Have implicit faith in God, and do not depend upon self.

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. . . . I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Psalm 32:1–2, 5.

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Psalm 51:17. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Isaiah 57:15.

And to all who seek Him with true repentance, God gives the assurance: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." Isaiah 44:22. These promises are full of comfort and hope and peace.

Review and Herald, December 16, 1890.
Fit Guests for the Wedding

I SUPPOSE that most of us have read the insert in the November 5, 1992, issue of the North American Division Adventist Review, entitled The Seventh-day Adventist Church & Certain Private Organizations. On page 8 we have a most encouraging statement:

"[Any other group] may believe that they are right and the church is wrong. That is their privilege. In that case they should attempt to persuade the church to restudy the matter and possibly change direction."

With this fairly stated invitation to historic Adventism to present its case, I am taking the opportunity to make just such an attempt. That this article presents the true historic Adventist view of our subject is evident from the fact that the biblical evidence presented will be confirmed by Ellen White, who was herself a pioneer in our church, as well as God's last-day messenger to the remnant. I make no apology for the extensive use of her writings. My thesis, that one must indeed put on the garment of Christ's righteousness before His second coming, is based on Matthew 22:1-14:

"And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen." The importance of this parable can hardly be overestimated. Sister White comments:

"The parable of the wedding garment opens before us a lesson of the highest consequence. By the marriage is represented the union of humanity with divinity; the wedding garment represents the character which all must possess who shall be accounted fit guests for the wedding." Christ's Object Lessons, 307; all emphasis added unless otherwise noted. Why is the lesson of this parable so important that its acceptance or rejection is of the highest consequence? The reason is that those who accept its message will receive eternal life, while those who reject its message will be eternally lost. Let us examine briefly the context of the parable before we concentrate on the wedding garment.

The first invitation to the wedding was the gospel invitation given by Christ's disciples and rejected by the Jewish people. The second invitation was "borne to the Jewish nation after the crucifixion of Christ," (ibid., 308) but it was also rejected. Those who scorned the king's
invitation, and persecuted and killed his servants, were destroyed. The third invitation was given to the Gentiles. As many as they could find were bidden to the wedding, both good and bad.

Ellen White takes up the story:

"When the king came in to view the guests, the real character of all was revealed. For every guest at the feast there had been provided a wedding garment. This garment was a gift from the king. By wearing it the guests showed their respect for the giver of the feast. But one man was clothed in his common citizen dress. He had refused to make the preparation required by the king. The garment provided for him at great cost he disdained to wear. Thus he insulted his lord. To the king's demand, 'How camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?' he could answer nothing. He was self-condemned.

Then the king said, 'Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness.'" Ibid., 309.

This man lost his life because he arrogantly refused to accept the king's condition for attending the feast. In effect he said, "No one is going to tell me what I must wear to attend the king's feast!" Remember, "The wedding garment represents the character which all must possess who shall be accounted fit guests for the wedding."

At this point, it may be well to ask, Is it possible for anyone to be so deceived as to think that he can continue living in sin until Christ comes, and still be saved? Unfortunately and sadly, there are those who believe this way. Sometimes they are even pastors, with tragic influence on those who follow them. It is never safe to follow men, only Christ. Even the apostle Paul's bidding to follow him was predicated upon his being a follower of Christ. See 1 Corinthians 11:1. Consider Peter's statement in 1 Peter 3:21-22:

"Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."

Here Peter actually defines what it means to follow in Christ's steps, the Christ who did no sin, who had no deceit or guile in his mouth. Here is a personal experience:

After heart surgery and early retirement in 1986, since we were uncertain as to where we wanted to live, my wife and I stored our furniture and started traveling west in our motorhome. As it was now fall, our thought was to find a comfortable, warm place by the Pacific Ocean to spend the winter. As we traveled, however, we decided to make a small detour and visit a little church where I was once pastor. Being welcomed with open arms by the members, we decided to stay. The pastor came only for the Sabbath services once a month, since most of his time was spent with his larger church.

After two months we bought a mobile home and settled down to what we thought would be a quiet, peaceful and spiritually rewarding retirement, helping a small church in need. However, it was not to be.

A few months later, while I was teaching the adult Sabbath school class, the pastor suddenly interrupted the lesson with a totally unrelated subject. The ensuing discussion took over ninety percent of our lesson time, but because of space limitations in this article I can repeat only a few short statements. I will never forget them, for he reiterated them several times and even continued the discussion in the same vein at the potluck which followed the services.

Here are his statements:

1. What I profess is what counts; works mean nothing. 2. I can sleep with my neighbor's wife and still get into the kingdom of heaven. (I can keep on sinning and still be saved.) 3. It is impossible to obey God's commandments. 4. Jesus will give me a perfect character when He comes. And in a subsequent discussion, he said: 5. Victory over all sin in this life is impossible. I am sure that many faithful and godly ministers would abhor this line of reasoning.

Let us now examine these assertions. Are these concepts what our pioneers believed and taught? Ellen White has this comment:

"By the king's examination of the guests at the feast is represented a work of judgment. The guests at the gospel feast are those who profess to serve God, those whose names are written in the book of life. But not all who profess to be Christians are true disciples. Before the final reward is given, it must be decided who are fitted to share the inheritance of the righteous. This decision must be made prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven; for when He comes, His reward is with Him, 'to give every man according as his work shall be.' Revelation 22:12. Before His coming, then, the character of every man's work will have been determined, and to every one of Christ's followers the reward will have been apportioned according to his deeds." Ibid., 310. Did you notice the thrust of this paragraph? One can profess to be a Christian and still not be a true disciple. Obviously, profession alone is not enough.

Is it possible for anyone to be so deceived as to think that he can continue living in sin until Christ comes, and still be saved?

"It is not enough to make a profession of faith in Christ and have our names registered on the church roll. 'He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.' 'Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.' 1 John 3:24; 2:3. [Verse 4: 'He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.'] This is the genuine evidence of conversion. Whatever our profession, it amounts to nothing unless Christ is revealed in works of righteousness." Ibid., 312.

And so we see that profession alone is worthless. It must be accompanied by works of righteousness. What are the rewards that Jesus will bring with Him? Eternal life and eternal death. Romans 6:23 says: "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is the character that we possess that determines the reward we will receive when Jesus comes back to this earth to claim His own. Notice this statement:

"Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them for His own." Ibid., 691.

Christ's people are not ready for His coming until His character is perfectly

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Never should we lower the standard of righteousness in order to accommodate inherited or cultivated tendencies to wrongdoing. We need to understand that imperfection of character is sin.

home which Christ has made ready for those who obey His commandments.

“The days of our probation are fast closing. The end is near. To us the warning is given, ‘Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.’ Luke 21:34. Beware lest you find you unready. Take heed lest you be found at the King’s feast without a wedding garment.

‘In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.’ ‘Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments [meaning the wedding garment, the robe of Christ’s righteousness], lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.’ Matthew 24:44; Revelation 16:15.” Ibid., 319.

We should always remember that “We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,” Isaiah 64:6. Our own robe of righteousness is filthy. More than that, it is a rag! It is full of holes! It is no wonder that those without the wedding garment are described as walking naked, to their shame. Now let us take a closer look at the marriage supper of the Lamb as described in Revelation 19:7–9:

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, clean and white. It is not filthy, but pure. There are no holes in it; it is not a rag. What does the wedding dress represent? The righteousness of saints. It represents the righteousness of God’s people when they appear at the wedding. But where did it come from? It was granted to her. It was given to her. By whom? By the Bridegroom, the King, who is none other than King Jesus. [Remember, this parable is different from the one found in Matthew 22:1–14, and the symbols are interpreted differently.] It is Jesus, the true Witness of Revelation 3:18 who invites us to buy of Him “white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.”

Does this invitation to buy sound like a contradiction? We are told to buy the white raiment in Revelation 3, and then we are told that it will be given to us in Revelation 19. Does it cost us something? Yes, it does. Not money, but a surrendered heart. The problem is that we do not want to surrender. It goes against our natural desires. We like to do our own thing.

When our oldest daughter was about four years old, I asked her to do something. When I found out later that she had not done it, I asked her why she had not obeyed me. Her answer was: “I wanted to do what you asked me to do, but I wanted to do what I wanted to do, too.” She had an internal conflict. When it comes to obeying God, the unsurrendered heart is always in conflict. What is the solution? Would it not be wonderful if we could both obey God and at the same time have our own way? Believe it or not, there is a way:

“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.

Is that not wonderful? If we allow Jesus to come into our hearts, He will so guide our thoughts, aims and minds that our wills are blended with His. Then when we obey Him, we are simply doing what we want to do. But that is not all:

“The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.” Ibid. Is not this what God meant when He told Satan in the garden: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman”? Genesis 3:15. This hatred of sin is put in our hearts by God Himself. But, does God really expect us to gain perfection? Yes, indeed. Not only does He expect it, but He requires it of us.

“He [God] chooses His agents not because they are perfect but because, through a connection with Him, they may gain perfection. . . . God will accept only those who are determined to aim high. He places every human agent under obligation to do his best. Moral perfection is required of all. Never should we lower the standard of righteousness in order to accommodate inherited or cultivated tendencies to wrongdoing. We need to understand that imperfection of character is sin. All righteous attributes of character dwell in God as a perfect, harmonious whole, and every one who receives Christ as a personal Saviour is privileged to possess these attributes.” Christ’s Object Lessons, 330.

Yes, friends, we can indeed possess the righteous character of God. Many years ago, I met the son of one of our church members. He told me that he had given up the struggle to live a Christian life. It just was not worth it. Since that decision, he claimed that he had real peace and contentment. No more guilt trips about anything. He was one of two men I encountered in my experience who seemed to me to have reached a point of no return. He had no interest in religion
whatever. Has God ever told us that the Christian life will be easy? Jesus did say in Matthew 11:28-30:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Rest from what? Rest from the burden of sin. What a relief it is to be free from this burden! Never forget that the way of the transgressor is hard. However, while our yoke is easy and our burden light, we still have a battle to fight:

"But Christ has given us no assurance that to attain perfection of character is an easy matter. A noble, all-round character is not inherited. It does not come to us by accident. A noble character is earned by individual effort through the merits and grace of Christ. God gives the talents, the powers of the mind; we form the character. It is formed by hard, stern battles with self. Conflict after conflict must be waged against hereditary tendencies. We shall have to criticize ourselves closely, and allow not one unfavorable trait to remain uncorrected." Ibid., 331.

With whom is the battle? It is with self. It is not only with Satan, who is a defeated foe, but primarily with self. Now look closely at this very next paragraph:

"Let no one say, I cannot remedy my defects of character. If you come to this decision, you will certainly fail of obtaining everlasting life. The impossibility lies in your own will. If you will not, then you cannot overcome. The real difficulty arises from the corruption of an unsanctified heart, and an unwillingness to submit to the control of God." Ibid.

Friends, this battle with self is hard and stern, but it is well worth the effort. Whatever it takes, make your surrender to God. This quotation will encourage you as you struggle with self.

"A character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next." Ibid., 332.

But what about the pastor's claim that it is impossible to obey God's commandments? Did you know that it is Satan's claim also?

"Satan had claimed that it was impossible for man to obey God's commandments; and in our own strength it is true that we cannot obey them. But Christ came in the form of humanity, and by His perfect obedience He proved that humanity and divinity combined can obey every one of God's precepts." Ibid., 314.

Peter tells us, (2 Peter 1:4), that by accepting the "exceeding great and precious promises" found in God's Word, we can actually become partakers of the divine nature. Thus we will be enabled to "escape the corruption that is in the world through evil desires." But that is not all:

"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." John 1:12. This power is not in the human agent. It is the power of God. When a soul receives Christ he receives power to live the life of Christ." Ibid.

Did you know that God requires perfection of His children?

"God requires perfection of His children. His law is a transcript of His own character, and it is the standard of all character. This infinite standard is presented to all that there may be no mistake in regard to the kind of people whom God will have to compose His kingdom. The life of Christ on earth was a perfect expression of God's law, and when those who claim to be children of God become Christlike in character, they will be obedient to God's commandments. Then the Lord can trust them to be of the number who shall compose the family of heaven. Clothed in the glorious apparel of Christ's righteousness, they have a place at the King's feast. They have a right to join the blood-washed throng." Ibid., 315. It is not hard to understand why God requires a perfect character, Christ's character, in every one of His people. If it were not so, and even a few of the corrupt "professed people of God" were allowed to slip into heaven, the universe would again be corrupted. Sin is like a cancer; if it is not destroyed, it will destroy us.

There are those who exclaim: "But God loves everyone. He gave His only begotten Son to save the world." But they forget that salvation is only for those who believe. They leave out "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." If we really believe in something, we will act on that belief.

For example, suppose that I was driving in Oroville, listening to the news, when suddenly the newscaster stopped in the middle of a sentence with a news flash: "THE OROVILLE DAM HAS COLLAPSED! A wall of water fifty feet high is rushing toward Oroville and will be in the downtown area in thirty minutes or less. Get out of its path. Flee for your lives to higher ground. This is not a joke. The earthquake-damaged dam is gone." If I really believed this urgent warning, what do you think I would do? I would flee for my life. Immediately. Incidentally, this scenario is not impossible to the people living in Oroville, California, today. No, the love of God will never cause Him to excuse sin.

"The love of God does not lead Him to excuse sin. He did not excuse it in Satan; He did not excuse it in Adam or in Cain; nor will He excuse it in any other of the children of men. He will not connive at our sins or overlook our defects of charac-

If even a few of the corrupt "professed people of God" were allowed to slip into heaven, the universe would again be corrupted. Sin is like a cancer; if it is not destroyed, it will destroy us.

Christlike in character, they will be obedient to God's commandments. Then the Lord can trust them to be of the number who shall compose the family of heaven. Clothed in the glorious apparel of Christ's righteousness, they have a place at the King's feast. They have a right to join the blood-washed throng." Ibid., 316.

There is an unequivocal passage in 1 John 3:4-10 that tells the exact truth:

"Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. [KJV: 'Sin is the transgression of the law,' law-breaking.] But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

"Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. [KJV: 'Let no man deceive you.' It is in this precise area that many are attempting to deceive us.] He who does what is right is righteous, just as he [Christ] is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to
destroy the devil’s work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him, he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; neither is anyone who does not love his brother.”

NIV

While this passage may seem unequivocal to us, it is amazing how some theologians wrest it to their own destruction. More than thirty years ago, while I was still in college, we had a Greek teacher, whom we liked immensely, who tried to explain this passage to our class.

Verse six reads (in the KJV): “Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not.” But his explanation of verse six was: “As the Greek verb is in the tense of continuous action, it should read: ‘Whosoever abides in him does not sin continuously,’ implying that ‘he does sin on occasion, even though he is abiding in Christ.’” However, even though he knew ten times as much Greek as I did, I could not accept his explanation. Why not? Because the Greek also allows it to be rendered: “Whosoever abides in Christ continuously, does not sin.” Or as the NIV correctly reads: “No one who lives in him keeps on sinning.” Many other versions give a similar rendering. However, it is this false reading that promotes the Evangelical-Calvinistic theology, on which the pastor mentioned earlier was basing his false hope for salvation. In addition, of course, this interpretation is completely refuted by the Spirit of Prophecy as evidenced by the quotations in this article and by many more that could be cited.

Is there any scriptural evidence that will help us realize that victory over sin is not only possible but absolutely necessary? Let us look at Revelation 15:2: “And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.”

It is obvious that the victory over the beast, his image, mark and number, was obtained before the second coming of Christ. If you want to be among those who stand on the sea of glass, you must obtain victory in this life. How did they obtain victory over Satan and his evil hosts? Only through their faith in the power of Christ. 1 John 5:4 makes this fact very clear:

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” We should never forget the hymn we sing frequently: “Faith Is the Victory.” Faith is indeed the Victory, that overcomes the world! Tragically, the fact that “many professed Christians are Christians in name only,” was also rampant in the days of Ellen White.

“Many who call themselves Christians are mere human moralists. They have refused the gift which alone could enable them to honor Christ by representing Him to the world. The work of the Holy Spirit is to them a strange work. They are not doers of the Word. The heavenly principles that distinguish those who are one with Christ from those who are one with the world have become almost indistinguishable. The professed followers of Christ are no longer a separate and peculiar people. The line of demarcation is indistinct. The people are subordinating themselves to the world, to its practices, its customs, its selfishness. The church has gone over to the world in transgression of the law, when the world should have come over to the church in obedience to the law. Daily the church is being converted to the world.

“All these expect to be saved by Christ’s death, while they refuse to live His self-sacrificing life. They extol the riches of free grace, and attempt to cover themselves with an appearance of righteousness, hoping to screen their defects of character; but their efforts will be of no avail in the day of God. The righteousness of Christ will not cover one cherished sin.” Ibid., 315–316.

There is no evidence that the situation has improved since this statement was first published in 1900. In fact, we are warned by the apostle Paul: “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.” 2 Timothy 3:12–13.

What more could God have done to persuade us to get ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb? The Lord has revealed to us ever-increasing light. We have not only the light given to ancient Israel but the light given to us from the New Testament in the life and work of Christ. We have the assurance of a Saviour who has come, who has been crucified and who has risen; a Saviour who proclaimed, “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25); a Saviour who promised to come again and gave us the signs of His coming. Christ has been

The wedding garment, provided at infinite cost, is freely offered to every soul. . . . What could God do for us that He has not done in providing the great supper, the heavenly banquet?

revealed to us in sermons and in songs. As Ellen White clearly states:

“The wedding garment, provided at infinite cost, is freely offered to every soul. By the messengers of God are presented to us the righteousness of Christ, justification by faith, the exceeding great and precious promises of God’s Word, free access to the Father by Christ, the comfort of the Spirit, the well-grounded assurance of eternal life in the kingdom of God. What could God do for us that He has not done in providing the great supper, the heavenly banquet?” Ibid., 317.

The following is the final report of the ministering angels as human probation is brought to a close:

“In heaven it is said by the ministering angels: The ministry which we have been commissioned to perform we have done. We pressed back the army of evil angels. We sent brightness and light into the souls of men, quickening their memory of the love of God expressed in Jesus. We attracted their eyes to the cross of Christ. Their hearts were deeply moved by a sense of the sin that crucified the Son of God. They were convicted. They saw the steps to be taken in conversion; they felt the power of the gospel; their hearts were made tender as they saw the sweetness of the love of God. They beheld the beauty of the character of Christ. But with many it was all in vain. They would not surrender their own habits and character.
off the garments of earth in order to be clothed with the robe of heaven. Their hearts were given to covetousness. They loved the associations of the world more than they loved their God.” Ibid., 318.

What a tragedy! After all this work for humanity by the infinite God and His angels, the great majority will reject the wonderful plan of salvation. Mankind would rather cling to their idols than “surrender their own [evil] habits and character.” Sister White then refers us to the final judgment:

“Solemn will be the day of final decision. In prophetic vision the apostle John describes it: ‘I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.’ Revelation 20:11–12.” Ibid.

Were they judged according to their profession? No! According to their works! As men stand before the great white throne, they will suddenly come face to face with the results of their choice. They will see for the first time how transgression of the law of God has led them step by step to perdition. The pleasures, riches, and honors of this world will seem unimportant. Men will then see that righteousness of Christ that they have despised, alone has true value. No wonder there will be weeping and wailing as they comprehend for the first time the result of their choices made while on earth! Finally, consider the following:

“They will see that they have fashioned their characters under the deceptive allurements of Satan. The garments they have chosen are the badge of their allegiance to the first great apostate. Then they will see the results of their choice. They will have a knowledge of what it means to transgress the commandments of God.” Ibid., 318–319.  

The use of the NIV in this article is not intended to be a recommendation. The editors acknowledge that the NIV is not a preferred translation for doctrinal study. However it can be seen in this case that even the NIV (one of the popular versions of today among Calvinist theologians) disproves the Calvinistic understanding of righteousness by faith.

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**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

Just a note to thank you for the June copy of *Our Firm Foundation*. This one has been so timely and wise in the coverage of such a critical event in this end time in which we are living. I have been a loyal member of the Seventh-day Adventist Family since my minister father baptized me 72 years ago. The church is very close to my heart and what hurts the church hurts me, too. Yes, the church is close to my heart, but so close that I am blind to its needs and weaknesses in this end time.

I understand more clearly now the Waco tragedy. How easy it is to trace human feelings that lead to such things back to Lucifer and his pride and ambitions!

—SD, California

I have really appreciated *Our Firm Foundation* on cassette. Keep them coming. Be of good courage and hold the standard high.

—LL, Nevada

Thank you for the *Issues Clarified....* In spite of the sorrow and sadness at the misunderstandings, we feel relieved that some people are really listening to that Voice that speaks from heaven.

—DS, Iowa

I am writing to thank you so much for your ministry and especially *Our Firm Foundation*. I have read the book which the North American Division wrote on certain private groups in which Hope International and Ron Spear were much talked about. I can only pray to our heavenly Father for the misrepresentation and the absence of Bible evidence that Hope is guilty of any false teaching.

I want you to know that the work you are doing is led by the Holy Spirit. Your work in *Our Firm Foundation* has led my family to our Lord Jesus and the present work and purpose of His redeemed.

—KH, DC

Every night I pray especially for you and all who write for *Our Firm Foundation*. How I thank God for each one of you faithful ones bent on finishing God’s work! I became a Seventh-day Adventist when about 23 years of age. Didn’t know a thing about an Adventist believer. It was an “all alone with God” experience—and now it is nearly that way again.

Keep faithful; the pressure is just beginning. But we will soon be home.

Our pastor throws *Our Firm Foundation* in the trash can and a member takes it out and is blessed by it. He became angry at me when I told him it is a very straight Adventist publication. The sister who gets it via the trash is struggling financially, and she used to borrow mine. I became an Adventist through a *Signs* (via the trash also) that an aunt wouldn’t read. God works in mysterious ways to reach the honest in heart.

—KH, Georgia

**Overseas Literature**

I received with great delight your parcel containing two publications (*Christ’s Objects Lessons* and *Patriarchs and Prophets*) and would like to thank you very much for these golden treasures. They arrived at the time I had just completed reading *The Great Controversy.*

I know I am not alone in appreciating the great work your organization is doing for the church worldwide and would like to encourage you to continue this ministry, especially for those of us who have just come to the faith and who are from poor backgrounds. Your interest in and service to us is a strong witness in itself that you are true servants of God, working earnestly to finish the work.

I pray that the Lord will lay upon your heart another opportunity to send me more of your literature.

—JD, Sierra Leone

We extend our thanks for the many donations that have enabled us to respond to requests such as this one.—EDITORS
WHILE I was researching the Waco tragedy, I became aware of the political maneuvers to use this incident as a vehicle to bring tougher legislation on gun control. See US News and World Report, May 3, 1993, 40. (Incidentally, we believe that all Christians must abide within the perimeters of all civil laws not infringing upon the law of God.) In like manner, some Seventh-day Adventist Church officials exploited this event by attempting to link Hope International with the Branch Davidians, seemingly for the purpose of creating an atmosphere of fear, disaffection and lack of friendship toward independent and supportive ministries, particularly Our Firm Foundation.

This unfortunate action brought grief to hearts of the staff of Hope International and also fear, not for ourselves, because we well know that “we can do nothing against the truth but for the truth.” 2 Corinthians 13:8.

Our fear was for the persons who blindly persist in a systematic campaign of misrepresentation against this ministry of our Lord. Our only intent is to vindicate God’s character, not by executing God’s enemies as David Koresh intended to do, but by sharing God’s message of salvation with the church and with the world. Our mission is to help prepare a people to meet their God. We pray that somehow the Lord may touch the hearts of those who misrepresent us, that they may be able to hear that still small voice saying: “It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.” Acts 9:5.

Realizing the magnitude and seriousness of this accusation, and understanding well from the Spirit of Prophecy that “we would not be doing justice to the accusers, or to those who are misled by their accusations should we keep silent, leaving the people to think that their brethren and sisters, in whom they have had confidence, are no longer worthy of their love and fellowship” (Manuscript Releases, vol. 7, 332) I believe that we need to address the basis and the nature of this accusation of a link between Our Firm Foundation and the recent Waco activities of the Branch Davidians.

I will do so by sharing some statements taken from different sources describing the beliefs and the practices of David Koresh and the Branch Davidians. These remarks will be followed with excerpts from a variety of past issues of Our Firm Foundation.
their enemy. . . . Those who have dishonored their minds and affections by placing them where God’s Word forbids, will not scruple to dishonor God by various species of idolatry. God will leave them to their vile affections. It is necessary to guard the thoughts; to fence the soul about with the injunctions of God’s Word; and to be very careful in every thought, word, and action not to be betrayed into sin. It is necessary to guard against the cultivation of the indulgence of the lower passions. This is not the fruit of sanctified thoughts or hearts.” Ellen White, Review and Herald, May 17, 1887; Our Firm Foundation, December 1986, 20; all emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.

Violation of Civil Law

“The Branch Davidian siege brings the issue of assault weapons back to the fore. Federal agents charge that cult leader David Koresh and his flock had amassed nearly $200,000 worth of weapons, including more than 100 illegally assembled machine guns and possibly antitank guns. It may never be established exactly how much of the arsenal was obtained legally, but police organizations and gun-control leaders on Capitol Hill called last week for new measures to stem the flow of firearms they contend are designed only for crime, not hunting or self-defense.” US News and World Report, May 3, 1993, 40.

Our Firm Foundation: “The things of the state have to do with man’s civil relations with his fellow men. This civil authority belongs to the state, having been given to it by God. The church, the espoused of Christ, has no right to require of men any civic duty. The civil duty which we owe to the government is spelled out in the New Testament to include taxes, customs, honor, and respect (Romans 13:7), the duty not to murder, steal, engage in clandestine, secretive or underhand business, or to relate to a neighbor in an evil way.” Our Firm Foundation, November 1989, 21-22.

Mind Control

Max Torkelsen, former pastor of fourteen of those involved in recent cult events in Waco, and now communication director of the Upper Columbia Conference in Spokane, Washington, made the following remark about David Koresh’s techniques to control the mind of his followers and sympathizers: “He used the midnight hours; he used sleep deprivation; he used psychological warfare to control the minds of these new Adventists. Besides, I believe he was possessed; there is no other way to explain the control he had over these people.” North Pacific Union Conference Gleaner, May 17, 1993, 4.

So persuasive were the mind-controlling abilities of David Koresh that Bonner Allen made the following observation: “I never had seen anything like this before in my life.” “These were formerly independent-minded young people who just weeks before would depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. But God will keep that which is committed to Him. Let us draw near to Him, that He may draw near to us. Let us bear a plain, clear testimony right to the point, that hypnotism is being used by those who have departed from the faith, and that we are not to link up with them. Through those who depart from the faith, the power of the enemy will be exercised to lead others astray.” Ellen White, Selected Messages, book 3, 411; ibid., 24.

Both denominational leaders and supportive ministry leaders must always be on guard to avoid the creation of an environment where the people blindly follow their leaders, and become dependent upon their dictates.

Reliance and Dependence on Man

Rick Ross, “an expert who advised the FBI during the confrontation in Waco” made the following remark: “The Branch Davidians, he says, were ‘totally dependent’ on Koresh, who, like Jim Jones in Guyana, systematically brainwashed his followers and cut them off psychologically from the outside world.” Newsweek, May 3, 1993, 31.
Our Firm Foundation: “Dependence upon men, who make manifest that they are not in vital connection with God, but are moved by their own feelings, will end in placing us under another leader than Jesus Christ.” The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, 1370; Our Firm Foundation, August 1988, 30.

gave the warning of “historic Adventism” becoming “synonymous with playing ‘follow the leader’ with a hero of choice.” Ibid., April 19, 1993, 8.

Truly, Brother Johnston was expressing the sentiments of our prophet when she said: “The great sin which has been entering the ranks of Seventh-day Adventists is the sin of exalting man, and placing him where God should be. This was demonstrated at Minneapolis.” Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, 1619. “Men in responsible positions have manifested the very attributes that Satan has revealed. They have sought to rule minds, to bring their reason and their talents under human jurisdiction…. Principles have been born that should never have seen the light of day.” Ibid., 1525-1526. “The spirit of domination is extending to the presidents of our Conferences. If a man is sanguine of his own powers and seeks to exercise dominion over his brethren, feeling that he is invested with authority to make his will the ruling power, the best and only safe course is to remove him, lest great harm be done, and he lose his own soul, and imperil the souls of others. ‘All ye are brethren.’ Matthew 23:8.” Ibid., 1445.

Intellectual Integrity

My heart echoes the valid concern of church leaders to evaluate any information given to the general public, either by denominational leaders or church-supportive ministries, and that all data be verified and presented in its true light and its proper perspective. With them I can say: “Is there a ‘right’ and a ‘wrong’ way to use information and material disseminated to the public? The obvious answer is Yes. Honesty and integrity are requirements in the publication of materials. What are the ‘rules of the road’ when it comes to the use of source materials?…. A longtime writer for the New Yorker magazine, John Hersey, explains: ‘The writer must not invent. The legend of the license must read: None of this was made up. The ethics of journalism, if we can be allowed such a boon, must be based on the simple truth that every journalist knows the difference between the distortion that comes from subtracting observed data and the distortion that comes from adding invented data.” Issues: The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Certain Private Ministries, 24.

Our hearts were grieved when we read the editorial of the Messenger (news journal for the Seventh-day Adventists in the British Isles) written by David Marshall, in which he attempted to link the Branch Davidians with Our Firm Foundation magazine.

These are his words: “The Shepherd’s Rod/Branch Davidians has been the smallest of a number of offshoot groups. Smaller by far, for example, than the Firm Foundation. In the London area the Union president has uncovered a significant overlap between the Davidians and Firm Foundation. The FF has certainly made a major contribution to creating the climate of alienation which made Britain a recruiting ground for Koresh.” Messenger, April 2, 1993, 3.

It is unfortunate that Brother Marshall did not give to his readers the “evidence” that shows his “significant overlap.” The meaning of his accusation is unclear. The pen of Inspiration states unequivocally: “On every point the accusers should be called upon to bring their proof. Every charge should be carefully investigated; it should not be left in any uncertain way, the people should not be left to think it may be or it may not be.” Manuscript Releases, vol. 7, 332.

Without doubt, his statements are directed to establish in the minds of his readers a connection between the Branch Davidians and Our Firm Foundation magazine.

The Messenger’s editorial is a flagrant violation of the principles of ethical journalism, well advocated by the North American Division in their book Issues. Rather than “creating the climate of alienation,” readers of Our Firm Foundation would have been influenced not only to abhor the failacies, and the aberrant views and practices of Koresh, but they also would have been encouraged to turn their direction toward God, holiness, chastity, temperance, civility, freedom of thinking and support of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as the remnant church of Bible prophecy.

“We find no support whatever for the present agitation by some [like Davidians and others] that we leave the church. If that is what they wish to do, we perhaps cannot
Let us instead build ramparts of truth and intellectual integrity to hold back the waves of error and the false ways of dealing that threaten to penetrate our midst.
Fornication, adultery, incest, homosexuality, theft, murder. How is it possible that those claiming to be part of the community of saints who are preparing for the coming of the Lord could take part in any of these terrible iniquities? But it is only to be expected that when truth is put aside, there will be sin. If “there is no sanctification aside from truth,” (Fundamentals of Christian Education, 432) then once the perimeters of truth have been compromised, the natural consequence is increasing sin and unrighteousness.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we should have learned this lesson from the world. Up until the nineteenth century, in all Christian countries, the law of God was held to be the basis of society. Its precepts were held to be immutable and eternal. Then society slowly drifted to the concepts of the philosophers, who rejected God as the great Ruler of the universe, and social mores began to replace His law as the basis for societal practice.

Even at this point, there was not a sudden breakdown of morals within society, because it was clear to most that the principles of the law of God were the basis of all ordered society. But then, other philosophers, perhaps beginning with the Danish theologian and philosopher, Kierkegaard, introduced the concepts of existentialism, which placed the values of man within the individual himself. Thus as it were, human morality became like flotsam on the ocean, to drift hither and thither according to the whims and motives of each person.

This trend has led in the twentieth century to the concepts of situational ethics in which theologians such as Dr. Joseph Fletcher, formerly of the University of Virginia, claimed there are no absolutes. Just as there are white lies, there are white murders and white adultery, and so on. His claim was that each person must make the decision on how to relate to every situation according to the circumstances that pertain at any given time. Thus, for example, he claimed that the best good might be served by murder rather than sparing a life, or by adultery rather than virtue, or by lying rather than telling the truth. It was claimed that the best good is served as the person related to the changing panorama of circumstances. It does not take deep insight to recognize the fallacy of such concepts. First, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” Jeremiah 17:9. The unconverted heart is naturally selfish. What is seen as the best good will be that which serves our own carnal desires. Such desires cannot be trusted. Inevitably, the concepts of situational ethics lead to deeper and deeper sin and wickedness. Second, often decisions have to be made quickly, when there is no time to carefully evaluate the consequences of a situation.

Surely it is this philosophic basis that has led to an unprecedented time of immorality and cruelty in the world. Unfortunately, the whole concept of situational ethics has been wrapped in the pseudo-love philosophy of this age, but is it not a selfish love? It is not the love that gives. It does not represent the love of God who “gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. It is not a love that “seeketh not her own.” 1 Corinthians 13:5. It is lustful indulgence that leads to perversions of every kind. Thus, now that the Word of truth no longer is the basis of morality for many Seventh-day Adventists, all sorts of abominations can be found within the membership of the church. Indeed, sometimes they are found in the ministry of the church. I personally have known of a few pastors, or former pastors, who have been engaged in theft, murder, adultery, fornication, incest, drunkenness and homosexuality. This fact is heartbreaking to many godly and faithful ministers.

While it is difficult to understand how those claiming to be the representatives of Jesus Christ on earth could ever fall into such depths of degradation, nevertheless, these are the inevitable results of turning aside from the great immutable truth of God. Once truth has been put aside as the foundation of a whole life of the church membership,
then there is a reluctance to exercise proper discipline upon those who fall into many of these great sins.

How can we be surprised at the impotency of the church when such is the case? “If the presence of one Achan was sufficient to weaken the whole camp of Israel, can we be surprised at the little success which attends our efforts when every church and almost every family has its Achan?” Testimonies, vol. 5, 157.

Once truth is lost as the paradigm by which all our lives are evaluated, then there is a need to search for other bases for unity in the church. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, following the pattern of the fellow churches of Christendom, now looks for unity built upon “support of the church,” which quickly deteriorates to “support for leadership” irrespective of leadership’s loyalty or disloyalty to the Word of God. In such circumstances the righteous are perceived as unrighteous, and the wicked are frequently defended. It becomes the loving thing to forgive those who are “living in sin.” Those who love the truth and the righteousness of Christ become oppressed by those who do not themselves follow in the pathway of righteousness.

Unfortunately, ministers frequently support these tragic situations. “Ministers of the gospel sometimes do great harm by allowing their forbearance toward the erring to degenerate into toleration of sins and even participation in them. Thus they are led to excuse and palliate that which God condemns, and after a time they become so blinded as to commend the very ones whom God commands them to reprove. He who has blinded his spiritual perceptions by sinful leniency toward those whom God condemns, will ere long commit a greater sin by severity and harshness towards those whom God approves.” The Acts of the Apostles, 504.

While most unconverted Seventh-day Adventists do not engage in the grossest of these sins, nevertheless, their lives witness to the fact that they do not know Him whom to know is life eternal. See John 17:3.

What are the consequences of this devastating situation? First, God cannot entrust His people with the latter rain so that the loud cry may be given, and the warning message taken to every human being on the face of the planet. “Thou hast polluted the land with thy whore-dom and with thy wickedness. Therefore the showers have been withheld, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore’s forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed.” Jeremiah 3:2–3. This consequence has resulted from the devastating move away from truth; for there is no way in which Christian character can be perfected outside the perimeters of truth. In His prayer for unity, Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” John 17:17. Paul also linked truth with sanctification. “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we

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henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” Ephesians 4:13–15. Peter was one who understood this. “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” 1 Peter 1:22–23.

Thus until God’s people re-establish the platform of truth, sin and transgression will increase within the church. Every minister and every lay leader has a God-given responsibility to proclaim the great message of Christ’s righteousness. The law of God and the faith of Jesus “must be given with equal force and power.” Selected Messages, book 3, 184. There must be a faithful understanding of the gospel. We must understand that entire surrender of the will alone is true justification.

“But while God can be just, and yet justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ’s righteousness while practicing known sins or neglect-works are the result of a sanctified life. But sanctification, like justification, is the result of faith in Jesus through the sacrifice and ministry of the Son of God.

Eternity is at stake. “Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement. Then the latter rain will fall upon us as the early rain fell upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost.” Testimonies, vol. 5, 214.

“Now is the time to prepare. The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the ambitious, world-loving man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of men or women of false tongues or deceitful hearts. All who receive the seal must be without spot before God—candidates for heaven.” Ibid., 216. □
PRIOR to the first coming of Jesus Christ to this earth God was demonstrating that man's finite wisdom alone could not come to a pure knowledge of truth and of God, the source of truth. In our day He is allowing error to be exalted in order that truth can be more clearly revealed.

"The Lord would make it manifest whether men by their own finite wisdom could acquire a knowledge of the truth, whether they could know God, their Creator. When Christ came to our world, the experiment had been fully made, and it proved the boasted wisdom of men to be but foolishness. Finite wisdom was utterly unable to come to right conclusions in regard to God, and therefore man was wholly incompetent to judge in regard to His law. The Lord has allowed matters in our day to come to a crisis, in the exaltation of error above truth, that He, the God of Israel, might work mightily for the greater elevation of His truth in proportion as error is exalted." Selected Messages, book 2, 371-372.

The Dark Ages demonstrated that Satan's heresies could prosper during a time of intellectual darkness. Our day will yet demonstrate that Satan's perfected heresies and deceptions can prosper in time of great intellectual and even greater spiritual light. See The Great Controversy, 572-573.

God's end-time people will be characterized by their keeping of His commandments and by their following the guidance of the Spirit of Prophecy. See Revelation 12:17 and 19:10. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been uniquely and abundantly qualified to fulfill God's purpose of exalting truth in proportion to the exaltation of error. Our doctrinal beliefs are founded on the truths of all prior generations. Our understanding of biblical truth has been unexcelled by humanity other than by Christ Himself. Through the copious writings of God's messenger, Ellen G. White, we are uniquely blessed with a lesser light to more fully understand God's will for His people. Through the Spirit of Prophecy we have a wealth of instructions as to how God's final generation is to live and work for Him and how His truth is to be demonstrated and exalted in our lives and in our operation of His work on earth.

The Seventh-day Adventist movement came about because of a failure of the Protestant churches to accept the present truth of the first and the second angel's messages presented by the Millerite movement from 1840 to 1844. The Christian churches of that era had given up the belief that they were to be guided by "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Matthew 4:4. They listened to the higher critics who stated that the Bible was to be interpreted and applied by the wisdom of man. This pick-and-choose method of scriptural interpretation led them to the belief that they could reject the present truth brought forth from Scripture by the Millerite preachers.

Early Adventists, to the contrary, accepted the Bible's claim that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." 2 Timothy 3:16.

Studying early and late our pioneers, with the assistance of the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy when needed, laid out the foundations of our faith—a line of truth
that is to remain until the saints enter the New Jerusalem.

"Many of our people do not realize how firmly the foundation of our faith has been laid. My husband, Elder Joseph Bates, Father Pierce, Elder [Hiram] Edison, and others who were keen, noble, and true, were among those who, after the passing of the time in 1844, searched for the truth as for hidden treasure. I met with them, and we studied and prayed earnestly. Often we remained together until late at night, and sometimes through the entire night, praying for light and studying the Word. Again and again these brethren came together to study the Bible, in order that they might know its meaning, and be prepared to teach it with power. When they came to the point in their study where they said, 'We can do nothing more,' the Spirit of the Lord would come upon me, I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me, with instruction as to how we were to labor and teach effectively. Thus light was given that helped us to understand the Scriptures in regard to Christ, His mission, and His priesthood. A line of truth extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God, was made plain to me, and I gave to others the instruction that the Lord had given me." Selected Messages, book 1, 206-207.

In 1905 the servant of the Lord used three terms to describe the biblical doctrines of the church—pins, pillars and foundation. All of these doctrines were to remain unchanged and unmoved.

"When men come in who would move one pin or pillar from the foundation which God has established by His Holy Spirit, let the aged men who were pioneers in our work speak plainly, and let those who are dead speak also, by the reprinting of their articles in our periodicals. Gather up the rays of divine light that God has given as He has led His people on step by step in the way of truth. This truth will stand the test of time and trial," Manuscript Releases, vol. 1, 55.

"When the power of God testifies as to what is truth, that truth is to stand forever as the truth. No after suppositions, contrary to the light God has given are to be entertained." Counsel to Writers and Editors, 31-32.

From the very beginning of our movement we have never fully appreciated, accepted or obeyed all of the counsels of the Lord. Indeed our natural hearts have not felt the need for all of the detailed instructions as to how to live for Christ and how to operate the branches of His work. Soon after the turn of the century our negligence of where to locate and how to operate the Lord's educational institutions had reached such a degree of self-willed insubordination that Ellen White helped lead out in the establishing of Madison College and directed it to remain separate from organizational control. See "Supportive Ministries," Our Firm Foundation, February 1993.

God had prophesied that His remnant church would be lukewarm in its relationship to His counsels and plans. See Revelation 3:14-17. Since the days when Madison College was established we have operated the majority of our academies, colleges and universities in increasing disobedience to the directives of Christ. Especially in the areas of location, size, curriculum, work/study programs and social and religious standards we have followed more the directives of the boards of accreditation of the world and the example of worldly schools than we have followed Christ's instructions in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. Satan has been very successful in making the testimonies of the Lord of none effect, which is the very last deception that he has planned for us as a people. See Selected Messages, book 1, 48.

The same method of higher criticism used by the fallen churches of Christianity to make the Bible of none effect in their beliefs and practices has been used by us now these many years to pick and choose in the Spirit of Prophecy as to which counsels of the Lord we are or are not going to obey. "My brethren have trifled and caviled and criticized and commented and demerited, and picked and chosen a little and refused much until the testimonies mean nothing to them. They put whatever interpretation upon them that they choose in their own finite judgment and are satisfied." The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, 800. This Seventh-day Adventist picking and choosing in the Spirit of Prophecy is just as surely insubordination and apostasy as is the fallen Protestant picking and choosing in the Scriptures. We need only to review the experiences of Cain and of King Saul to document that willful, partial obedience to the Lord is in reality disobedience, rebellion and apostasy.

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"It pains me to say, my brethren, that your sinful neglect to walk in the light has ensnared you in darkness. You may now be honest in not recognizing and obeying the light; the doubts you have entertained, your neglect to heed the requirements of God, have blinded your perceptions so that darkness is now to you light, and light is darkness. God has bid you to go forward to perfection. Christianity is a religion of progress." Testimonies vol. 5, 71.

As the above reference points out, we may be sincere in our disobedience to the Lord, but Laodicea's sincere disobedience to the Spirit of Prophecy is no more acceptable in God's eyes than is fallen Christianity's sincere disobedience of the Bible. The reality of this fact should be brought home to us by the following sober message: "Will the churches heed the Laodicean message? Will they repent, or will they, notwithstanding that the most solemn message of truth—the third angel's message—is being proclaimed to the world, go on in sin? This is the last message of mercy, the last warning to a fallen world. If the church of God becomes lukewarm, it does not stand in favor with God any more than do the churches that are represented as having fallen and become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird. Those who have had opportunities to hear and receive the truth and who have united..."
with the Seventh-day Adventist church, calling themselves the commandment-keeping people of God, and yet possess no more vitality and consecration to God than do the nominal churches, will receive of the plagues of God just as verily as the churches who oppose the law of God. Only those that are sanctified through the truth will compose the royal family in the heavenly mansions Christ has gone to pre-

the exception rather than the rule. It is not surprising that these worldly-trained teachers of religion would try to harmonize our Seventh-day Adventist beliefs with the beliefs of their advanced-degree institutions. This effort to accommodate our historic beliefs with those of fallen Christianity has given us a new set of beliefs which have become known as the New Theology.

Many believe that we are well along in the Omega of apostasy which we were warned would be of a most startling nature. "Be not deceived; many will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. We have now before us the alpha of this danger. The omega will be of a most startling nature." Selected Messages, book 1, 197.

Teachers that say that we cannot be victorious over sin in this life and to attempt to do so is of itself a sin have been embraced with open arms by Laodicean leaders and laity who have not wanted or found it convenient to obey the instructions of Christ in the Bible and in the Spirit of Prophecy as to how to live and work for Him. The unscriptural heresies of fallen Christianity, which our pioneers and many present Seventh-day Adventist members have come out of, have been reintroduced into the very heart of our work by unfaithful sentinels.

"Satan has gained marked advantage in —— because the people of God have not guarded the outposts. The very men whose labors God has signified that He would accept if they were fully consecrated have been the ones to be deceived, to fail in their duties, and to prove a terrible burden and discouragement, instead of the help and blessing that they should have been. These men who have been trusted to keep the fort have well-nigh betrayed it into the hands of the enemy. They have opened the gates to a wily foe, who has sought to destroy them.

"Men of experience have seen stealthy hands slipping the bolts that Satan might enter; yet they have held their peace with apparent indifference as to the results.

Among the doctrines imported from fallen Christianity are such teachings as
1. Each of us is accountable for Adam's sin, rather than that each is responsible only for his own sin.
2. Christ did not receive from His mother Mary the same moral inheritance that you and I would have received if she had been our mother.
3. The atonement was completed on the cross, rather than being completed in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary.
4. The Spirit of Prophecy is good for devotional reading, but it is not authoritative in doctrinal interpretation of the Bible.
5. Righteousness by faith is justification or pardon for ongoing sin or disobedience, rather than justification or pardon plus sanctification or victory over sin.


God has permitted these heresies to be increasingly taught in our schools, printed in our publications and preached from our pulpits now for at least forty years. Indeed, we are reaping a harvest of unbelief in the Spirit of Prophecy and in the Bible-based historic beliefs of Adventism.

"The theories of great men need to be carefully sifted of the slightest trace of infidel suggestions. One tiny seed sown by teachers in our schools, if received by the students, will raise a harvest of unbelief." Review and Herald, March 1, 1898.

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have confederated to oppose the Lord God of heaven, and the church is only half awake to the situation. There needs to be much more of prayer, much more of earnest effort, among professed believers." Selected Messages, book 2, 383.

This doctrinal apostasy of the New Theology has destroyed our unity of belief, resulting in division, controversy and schism.

"The great enemy of the church is determined to introduce among God's people that which will result in disunion and variance. Schism and division are not the fruit of righteousness; they are of the evil one. The great hindrance to our advancement is the selfishness that prevents believers from having true fellowship with one another." Review and Herald, May 12, 1903.

"The standard of truth, of the first, second, and third angels' messages has been left to trail in the dust. If the watchmen are left to mislead the people in this fashion, God will hold some souls responsible for a lack of keen discernment to discover what kind of provender was being given to His flock." Selected Messages, book 2, 394.

The New Theology teaching that full obedience to God—sanctification—is not possible and not required is creating an influence in the church that makes it difficult to hold fast to the faith once delivered to the saints.

"Even under the most faithful surroundings, it is difficult to hold fast the Christian profession of faith unto the end, to stand decidedly and earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. But it is most difficult to keep true and loyal to God's holy commandments, when there are few in number to help and encourage one another, and when many of these are sickly and ready to die because they do not honor God by keeping His commandments truly and loyally." Review and Herald, June 8, 1897.

The making of the Testimonies of none effect in our institutions and doctrines is comparable to the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.

"If you seek to turn aside the counsel of God to suit yourselves, if you lessen the confidence of God's people in the testimonies He has sent them, you are rebelling against God as certainly as were Korah, Dathan, and Abiram." Testimonies, vol. 5, 66.

Because of our unbelief in the Testimonies manifested by our disobedience to them we are under divine forbearance.

"I have been shown that unbelief in the testimonies has been steadily increasing as the people backslide from God. It is all through our ranks, all over the field. But few know what our churches are to experience. I saw that at present we are under divine forbearance, but no one can say how long this will continue. No one knows how great the mercy that has been exercised toward us. But few are heartily devoted to God. There are only a few who, like the stars in a tempestuous night, shine here and there among the clouds." Ibid., 76.

In this last remnant of time Satan has caused confusion and pluralism in our doctrines. The primary pillars may still appear intact, but by moving the pins and undermining the foundation he knows that when tests and trials come many will lose their faith even in the principal doctrines of Adventism.

"I have been shown that many who profess to have a knowledge of present truth know not what they believe. They do not understand the evidences of their faith. They have no just appreciation of the work for the present time. When the time of trial shall come, there are men now preaching to others who will find, upon examining the positions they hold, that there are many things for which they can give no satisfactory reason. Until thus tested they knew not their great ignorance. And there are many in the church who take it for granted that they understand what they believe; but, until controversy arises, they do not know their own weakness. When separated from those of like faith and compelled to stand singly and alone to explain their belief, they will be surprised to see how confused are their ideas of what they had accepted as truth. Certain it is that there has been among us a departure from the living God and a turning to men, putting human in place of divine wisdom." Ibid., 707.

During the apostasy under King Ahab, God had Elijah anoint Hazael king of Syria. God then used Hazael to repeatedly punish Israel in an attempt to weaken her to her true spiritual condition. Only with the unrolling of the scroll will we be able to fully understand the following message from the Lord. Those whom Laodicea has embraced to preach to her smooth things will be used of God as Hazaels as a scourge to His people.

"There are men among us in responsible positions who hold that the opinions of a few conceited philosophers, so-called, are more to be trusted than the truth of the Bible, or the testimonies of the Holy Spirit. Such a faith as that of Paul, Peter, or John is considered old-fashioned and insufferable at the present day. It is pronounced absurd, mystical, and unworthy of an intelligent mind.

"God has shown me that these men are Hazaels to prove a scourge to our people. They are wise above what is written. This unbelief of the very truths of God's Word because human judgment cannot comprehend the mysteries of His work is found in every district, in all ranks of society. It is taught in most of our schools and comes into the lessons of the nurseries. Thou-

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God will hold some souls responsible for a lack of keen discernment to discover what kind of provender was being given to His flock.
giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. The Lord desires that every soul who claims to believe the truth shall have an intelligent knowledge of what is truth. False prophets will arise and will deceive many. Everything is to be shaken that can be shaken. Then does it not become everyone to understand the reasons of our faith? In place of having so many sermons there should be a more close searching of the Word of God, opening the Scriptures, text by text, and searching for the strong evidences that sustain the fundamental doctrines that have brought us where we now are, upon the platform of eternal truth.” Selected Messages, book 2, 392-393.

God is not the cause of our present doctrinal confusion. The Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy do not support the pluralism of beliefs presently being promoted in Adventism. Only the truth sanctifies. Errors keep us from full compliance with God’s will, thus preventing purification from sin and our participation in the cleansing of the sanctuary.

“God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. But Satan is a vigilant, unselecting foe, ever at work upon human minds, seeking a soil in which he can sow its tares. If he finds any whom he can press into his service, he will suggest ideas and false theories, and make them zealous in advocating error. The truth not only converts, but works the purification of its receiver. Jesus has warned us to beware of false teachers.” Testimonies to Ministers, 54.

Laodicea, at present, is wasting considerable amounts of her time, human resources and financial means on the operation of the branches of the Lord’s work contrary to His directions. This disobedience to God has caused resulting blindness. We are presently misusing further resources in the promulgation of false beliefs. God has caused (permitted) the false doctrine that we can be saved in disobedience to come in among us to shake and purify His people. God has caused (permitted) heresies to come in to test our love for the truth. These doctrinal errors will prove the ruin of many.

“If all that appears to be divine life were such in reality; if all who profess to present the truth to the world were preaching for the truth and not against it, and if they were men of God guided by His Spirit—then might we see something cheering amid the prevailing moral darkness. But the spirit of Antichrist is prevailing to such an extent as never before. Well may we exclaim: ‘Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.’ Psalm 12:1. I know that many think far too favorably of the present time. These ease-loving souls will be engulfed in the general ruin. Yet we do not despair.” Testimonies, vol. 5, 79-80.

The message to Laodicea wounds only that it might heal. Rather than drive us to despair, it is to lead us to repentance, revival and reformation. God’s message to us is to provide us with heavenly eyesalve that we may see our true condition. Light from God with spiritual discernment is full and ample and only awaits our demand. We are assured that those who make use of it will triumph at last. The entrance of heresy and apostasy into our own ranks will in the end be used of God to reveal truth even that much brighter.

“Light from God is full and ample, waiting our demand upon it. Whatever blessings the Lord may give, He has an infinite supply beyond, an inexhaustible store from which we may draw. Skepticism may treat the sacred claims of the gospel with jests, scoffing, and denial. The spirit of worldliness may contaminate the many and control the few; the cause of God may hold its ground only by great exertion and continual sacrifice, yet it will triumph finally.” Ibid., 71.

God is purifying to Himself a people. The entrance of doctrinal heresies is the first phase of the shaking of Adventism and its purpose is to prepare those without a love of the truth to be sifted out during the third phase of the shaking which will leave the church with that unity for which Christ prayed. His people must be in unity of truth before they can receive the latter-rain power to give the loud cry.

God is not the cause of our present doctrinal confusion. The Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy do not support the pluralism of beliefs presently being promoted in Adventism. Only the truth sanctifies.

“The last prayer that Christ offered for His disciples before His trial was that they might be one in Him. Satan is determined that this oneness shall not be; for it is the strongest witness that can be borne that God gave His Son to reconcile the world to Heaven. But the union for which Christ prayed must exist among God’s people before He can bestow on the church the enlargement and power that He longs to bestow on it.” Review and Herald, May 12, 1903.

In future articles we will study the other means that God will use (allow) to shake and sift His people, purifying them from disobedience and apostasy, fitting them to give the third angel’s message to every nation, kindred, tongue and people, and thus ushering in Christ’s kingdom of glory. That each one of us will be among that group is to be our goal and our prayer.

The Lord has raised up messengers, and endued them with His Spirit, and has said, “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” Isaiah 58:1. Let no one run the risk of interposing between the people and the message of Heaven. This message will go to the people; and if there were no voice among men to give it, the very stones would cry out. Gospel Workers, 304.
UPON the crystal sea before the throne, that sea of glass as it were mingled with fire—so resplendent is it with the glory of God—are gathered the company that have gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name.’ With the Lamb upon Mount Zion, ‘having the harps of God,’ they stand, the hundred and forty and four thousand that were redeemed from among men; and there is heard, as the sound of many waters, and as the sound of a great thunder, ‘the voice of harpers harping with their harps.’ And they sing ‘a new song’ before the throne, a song which no man can learn save the hundred and forty and four thousand. It is the song of Moses and the Lamb—a song of deliverance. None but the hundred and forty-four thousand can learn that song; for it is the song of their experience—an experience such as no other company have ever had. ‘These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.’ Revelation 15:2–3; 14:1–5. *The Great Controversy*, 648–649.

Brothers and sisters, what a picture the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy paint in regard to that special group that we know as the one hundred and forty-four thousand! They have special characteristics that make them different from any other group of people who have ever lived upon this earth. They are an end-time people who never taste of death. Just think, you and I have the opportunity of being among this very special group. In fact, Ellen White tells us that we should “strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand.” *Maranatha*, 241. I pray that this article will encourage you to so strive.

Not only John the Apostle, but also Ellen White, our modern-day prophet, was given a vision of the one hundred forty-four thousand. Both visions showed the special group, not on earth during the great tribulation that they will have to pass through, but in heaven after this great controversy is ended. Ellen White’s vision was also connected with other worlds that have never fallen. What a joy it was for Sister White to view the scenery, the people, the fruits of these unfallen worlds! After such a view, Ellen White did not want to return to this earth. Listen to her conversation with her companion angel: “I begged of my attending angel to let me remain in that place. I could not bear the thought of coming back to this dark world again. Then the angel said, ‘You must go back, and if you are faithful, you, with the 144,000 shall have the privilege of visiting all the worlds and viewing the handiwork of God.’” *The Adventist Home*, 543.

I have lived adjacent to Yellowstone National Park, and then directly across from Glacier National Park, and now I look out at Mount Rainier (when it is not hidden by clouds). God has allowed certain beauty to be preserved for us in our fallen states. But that beauty does not even begin to compare with what God has for us in the new heaven and the new earth. In fact it must look dark and dreary in comparison. “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” 1 Corinthians 2:9.

Recently I listened to a lecture by a creation scientist. He shared with the people certain evidences which exist to prove creation over evolution. He also spoke of a model of what this earth might have been like before the Flood. Some scientists now feel that the earth was created with a water shield at approximately 11 miles above the surface of the earth and that this theory is in accordance with Genesis 1:6–7. This shield would have served several functions, one of which would have been to magnify the stars to the view of the people on the earth. They speculate that before the Flood, people would have been able to see the individual colors of the separate stars. The temperature of the whole earth at that
time would have been 78 degrees Fahrenheit in the day and 72 degrees Fahrenheit at night. Also, because of the shield around the earth, the atmospheric pressure and oxygen levels would have been greater than they are now, perhaps providing a more suitable environment for the dinosaurs. Today, it has been shown that under greater atmospheric pressure and oxygen content, not only does healing take place quicker, but fruits and vegetables grow much bigger, especially if the ultraviolet rays of the sun are filtered out as they would have been then.

Friends, can you imagine what it must have been like for Noah, as he stepped from the ark into a post-Flood world. Like Ellen White, he could not go back. But the good news is, we can all go forward with God and enter into this great experience of a new heaven and a new earth where, by the way, there will be no more tears. See Revelation 21:1-4 and Revelation 7:16-17. What waits for us is beyond our wildest imagination. Do you not want to be there? I do.

Ellen White tells us that those in the Seventh-day Adventist Church who lived before us could have had the experience of being the group that welcomed Jesus back to this earth at His second coming. They could have been the 144,000.

"Upon us is shining the accumulated light of past ages. The record of Israel's forgetfulness has been preserved for our enlightenment. In this age God has set His hand to gather unto Himself a people from every nation, kindred, and tongue. In the Advent movement He has wrought for His heritage, even as He wrought for the Israelites in leading them from Egypt. In the great disappointment of 1844 the faith of His people was tested as was that of the Hebrews at the Red Sea. Had the Adventists in the early days still trusted to the guiding hand that had been with them in their past experience, they would have seen the salvation of God. If all who had labored unitedly in the work of 1844 had received the third angel's message and proclaimed it in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts. A flood of light would have been shed upon the world. Years ago the inhabitants of the earth would have been warned, the closing work would have been completed, and Christ would have come for the redemption of His people." Testimonies, vol. 8, 115-116.

Today we are given several reasons why the Lord has not come. In The Great Controversy, 458, we are advised: "In mercy to the world, Jesus delays His coming, that sinners may have an opportunity to hear the warning and find in Him a shelter before the wrath of God shall be poured out."

We are then told in Evangelism, 696: "We may have to remain here in this world because of insubordination many more years as did the children of Israel. . . . It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years." And then in Testimonies, vol. 5, page 94, we read: "The sin of ancient Israel was in disregarding the with the doctrine of original sin because he could not escape his liking for the ladies, when they do not seem to experience victory over sin in their own lives, they rule out the doctrine. Their belief is based on their own faulty experience, rather than on faith in God's promises of victory. Lacking the necessary faith, they cannot obey God's will, including keeping the Sabbath.

Listen to what the final experience of this group will be, unless they are converted. "Then I was shown a company who were howling in agony. On their garments was written in large characters, 'Thou art weighed in the balance, and

Those in the Seventh-day Adventist Church who lived before us could have had the experience of being the group that welcomed Jesus back to this earth at His second coming. They could have been the 144,000.

expressed will of God and following their own way according to the leadings of unsanctified hearts. Modern Israel are fast following in their footsteps, and the displeasure of the Lord is as surely resting upon them."

Brothers and sisters, I am here to tell you that God is preparing a people. I see them in small groups as Elder Spear and I travel throughout the world—people who are serious about their relationship with Jesus Christ, people who are striving to be among the 144,000. God is waiting for His character to be reproduced in His people and then He will return to take them home. See Christ's Object Lessons, 69.

But Satan is not inactive, even within the borders of our church. Recently, a well-known liberal Adventist author was interviewed by William Johnsson, the editor of the Adventist Review, on the Review program broadcast on 3ABN. This author was asked about perfection. He said that as a pastor he had been unable to attain perfection. He went on to state that he had not seen perfection in any other person's life. He then alluded to the doctrine of Christian perfection as being a "bunch of baloney." Others in the church tell us that we will continue sinning until Jesus comes.

Many of these men are basing their theology on their experience rather than on the Bible. As Augustine, who came up found wanting,' I asked who this company were. The angel said, 'These are they who have once kept the Sabbath and have given it up.' I heard them cry with a loud voice, 'We have believed in Thy coming, and taught it with energy.' And while they were speaking, their eyes would fall upon their garments and see the writing, and then they would wail aloud. I saw that they had drunk of the deep waters, and fouled the residue with their feet—trod the Sabbath underfoot—and that was why they were weighed in the balance and found wanting." Early Writings, 36.

Once someone turns to experience rather than faith for interpreting the Bible, then they will find in the Bible verses to back their experience even though they do so by misuse. Romans 7 thus becomes one of the most misused texts of Scripture where Paul says, "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." Romans 7:15. We are told by some that this is the experience of the converted man. But the converted man lives in the Spirit and allows Jesus to work in him to do that which is right. See Romans 8.

The Christian needs to live by faith. If we look at our experience to determine our theology, we will rise no higher in our Christian walk than our initial experience allows. It becomes easy for Satan to show

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us that we are erring, fallible people and that Christian perfection is not attainable by any of us.

But what about the 144,000? Who are they? Let us look at them a little closer. Have we truly understood what it takes in order to be a people prepared for Christ's second coming? And even beyond the understanding, have we put into practical application that understanding?

Ellen White tells us to strive to be among the 144,000. May we move forward in faith, knowing that God has promised and that He is able to deliver on those promises, no matter what our experience has been in the past.

We know that God, in the book of Revelation, speaks of a very special group that will be made up in the last days, just prior to the second coming. This group is referred to as the one hundred forty-four thousand in Revelation 7 and in Revelation 14. Those found in this group are described as “virgins,” “which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.” Ellen White says of them, “But all who follow the Lamb in heaven will first have followed Him on earth, in trustful, loving, willing obedience, followed Him not fretfully and capriciously, but confidently, truthfully, as the flock follows the shepherd.” Selected Messages, book 3, 424.

They are described further as being without guile in their mouths and being “without fault before the throne of God.” The prophet says, “They bore the signet of heaven. They reflected the image of God. They were full of the light and the glory of the Holy One. If we would have the image and superscription of God upon us, we must separate ourselves from all iniquity. We must forsake every evil way, and then we must trust our cases in the hands of Christ. While we are working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, God will work in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure.” The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7, 978.

All those who are saved will be considered perfect in the sight of God. Perfection is a relative term as we shall see.

In Matthew 5:48, we are commanded, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

Ellen White in commenting on this verse in The Desire of Ages, 311 states, “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 Greek word for perfect in this Bible passage is “teleios,” which means “complete.” One Greek lexicon says that teleios refers to “one who has attained the moral end, the goal for which he was intended, namely a man obedient in Christ. It may be true, though, that having reached this attainment, other and higher ends will open up before him in order to have Christ formed in him more and more.” In other words, he is considered as one living up to the light he has, but new light will continually be opening before him for his Christian growth. His perfection is relative to the light he has, whereas God’s perfection is absolute because He has all light.

Jesus uses the same term in speaking to the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:21, telling him that: “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor.” Paul uses teleios in Romans 12:2 in speaking of the “perfect will of God,” in Colossians 1:28 stating that “we may present every man perfect in Jesus Christ,” and again in Colossians 4:12 when he speaks of laboring for people that they “may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” In James 3:2 we read that a man that can bridle his tongue is a teleios or perfect man for he is also able to control his whole body.

At a time when Satan’s deceptions will be greatest God is looking for a people that will live up to all the light they have, a teleios people, a people that are pure in their religion, virgins without guile in their mouths, faultless before the throne of God—the 144,000.

The Bible is full of verses speaking of attainments in the Christian walk of living without sin in our lives. See the promises and requirements made to all of the seven churches of Revelation. Remember Christ’s command, “Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect.” Matthew 5:48. The promise is that even though in our own strength we cannot be perfect, we can in God’s power working in our lives, reach the ideal God wants us to attain. We can be perfect. Those that so attain in these last days will make up the 144,000.

The question is asked, “Why were they (the 144,000) so specially singled out? Because they had to stand with a wonderful truth right before the whole world, and receive their opposition, and while receiving this opposition they were to remember that they were sons and daughters of God, that they must have Christ formed within them the hope of glory. They were ever keeping in view the great and blessed hope that is before them. What is it? It is an eternal weight of glory. Nothing could surpass it.” Sermons and Talks, 72.

“Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above, are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort, they must be conquerors in the battle with evil.” The Great Controversy, 425.

It is your choice. Will you seek to follow all the loving counsel God has given us in both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy? You can do so only in the strength of God. And that comes only as day by day you commit to spend time with God through prayer, Bible study and the study of the writings of Ellen White, and then you actually experience that commitment. You must also abandon the world and its enticements in order to give the throne of your life to Jesus Christ. Self must be surrendered.

Remember, Ellen White tells us to strive to be among the 144,000. May we move forward in faith, knowing that God has promised and that He is able to deliver on those promises, no matter what our experience has been in the past.

Come soon, Lord Jesus!
THE Value of Prayer

The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers. “Psalm 34:15.

We are told that Elijah “was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly” (James 5:17), and his prayer was answered. A royal decree was signed in the courts of Babylon, that if for thirty days any man asked a petition of any God or man, save of Darius the king, he should be cast into the lions’ den; but Daniel, notwithstanding he knew of the decree, failed not to pray three times a day, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, as he had done before the decree was made; and the God whom he served continually delivered him out of the power of the lions. These holy men knew the value of communion with God.

When Jesus was upon earth, and walked a man among the children of men, He prayed, and oh, how earnest were His prayers! How often He spent the whole night upon the damp, cold ground, in agonizing supplication! And yet He was the beloved and sinless Son of God. If Jesus felt the necessity of communion with His Father, and manifested so much earnestness in calling upon Him, how much more should we, whom He has called to be heirs of salvation, who are subject to the fiery temptations of the wily foe, and dependent upon divine grace for strength to overcome, have our whole souls stirred to wrestle with God. The language of our souls should be, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.” Genesis 32:26. But many have allowed their hearts to become overcharged with the cares of this life, and God and His Word have been neglected.

The subjects of Satan, although they hate and war with one another, are active and united in the one object of destroying souls. They are vigilant in improving every opportunity to advance their common interest, and war against the kingdom of Christ. But He who is the great Commander in Heaven and on earth, has limited their power.

Satan is ever ready to insinuate that prayer is a mere form, and avails us nothing. He cannot bear to have his powerful rival appealed to. At the sound of fervent prayer, the hosts of darkness tremble. Fearing that their captive may escape, they form a wall around him, that Heaven’s light may not reach his soul. But if in his distress and helplessness the sinner looks to Jesus, pleading the merits of His blood, our compassionate Redeemer listens to the earnest, persevering prayer of faith, and sends to his deliverance a reinforcement of angels that excel in strength. And when these angels, all-powerful, clothed with the armory of Heaven, come to the help of the fainting, pursued soul, the angels of darkness fall back, well knowing that their battle is lost, and that one more soul is escaping from the power of their influence.

Prayer is the Christian’s life. There is a remedy for the sin-sick soul, and that remedy is in Jesus. Precious Saviour! His grace is sufficient for the weakest, and the strongest must have His help or perish. A Christian has victory over his passions and besetments. I would not dishonor my Master so much as to admit that a careless, trifling, prayerless person is a Christian. It is the privilege of the Christian to enjoy the deep movings of the Spirit of God. A sweet, heavenly peace will pervade his mind. He will love to meditate upon God and Heaven, and to feast upon the glorious promises of the written Word.

But how shall this victory over the world be obtained? Go to your closet, dear reader, and there plead with God: “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” Psalm 51:10. Be in earnest; be sincere; Jacob-like, wrestle in prayer. Do not leave your closet until you feel strong in God. Remain until unutterable longings for salvation are awakened in your heart, and the sweet evidence is obtained of pardoned sin. Then when you
Do not leave your closet until you feel strong in God. Remain until unutterable longings for salvation are awakened in your heart, and the sweet evidence is obtained of pardoned sin.

strengthen you speedily, and you will have that peace that passeth understanding.

While you pray that you may not be led into temptation, remember that your work does not end with the prayer. You must then answer your own prayer as far as possible, by resisting temptation, and leave that which you cannot do for yourselves for Jesus to do for you. We cannot be too guarded in our words and deportment, lest we invite the enemy to approach us with his temptations. With the Word of God for our guide, and Jesus for our heavenly Teacher, we need not be ignorant of the divine requirements or of Satan’s devices. And it will be no unpleasant task to be obedient to the will of God, when we yield ourselves fully to be directed by His Spirit.

Pray in the family. Morning and evening obtain the victory at your family altar. Let not your daily labor keep you from this duty. Take time to pray. And as you pray, believe that God hears you, have faith mixed with your prayers. Let faith take hold of the blessing, and it is yours.

In the morning the Christian’s first thoughts should be of God. Come before Him with humility, with a heart full of tenderness, and with a sense of the temptations and dangers that surround yourself and your children. Morning and evening, by earnest prayer and persevering faith, make a hedge about your children. Patently instruct them; kindly and untringly teach them how to live so that they may please God.

Teach your children reverence for God and the hour of prayer. The Lord our God is holy, and His name is to be treated with great reverence. Angels are displeased and disgusted with the irreverent manner in which the name of God, the great Jehovah, is sometimes used in prayer. They mention that name with the greatest awe, even veiling their faces when they speak the name of God; the name of Christ also is sacred, and is spoken with the greatest reverence. And those who in their prayers use the name of God in a common and flippant manner, shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Romans 8:32.

Every petition that is offered to God in faith, and with a true heart, will be answered. Such prayer is never lost; but to claim that it will always be answered in the very way and for the particular thing that we desire, is presumption. God is too wise to err, and too good to withhold any good thing from them that walk uprightly. Then do not fear to trust Him even though you do not see the immediate answer to your prayers. Rely upon His sure promise, “Ask, and ye shall receive.” John 16:24.

Fervent and effectual prayer will be regarded in Heaven. It is the privilege of Christians to obtain strength from God to hold every precious gift of His Spirit. The power of God has not decreased. His grace and His Spirit will be just as freely bestowed now as formerly. It is the church of God that have lost their faith to claim, their energy to wrestle, as did Jacob, crying, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.” Enduring faith has been dying away, and must be revived in the hearts of God’s people. There must be a claiming of the blessing of God. Living faith always bears upward to God and glory; unbelief, downward to darkness and death.

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” Revelation 3:21. We can overcome, fully, entirely. Jesus died to make a way of escape for us, that by prevailing prayer by His grace, we might overcome every temptation, every subtle snare of the adversary, and at last sit down with Him in His kingdom.

The Signs of the Times, November 18, 1886.

The work of gaining salvation is one of copartnership, a joint operation. There is to be co-operation between God and the repentant sinner. This is necessary for the formation of right principles in the character. Man is to make earnest efforts to overcome that which hinders him from attaining to perfection. But he is wholly dependent upon God for success. Human effort of itself is not sufficient. Without the aid of divine power it avails nothing. God works and man works. Resistance of temptation must come from man, who must draw his power from God.

The Acts of the Apostles, 482.
A Waco Connection?
Continued from 17
church members and leaders whose personal zeal has blindered their spiritual understanding; when they try to manipulate the minds of the people to create disaffection toward those with whom they disagree, to portray them as "seditious, heretical, or schismatic," and do not realize the possible loss of many souls from the turning of the people from receiving precious, vital and saving truth; then we must speak up to set the record straight.

Sister White’s recommendations for this type of action are worthy of serious consideration: "When man assails his fellow men, and presents in a ridiculous light those whom God has appointed to do work for Him, we would not be doing justice to the accusers, or to those who are misled by their accusations should we keep silent, leaving the people to think that their brethren and sisters, in whom they have had confidence, are no longer worthy of their love and fellowship.

"This work, arising in our very midst, and resembling the work of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram is an offense to God, and should be met. And on every point the
accusers should be called upon to bring their proof. Every charge should be carefully investigated; it should not be left in any uncertain way, the people should not be left to think it may be or it may not be." Selected Messages, book 3, 348.

"When men endanger the work and cause of God by their own wrong course of action, shall they hear no voice of reproof? If the wrongdoer only were concerned, and the work reached no farther than him, he alone should have the words of warning but when his course of action is doing positive harm to the cause of truth, and souls are imperiled, God requires that the warning be as broad as the injury done." Ibid., book 2, 153.

Dear reader, as we accept the risks of being misunderstood and being misrepresented for truth’s sake, let us not forget that "the great obstacle both to the acceptance and to the promulgation of truth is the fact that it involves inconvenience and reproach. This is the only argument against the truth which its advocates have never been able to refute. But this does not deter the true followers of Christ. These do not wait for truth to become popular." The Great Controversy, 460.

Rather than waiting in Laodicean complacency for truth to become popular, let us proceed to confess Jesus Christ and the principles of His Word. But let us be sure that we do not allow the agencies of darkness to distort our sacred and solemn mission of vindicating God's character in our lives, church and nation. Our confession of Christ is not a suicidal undertaking as was that of David Koresh and his followers. We need not develop a martyr’s paranoid complex and become victims of our feeble minds, perverted zeal, confused theology, and corrupted behavior. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." 1 Peter 4:14–16.

May Christ help us to confess His name by a pure, compassionate and holy life. May the Lord keep us truthful to His cause despite the consequences. This is my prayer. Amen and Amen.

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<td>Adventist Standards</td>
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<td>Tape 8</td>
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Spirit of Prophecy since his middle teens. In this series of presentations he shares with us insights gleaned from his years of study into the sanctuary and its meaning for us in these last days. Without these understandings we will one day find ourselves adrift, a ship without an anchor, unable to explain to an asking world why we are Seventh-day Adventists. We urge you to hear his messages and share them with others so that we may all be prepared for the testing days ahead.

DO WE REALLY UNDERSTAND WHY God gave the health-reform message to the Seventh-day Adventist people? Many of us have believed these instructions were given mainly to enable us to have longer, healthier lives. We need to be aware of God’s ultimate purpose in giving specific directions for our conduct in these areas and why He instructed us to be, not merely missionaries, but medical missionaries.

In the tapes listed below, Dr. Phil Collins explains why and how health reform is an integral part of the third angel’s message. Dr. Collins holds a Ph.D. in Health Science from Loma Linda University and is a health educator employed by Park Ridge (SDA) Hospital. You and your family will find vital information contained in these presentations. They are especially important for persons raising small children in this temptation-saturated world.

YOU MAY PURCHASE these messages on VHS video tapes or audio cassettes from Hope International. Save money by buying complete sets. Individual video tapes may be ordered for $20 per tape; individual audio tapes are $2.50 each. Please add 10% ($1.50 minimum) for shipping. Washington residents add 7.5% sales tax.
Camp Meeting 1993

is coming (July 28–August 1). Please plan to join us. Speakers will include Bill Stringfellow, Ron Spear, Colin and Russell Standish, Jim Hohnberger, Ray DeCarlo, and Norberto Restrepo.

If you plan to attend the Eatonville camp meeting, and wish to stay on our grounds, you are more than welcome. We ask that you write or call to make a reservation. We do not expect a shortage of room, but we need to have this information in order to make the best use of our facilities. Water and restrooms will be available at several locations on the grounds. There will be limited shower facilities, but hookups for water, sewer, and electricity are not available. Please plan on a real camp meeting.

As usual, there will be no charge for staying on our campus, but we cannot provide either lodging or food except in very unusual circumstances. Please do not take it for granted that we will be able to provide special services for those who need them. Instead, please call and let us know what your needs are. We will do our best to accommodate all who desire to attend, but, unfortunately, there are limits to what our staff can undertake during the hustle and bustle of camp meeting.

If you do not plan to stay on our grounds, you need not make a reservation with us. You should, however, make reservations ahead of time at the hotel or motel of your choice. The following may be of some assistance:

- La Grande Hotel and RV Park—10 miles south of Hope International. Call (206) 832-6643.

Please note: Spanish meetings will also be conducted on the grounds in our camp-meeting tent. This will be our first bilingual camp meeting. Invite your Spanish friends!

Hope International
P.O. Box 940
Eatonville, WA 98328

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