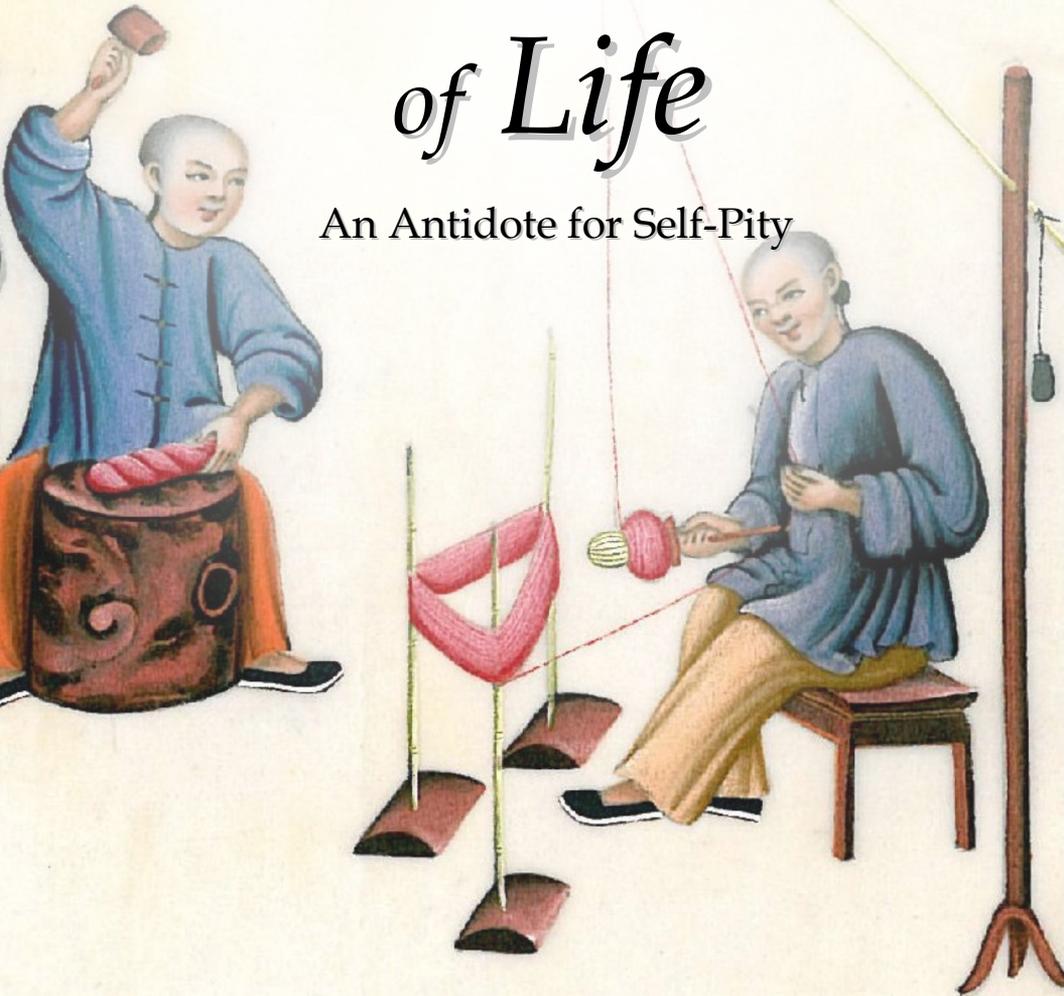


The School of Life

An Antidote for Self-Pity



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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Proverbs 22

¹⁵ Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him.

The real meaning of this and similar texts is often hidden by heated discussions as to whether corporal punishment is right or not, and how authoritarian the education of a child should be.

Another danger is trying to apply the message to our children, before we apply it to ourselves. But the message on true education can never be understood unless the character of the educator is in harmony with the truth. My prayer is that parents and teachers will apply the principles presented in this article to their own lives and so receive a change of heart that they will be better equipped for this important, God-given work.

Who is the Rod For?

The message on child salvation has taught us to seek, first and foremost, the implantation of the spirit of obedience in a child. Only God can change the heart of a child, but parents and educators need to cooperate diligently with the divine agencies in order to prepare the ground for this work, as well as to encourage its continued growth. For this purpose they need to understand how to be co-workers with God.

Let us not assume that any child will do the right thing of its own accord, automatically and without much effort. Unless parents and teachers do their part, this will simply not happen. The Scriptures teach us that “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child.” If it is not corrected, this “foolishness” will lead the child to perdition.

This is obviously the case for children who have yet to be born again, but it also applies to children who have already been born again, for they still have to gain the victory over their sinful human nature, which is common to all of us.

What is the Rod?

“The rod” mentioned in Scripture serves several purposes. It was used by the shepherd (*Psalms* 23:4) and farmer (*Isaiah* 28:27) as an instrument in their work. But it also has a highly symbolical meaning as in Moses’ case, where it was used as a sign for God’s work (*Exodus* 4:2–4). It was also used to confirm Aaron’s position (*Numbers* 17), and as a scepter or symbol of authority (*Genesis* 49:10). And it was even used as a weapon (*Exodus* 21:20; *Psalms* 2:9). But just as war serves as an allegory for spiritual warfare, so the rod, as a weapon, has a corresponding symbolical meaning.

In the context of *Proverbs* 22:15 and parallel texts, the rod is a symbol for the school of life, which is the most important “weapon” in the hand of educators in their battle against the foolishness of human nature. Let us read this text again, substituting our new understanding for the rod:

“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the correction which the school of life brings will drive it far from him.”

Confirmation that this is the correct understanding of the parental “rod” is found in *Psalms* 23:4. Here we read about the rod in the hand of our divine Parent:

Psalm 23

⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

The discipline in our day-to-day lives, especially when we have to face tests and trials, is our school of life. This is where

the Lord is our Teacher, and His rod—the lessons He teaches us in and through these trials—gives comfort to the believer. The Lord uses the circumstances in which we are placed; He overrules them and blesses us through them. Such circumstances are also known as “divine providence.”

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 524:

Trial is part of the education given in the school of Christ, to purify God’s children from the dross of earthliness. It is because God is leading His children that trying experiences come to them. Trials and obstacles are His chosen methods of discipline, and His appointed conditions of success. He who reads the hearts of men knows their weaknesses better than they themselves can know them.

He sees that some have qualifications which, if rightly directed, could be used in the advancement of His work. In His providence He brings these souls into different positions and varied circumstances, that they may discover the defects that are concealed from their own knowledge. He gives them opportunity to overcome these defects and to fit themselves for service. Often He permits the fires of affliction to burn, that they may be purified.

In the case of little children, the rod is the direct action of their parents in the various areas of everyday life, such as food, order, and clothing. For example, as parents feed their child they can teach regularity, contentment to eat, and health consciousness. If the child were left to follow its own appetite, it would be led astray. This is foolishness and should not be yielded to.

In the area of order, parents can encourage the child in obedience, punctuality, and cleanliness, and help the little one to keep its own belongings and room in order. Here again, the parents need to overcome the foolishness of disobedience, tardiness and uncleanness. By providing the right kind of clothing, the parents can also teach the child modesty, humility, meekness, contentment and purity. This is the way to over-

come the foolishness of fashion.

As the children are growing up, they will continue to walk in the way they were trained.

Proverbs 22

⁶ Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

But the training does not end when the child is older. The school of life should now be experienced less and less through the direct actions of the parents, and more and more through the daily circumstances which are under the overruling supervision of the Lord. Parents and teachers should still support this school with their prayers, instructions, encouragements, warnings, and reproofs. By overseeing the circumstances of life in this way, they can continue to apply the rod.

The proper application of the rod does not prevent the circumstances from happening, but gives the right encouragement in each situation. This is indeed a critical phase, because many parents and teachers unconsciously try to protect their children and pupils from the hardships of life. They think that because the children are still young, the rod needs to be spared. But the word of God tells us differently:

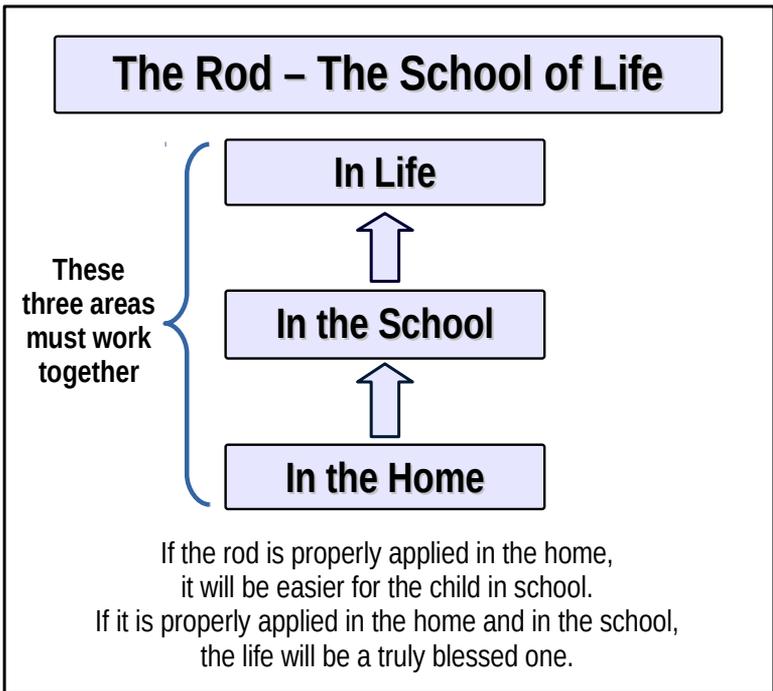
Proverbs 13

²⁴ He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.

When the children no longer live at home, neither parents nor teachers can protect them from the school of life anymore. Therefore, what they learned when they were young now becomes apparent. If the rod was spared in their childhood and school life, they will do everything possible to escape the rod that they inevitably encounter. If, on the other hand, parents and teachers did not spare the rod, the children will welcome the school of life. They will truly overcome selfishness and self-pity and grow up into the perfect stature

of Christ.

So the right application of the rod must be studied in all three phases of character development: Firstly, in the home while the child is still young; secondly when the child is of school age; and thirdly in the life of the adult.



CHAPTER TWO

Classrooms

As a Child

Let us illustrate these points with some practical examples. We will first look at the rod when it is directly applied by the parents. During this time the parents decide many things for their children, although the children are not always happy about it, for as the Bible says, foolishness is in their hearts.

The children complain:

“I don’t like this food.”

“I only want to eat the sweet things, not the other things.”

“I want to play—I’m not hungry.”

“I want to sit over there, not here.”

“I don’t want to go to bed.”

“I want this toy.”

“My parents are too strict.”

And so on.

Even though the child itself, and sometimes the parents, may not realize it, the very fact that some things are denied is essential for the child’s development. This is the school of life applied in the home. To spare the rod here would mean that the parents yield to the self-will of the child.

Often there is such a lack of discipline. The mother feeds the child whenever it cries, and the parents give the child whatever it wants. But the scripture says that this is actually hating the child. “Hate” here does not mean a feeling of anger towards the child. It means that such indulgence will destroy any good characteristics the child may have, by leading the child into the path of selfishness and self-pity. This hatred expresses itself in sentimental love, which is in fact selfish love.

To apply the rod in the circumstances described above means to be strict in carrying out principles that are good for the child. Such a child will then be able to face the sterner issues at school. To apply the rod is, in reality, true love.

The School and Events Outside the Home

The next phase in the school of life is when the child is of school age. This is the time when the circumstances of life begin to discipline the child more and more, while the parents and teachers continue to supervise these circumstances. The school of life is brought about by the challenges encountered at school. Human nature tries to avoid the hardships that are inevitably associated with this stage. Children often come home from school, or other events outside the home, with their complaints. Here are some examples:

“My teacher told me off.”

“My teacher’s not fair. He gives good marks to other pupils but bad marks to me.”

“My teacher gives us too much homework.”

“My teacher is bad. I even heard him cursing and swearing!”

“My teacher says that evolution is true!”

“They want me to go to a school party and you know what bad things happen there!”

“I have to go to religious lessons where they teach Catholic superstitions. In another class they teach us to doubt the Bible.”

“The other kids tease me.”

“A big boy beat me up.”

“The other children say nasty things about me.”

“My aunt/uncle said something that hurt me.”

“They always pick on me.”

“Just because we’re young we always have to do what we’re told, even when it’s not fair.”

“They are too strict.”

Many parents spare the rod by trying to protect their children from such unpleasant circumstances. When the children complain about the teacher or their peers, parents immediately think that the teacher has made a mistake, and try to protect their youngsters from them.

They may admit that their children make mistakes too, but they are convinced that there are mistakes on both sides and, in order to be fair, they try to ensure justice is done. This kind of protective attitude worsens the problem, because it teaches children how to avoid the school of life. Often the parents will talk with the teachers to “clarify” matters. Sometimes they even talk with the school principal instead, to prevent the teacher finding out which child complained, in order to protect their child from any adverse consequences.

The child hardly ever stands up for himself in difficult situations at school because the parents take care of everything. Instead of teaching the child to bear injustice bravely, they sympathize with the child and defend him. In this way parents become mouthpieces for their children and complain about their hardships in school and so forth.

When a child comes home with complaints like those mentioned above, the rod can be applied correctly by teaching the child to stand up for itself; to endure hardships and injustice bravely; and to take a stand in questions of principle. The parents will also refrain from criticizing the teacher, and instead praise the stricter teachers, knowing that as hard as the school may be, it is good for the character development of the pupils.

A good description of how to apply the rod to pupils, by allowing them to experience the school of life, is found in the following paragraphs:

Education, p. 295-296:

Beyond the discipline of the home and the school, all have to meet the stern discipline of life. How to meet this wisely is a lesson that should be made plain to every child and to every youth. It is true that God loves us, that He is working for our happiness, and that, if His law had always been obeyed, we should never have known suffering; and it is no less true that, in this world, as the result of sin, suffering, trouble, burdens, come to every life. We may do the children and the youth a lifelong good by teaching them to meet bravely these troubles and burdens. While we should give them sympathy, let it never be such as to foster self-pity. What they need is that which stimulates and strengthens rather than weakens.

They should be taught that this world is not a parade ground, but a battlefield. All are called to endure hardness, as good soldiers. They are to be strong and quit themselves like men. Let them be taught that the true test of character is found in the willingness to bear burdens, to take the hard place, to do the work that needs to be done, though it bring no earthly recognition or reward.

The true way of dealing with trial is not by seeking to escape it, but by transforming it. This applies to all discipline, the earlier as well as the later. The neglect of the child's earliest training, and the consequent strengthening of wrong tendencies, makes his after education more difficult, and causes discipline to be too often a painful process. Painful it must be to the lower nature, crossing, as it does, the natural desires and inclinations; but the pain may be lost sight of in a higher joy.

Let the child and the youth be taught that every mistake, every fault, every difficulty, conquered, becomes a stepping-stone to better and higher things. It is through such experiences that all who have ever made life worth the living have achieved success.

As an Adult

The next phase in the school of life is found when the child has grown up into an adult. Now there are no parents or

teachers to provide support for them in their experiences, and they have to stand on their own two feet. Blessed are those who have experienced the rod in younger years. For them life will not be difficult, but woe to those who were spared the rod! They imagine that everything in this world is directed against them, and they feel very sorry for themselves.

The school of life for an adult is fairly obvious, but let us look at some examples nonetheless. The following are some of the complaints often heard:

“They talk about me behind my back.”

“They misjudge me.”

“They are always sticking their nose into my personal affairs. They should mind their own business.”

“They criticize what I wear.”

“They criticize what I eat.”

“They say nasty things about my wife/husband/children.”

“They don’t accept me.”

“They don’t appreciate me.”

“They never ask me first.”

“They lie about me.”

“They are so unfair to me.”

“This world is so hard for me.”

“Life is a real struggle.”

“I have too much to do.”

“Someone should help me.”

“I don’t know why they criticize me.”

“They take advantage of me.”

“I don’t have enough money.”

“He picked on me.”

“I was verbally abused.”

“I am treated unfairly.”

“I am not appreciated as I should be.”

And so on. If we indulge in these lines of thought, we will plunge deeper and deeper into self-pity. Although we may not realize it, it is natural for us to try to escape the school of life. Since we have never really learned to accept this school, we have developed astonishing techniques to run away from it. The indulgence of self-pity is one of these techniques. Through this we try to enlist the sympathy of others who can shield us from the school of life.

Unrighteous behavior, such as shouting, taking revenge, and trying to justify myself, are other means of sparing the rod on oneself. Fleeing into the role of the victim, or that of an underdog, is another way of escape.

Shunning responsibilities, or placing my burdens on other people; being dependent on others; complaining to others about my difficult situation; being an adult child; lying, or avoiding the truth; making up excuses; blaming others for my own poor behavior; avoiding talking about subjects that are unpleasant to me; refusing to speak or communicate—all these are examples of sparing the rod. They are ways of escape from the school of life.

If we spare the rod we actually hate ourselves, as the Bible says. But it is all the result of a wrong education from the very beginning; and the pattern simply continues as we grow older.

Let us look at one example as an illustration of how people run away from the school of life. The fall of the twin towers at the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001 is an event that will never be forgotten. Those with a truly Christian attitude—those who have learned to accept the school of life—would see in this event the finger of the Lord directed against our own sins. These events were foretold by the Spirit of Prophecy as a consequence of the increased pride and wickedness of humanity.

But this is a school which is hard for many to accept. Therefore, they place the burden of this guilt on others. Many people are forced to suffer, even if they are not as guilty as those who committed the act. Ordinary human rights are denied them; they are killed in thousands, and many totally innocent people, who have nothing to do with this event whatsoever, perish with them. This is a living testimony of what lengths human nature will go to, in order to escape the school of life.

Another example of trying to escape from the school of life is when we try to shield ourselves from rebuke. We may avoid communicating with those from whom we expect a rebuke, or other difficulties. If the rebuke finally comes in spite our best efforts to avoid it, we usually respond with:

“I apologize, but...” A frequent excuse is: “...but this was a misunderstanding.” The word “misunderstanding” sounds like a harmless problem, but it often has a deeper root. There were misunderstandings among the builders of the tower of Babel, because they were in disharmony with God. It would be well for us not to use such excuses anymore, but humbly accept the full weight of our guilt and be healed.

Accepting the school of life as an adult is the only solution to the self-pity that is so prevalent today. What does this entail?

It means accepting the circumstances of life, and even the enmity of others, as part of our necessary schooling to bring us closer to Christ. It means allowing life to rebuke us, and also to fully accept the rebuke of the word of God and His living servants.

Accepting the School of Life

As an example of how the school of life can be accepted, let us look at an event in the life of Ellen Harmon, whom we know better by her married name Ellen White. As a school girl she experienced the most crushing blow in her life through the foolishness of another girl.

It was mid-afternoon and school was out. The nine-year-old twins, Ellen and Elizabeth, were on their way home, along with a classmate. As the three girls crossed the park they noticed that an older girl who also attended the Brackett Street School was following them. She shouted some angry words and was closing the gap between them.

The Harmon children had been taught never to retaliate, never to engage in a fight with anyone, but rather if there was trouble to hurry home. This the girls were intent on doing. Ellen later wrote of what happened next:

Arthur White, *The Early Years*, p. 28-29:

“We were doing this, running towards home, but the girl was following us with a stone in her hand. I turned to see how far she was behind me, and as I turned, the stone hit me on my nose. I fell senseless. When I revived, I found myself in a merchant’s store, the blood streaming from my nose, my garments covered with blood, and a large stream of blood on the floor.”

“...I have no recollection of anything for some time after the accident. My mother says that I noticed nothing, but lay in a stupid state [a coma] for three weeks. No one thought I would live except my mother. For some reason she felt that I would not die.”

The description of her symptoms would lead to the opinion that she suffered a concussion. The physician who was called offered no hope of her making a recovery, nor had he

any treatment to recommend. These were times of great ignorance in the medical world. One of the neighbors, certain that Ellen could not live, asked if she might buy a burial robe for her. "Not yet" was Eunice Harmon's reply, for something told her that Ellen would live.

As the little girl regained consciousness she was totally ignorant of the cause of her illness. It seemed to her she had been in a long sleep. She had no memory of the accident; all she knew was that she lay on her cot in great weakness. Then one day on hearing a visiting neighbor say, "What a pity! I should not know her," her curiosity was aroused. She asked for a mirror, only to be shocked at what the glass reflected. Of this she wrote:

"Every feature of my face seemed changed. The sight was more than I could bear. The bone of my nose proved to be broken. The idea of carrying my misfortune through life was insupportable. I could see no pleasure in my life. I did not wish to live, and I dared not die, for I was not prepared."

After such an incident, how many parents would do everything in their power to prosecute the girl responsible, and her parents! How quickly would there be an almost universal cry for "revenge"! This is American society today, the so-called American way of life. But it was not back then, even though the thought was not unknown.

Spiritual Gifts, vol. 2, p. 8:

Friends often visited my parents, and looked upon me with pity, and advised them to prosecute the parents of the child who had, as they said, ruined me. But mother was for peace. She said that if it could bring me back health and natural looks again, then there would be something gained, but as it was, she would only make herself enemies by following their advice.

It is most interesting that Ellen's parents did not try to escape this school of life. In their hearts they had forgiven the parents of the girl, and they wanted to maintain a good relationship with them. Very rationally, they concluded that any

revenge would not make Ellen better. They trusted that through this incident the Lord would lead them and their daughter to a higher experience.

Later, the teacher of Ellen's class took a step that revealed his correct understanding of how to use the rod of the school of life as a means of teaching his students.

Spiritual Gifts, vol. 2, p. 11:

The same girl who was the cause of my misfortune, was appointed by our teacher as a monitor to assist me in writing, and to aid me in getting my lessons.

This wise measure on the part of the teacher was an application of the school of life. For Ellen it was a lesson in forgiveness, and for the girl who threw the stone it was a lesson of bearing the consequences of her action. It was a school against self-pity for both of them.

But how did Ellen accept this school of life? She was very tempted to indulge in self-pity, and at times she succumbed to this temptation. Her youth was ruined, as she herself wrote:

Spiritual Gifts, vol. 2, p. 10:

It was some time before I became strong. As I was able to unite in play with my young friends, I was forced to learn this bitter lesson, that looks make a difference in the feelings of many. At the time of my misfortune my father was absent in Georgia. When he returned, he spoke to my brother and sisters, and inquired for me. I was pointed out by my mother; but my father did not know me. It was hard to make him believe that I was his Ellen. This cut me to the heart.

At first Ellen tried to overcome these feelings in her own strength, but this only produced a superficial victory. In reality, self-pity was becoming stronger and stronger.

Spiritual Gifts, vol. 2, p. 10:

...yet I tried to put on an appearance of cheerfulness, when my heart ached. Many times I was made to deeply feel my misfortune. With wounded pride, mortified at myself, I have

found a lonely spot to think over the trials I was doomed to bear daily. My life was often miserable, for my feelings were keenly sensitive. I could not, like my twin sister, weep out my feelings. My heart seemed so heavy, and ached as though it would break, yet I could not shed a tear. I often thought that if I could weep out my feelings, then I should find relief.

Unfortunately Ellen's self-pity was at times strengthened by others who thought that the school of life was too hard for her.

Spiritual Gifts, vol. 2, p. 10:

Others would pity and sympathize with me, and that weight, like a stone upon my heart, would be gone. How vain and empty the pleasures of earth looked to me. How changeable the friendship of my young companions. A pretty face, dress, or good looks, are thought much of. But let misfortune take some of these away, and the friendship is broken.

The real victory in accepting the school of life came when Ellen turned to the Saviour for comfort.

Spiritual Gifts, vol. 2, p. 11:

But I began to turn to my Saviour where I found comfort. I sought the Lord earnestly, and received consolation. I believed that Jesus did love even me.

About fifty years later, on a visit to Portland, Maine, she was able to testify about her victory over self-pity. Now she had learned to accept all that the school of life thrust upon her. This victory was due also to the wise application of the rod from both her parents and teacher. Sister White wrote:

The Review and Herald, November 25, 1884:

I visited...the spot where I met with the accident...This misfortune, which for a time seemed so bitter and was so hard to bear, has proved to be a blessing in disguise. The cruel blow which blighted the joys of earth, was the means of turning my eyes to heaven. I might never have known Jesus, had not the sorrow that clouded my early years led me to seek comfort in Him.

Then she made the following comparison:

The Review and Herald, November 25, 1884:

I have read of a little bird that while his cage is full of light never sings the songs his master would teach him. He will listen, and learn a snatch of this, a trill of that, but never a separate and entire melody. But the master covers his cage, and then, in the dark, he listens to the one song he is to sing. He tries and tries again to sing that song, until it is learned, and he breaks forth in perfect melody; and then the cage is uncovered, and ever after he can sing it in the light.

Thus God deals with His creatures. He has a song to teach us, and when we have learned it amid the deep shadows of affliction, we can sing it ever afterward.

CHAPTER FOUR

John the Baptist

John the Baptist was a man who was never spared the rod, and consequently, his life developed under the influence of strict discipline.

Luke 1

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

In other words, his parents were instructed to raise him in temperance and self-discipline from the earliest moments of his life. John spent his childhood in the barren wilderness.

⁸⁰ So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.

His dress and food were of the simplest kind.

Matthew 3

⁴ Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.

All this he did gladly and voluntarily, for it prepared him to give greater service.

As the messenger of the Lord, John had to rebuke the sins of the people—even those of people in high positions. This meant risking friendships, influence, and even life itself. But he would not run away from the school in which the Lord had placed him.

Finally, John lost his freedom and he was cast into a dungeon. This was the greatest test for him in accepting the rod.

The Desire of Ages, p. 214:

The life of John had been one of active labor, and the

gloom and inaction of his prison life weighed heavily upon him. As week after week passed, bringing no change, despondency and doubt crept over him.

Unfortunately the disciples of John did not understand what a privilege it is to accept the school of life. They gave John the wrong kind of sympathy, making his school even harder.

The Desire of Ages, p. 214:

They were allowed access to the prison, and they brought him tidings of the works of Jesus, and told how the people were flocking to Him. But they questioned why, if this new teacher was the Messiah, He did nothing to effect John's release. How could He permit His faithful herald to be deprived of liberty and perhaps of life?

Instead of strengthening John in his work of accepting the school of life, they weakened him. In this way they made themselves his enemies, when they should have been his friends.

The Desire of Ages, p. 215:

These questions were not without effect. Doubts which otherwise would never have arisen were suggested to John. Satan rejoiced to hear the words of these disciples, and to see how they bruised the soul of the Lord's messenger. Oh, how often those who think themselves the friends of a good man, and who are eager to show their fidelity to him, prove to be his most dangerous enemies! How often, instead of strengthening his faith, their words depress and dishearten!

Fortunately John the Baptist made the right choice in this situation. He accepted the school of life, from which he never ran away, despite his feelings. He would not discuss his questions with his disciples, but sent a message to Jesus instead.

The Desire of Ages, p. 216:

But the Baptist did not surrender his faith in Christ....

John would not discuss his doubts and anxieties with his companions. He determined to send a message of inquiry to

Jesus. This he entrusted to two of his disciples, hoping that an interview with the Saviour would confirm their faith, and bring assurance to their brethren. And he longed for some word from Christ spoken directly for himself.

After receiving Christ's answer, John was ready and willing to accept the final school of life—his own martyrdom.

The Desire of Ages, p. 218:

The Saviour's words, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in Me," were a gentle reproof to John. It was not lost upon him. Understanding more clearly now the nature of Christ's mission, he yielded himself to God for life or for death, as should best serve the interests of the cause he loved.

This is a shining example of accepting the school of life, especially for those who are living in the last days of this earth's history. John the Baptist is a type of those who will finish the work. Let us grasp the following promise, and fully accept the school of life for ourselves.

The Desire of Ages, p. 224:

God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him. Not Enoch, who was translated to heaven, not Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist, who perished alone in the dungeon.

"Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." Philipians 1:29.

And of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor.

The School of Life Rejected

As Ellen's life was ruined through her accident, so the life of our first parents was wrecked when they fell into sin. Their ruin was even greater in a sense, because death, a thing unknown until then, entered this world when they sinned. The Lord told them very plainly what the results of their disobedience would be.

Genesis 3

¹⁶ To the woman He said: I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.

¹⁷ Then to Adam He said, Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, You shall not eat of it: cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life.

¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field.

¹⁹ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 61-62:

After their sin Adam and Eve were no longer to dwell in Eden. They earnestly entreated that they might remain in the home of their innocence and joy. They confessed that they had forfeited all right to that happy abode, but pledged themselves for the future to yield strict obedience to God. But they were told that their nature had become depraved by sin; they had lessened their strength to resist evil and had opened the way for Satan to gain more ready access to them. In their innocence they had yielded to temptation; and now, in a state of conscious guilt, they would have less power to maintain their integrity.

In humility and unutterable sadness they bade farewell to their beautiful home and went forth to dwell upon the earth, where rested the curse of sin. The atmosphere, once so mild and uniform in temperature, was now subject to marked changes, and the Lord mercifully provided them with a garment of skins as a protection from the extremes of heat and cold.

As they witnessed in drooping flower and falling leaf the first signs of decay, Adam and his companion mourned more deeply than men now mourn over their dead. The death of the frail, delicate flowers was indeed a cause of sorrow; but when the goodly trees cast off their leaves, the scene brought vividly to mind the stern fact that death is the portion of every living thing.

Terrible as these results were, this school of life was necessary to bring Adam and Eve back to obedience and restore the image of God in them. The future happiness of humanity depended on their accepting this school. The sorrow of our first parents, and their plea to remain in the garden of Eden, shows how human nature tries to evade the school of life. But Adam and Eve had to accept this school, and in time they did.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 82:

Though the sentence of death pronounced upon him by His Maker had at first appeared terrible, yet after beholding for nearly a thousand years the results of sin, he felt that it was merciful of God to bring to an end a life of suffering and sorrow.

Cain, the eldest son of our first parents, did not accept the school of life, and he tried to escape it wherever he could.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 71:

But Cain cherished feelings of rebellion, and murmured against God because of the curse pronounced upon the earth and upon the human race for Adam's sin.

It was in this spirit that Cain brought his sacrifice before the Lord, not with the animal that God had specified, but with

the fruits of the field.

Genesis 4

³ And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord.

Cain did not want to see death, and so he tried to avoid the unpleasant school that God had given him. But he could not escape it, for the Lord

⁵ ...did not respect Cain and his offering.

In contrast to this, Abel brought an offering exactly as the Lord had specified, and with a willing spirit. He fully accepted the school of life the Lord had given to humanity.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 71:

He saw justice and mercy in the Creator's dealings with the fallen race, and gratefully accepted the hope of redemption.

Consequently, the Lord

Genesis 4

⁴ ...respected Abel and his offering.

This contrast was a challenge to Cain to accept the school of life, but instead he only indulged in feelings of self-pity.

Genesis 4

⁵ And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

Accepting the school of life also means showing no sympathy to those who indulge in self-pity, but instead showing them the unreasonableness of their course whenever the Lord so directs. And this is just what Abel did with his brother.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 74:

In meekness, yet fearlessly and firmly, Abel defended the justice and goodness of God. He pointed out Cain's error, and tried to convince him that the wrong was in himself. He pointed to the compassion of God in sparing the life of their parents when He might have punished them with instant

death, and urged that God loved them, or He would not have given His Son, innocent and holy, to suffer the penalty which they had incurred.

Reason and conscience told him that Abel was in the right...

But Cain still tried to avoid his school. Consequently, Cain killed his brother, thereby quieting the voice of conscience that was urging him to accept the school of life. Killing his brother was Cain's ultimate act of rejection of the school of life.

Subsequently, in harmony with his character of running away from the school of life, Cain tried to hide his action. When the Lord asked him where his brother was, he pretended that he did not know. But we cannot hide anything from the Lord.

When it became apparent that God knew what had happened, Cain seemed to show some regret. However, a closer look at his actions reveals that he was again running away from the school of life. He did not want to bear the consequences of his own actions.

Genesis 4

¹⁶ Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod [Hebrew: *nud* = "wandering," "flight," or "exile."] on the east of Eden.

Cain ran away from the presence of the Lord because he wanted to escape the school of life, from which he ever afterwards tried to flee. This is why the name of the land he went to was called "Nod," which means "flee."

CHAPTER SIX

Joseph

See *Genesis* 37:12-36.

Joseph, the son of Jacob and eldest son of Rachel, is an example of a man who was unwisely spared the rod in his childhood. Joseph was the favorite child of his father Jacob.

Genesis 37

³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors.

This favoritism led Jacob to deal unwisely with his son.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 209:

Jacob unwisely manifested his preference for Joseph, and this excited the jealousy of his other sons.

Not being required to bear all the necessary hardships of life, Joseph consequently developed a nature which made it very difficult for him to bear the hardships that eventually became unavoidable. The first of these occurred when his brothers, full of envy, dealt very harshly with him.

Joseph was sent by his father to look for his brothers. The place where he expected to find them was about 80 kilometers away, and when Joseph arrived there he was tired and hungry. He had not allowed himself much rest because he was so anxious to carry out the will of his father. When he learned that his brothers had gone to Dothan, which was a further 25 kilometers away, Joseph did not hesitate but immediately continued on his journey.

But his brothers did not give him a friendly reception. They recognized him from afar, and plotted to kill him. They had the same spirit as Cain—they wanted to avoid the school of life. But Reuben tried to save the life of his brother, and sug-

gested that they put him into a pit.

When Joseph arrived, they rudely tore off his beautiful garment and threw him into this pit. What a school this was for Joseph! And there was no father who could deliver him from it now. Joseph looked into the angry faces of his brothers, whom he thought loved him as he loved them. But here he was in this pit, from which there was no escape. He was hungry, fearful, and tired, and he could hear his brothers eating bread and mocking him.

After a while Joseph was pulled out of the pit, which at first must have been a relief to him. But when he saw the slave traders, his new school became even worse.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 211:

As he saw the merchants the dreadful truth flashed upon him. To become a slave was a fate more to be feared than death. In an agony of terror he appealed to one and another of his brothers, but in vain.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 213:

Joseph with his captors was on the way to Egypt. As the caravan journeyed southward toward the borders of Canaan, the boy could discern in the distance the hills among which lay his father's tents. Bitterly he wept at thought of that loving father in his loneliness and affliction. Again the scene at Dothan came up before him. He saw his angry brothers and felt their fierce glances bent upon him. The stinging, insulting words that had met his agonized entreaties were ringing in his ears.

With a trembling heart he looked forward to the future. What a change in situation—from the tenderly cherished son to the despised and helpless slave! Alone and friendless, what would be his lot in the strange land to which he was going? For a time Joseph gave himself up to uncontrolled grief and terror.

Joseph was full of self-pity. He obviously did not like the school in which he found himself, but it proved to be just the

right school for him at that time.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 213:

But, in the providence of God, even this experience was to be a blessing to him. He had learned in a few hours that which years might not otherwise have taught him. His father, strong and tender as his love had been, had done him wrong by his partiality and indulgence. This unwise preference had angered his brothers and provoked them to the cruel deed that had separated him from his home. Its effects were manifest also in his own character. Faults had been encouraged that were now to be corrected. He was becoming self-sufficient and exacting. Accustomed to the tenderness of his father's care, he felt that he was unprepared to cope with the difficulties before him, in the bitter, uncared-for life of a stranger and a slave.

The sentence, "He had learned in a few hours that which years might not otherwise have taught him," shows that he finally accepted this school, even though it was hard for him to do so. But once he had accepted it, the school did not seem so hard to Joseph anymore. The school of life in his youth and adulthood, finally did for him what his father had neglected to do in his childhood.

Patriarchs and Prophets, 213–214:

Then his thoughts turned to his father's God. In his childhood he had been taught to love and fear Him. Often in his father's tent he had listened to the story of the vision that Jacob saw as he fled from his home an exile and a fugitive. He had been told of the Lord's promises to Jacob, and how they had been fulfilled—how, in the hour of need, the angels of God had come to instruct, comfort, and protect him. And he had learned of the love of God in providing for men a Redeemer. Now all these precious lessons came vividly before him. Joseph believed that the God of his fathers would be his God. He then and there gave himself fully to the Lord, and he prayed that the Keeper of Israel would be with him in the land of his exile.

His soul thrilled with the high resolve to prove himself

true to God—under all circumstances to act as became a subject of the King of heaven. He would serve the Lord with undivided heart; he would meet the trials of his lot with fortitude and perform every duty with fidelity. One day's experience had been the turning point in Joseph's life. Its terrible calamity had transformed him from a petted child to a man, thoughtful, courageous, and self-possessed.

It is quite remarkable how quickly this change came about. Once we are committed to accepting the rod, the Lord can do great things indeed. This is a promise that we need to ponder.

Joseph's new experience in accepting the school of life was severely tested in Egypt. The first shock must have been the heathen surroundings.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 214:

He was in the midst of idolatry. The worship of false gods was surrounded by all the pomp of royalty, supported by the wealth and culture of the most highly civilized nation then in existence.

There was no loving father to protect him from this environment anymore, or even to warn him not to follow these practices. But Joseph took his own stand, and showed that he had fully accepted the challenges that the school of life had brought him.

Yet Joseph preserved his simplicity and his fidelity to God. The sights and sounds of vice were all about him, but he was as one who saw and heard not. His thoughts were not permitted to linger upon forbidden subjects. The desire to gain the favor of the Egyptians could not cause him to conceal his principles. Had he attempted to do this, he would have been overcome by temptation; but he was not ashamed of the religion of his fathers, and he made no effort to hide the fact that he was a worshiper of Jehovah.

As a result of his faithfulness and acceptance of the school of life, Joseph was blessed abundantly. It seemed that the school of life was not so bitter after all.

Genesis 39

² The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

³ And his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand.

⁴ So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority.

⁵ So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had in the house and in the field.

⁶ Thus he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

But this was not the end of the story. The school went on. Joseph was eventually cast into prison because of his faithfulness, and had to spend several years there. At first, it seemed that there was no prospect that he would ever be free. Furthermore, he was treated cruelly by the prison wardens.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 218:

At the first Joseph was treated with great severity by his jailers. The psalmist says, "His feet they hurt with fetters; he was laid in chains of iron: until the time that his word came to pass; the word of the Lord tried him." Psalms 105:18, 19, R.V.

But Joseph fully accepted this school as well, and as a result he was drawn nearer to God and was blessed before men.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 218:

But Joseph's real character shines out, even in the darkness of the dungeon. He held fast his faith and patience; his years of faithful service had been most cruelly repaid, yet this did not render him morose or distrustful. He had the peace that comes from conscious innocence, and he trusted his case with God. He did not brood upon his own wrongs, but forgot his sorrow in trying to lighten the sorrows of oth-

ers. He found a work to do, even in the prison.

God was preparing him in the school of affliction for greater usefulness, and he did not refuse the needful discipline. In the prison, witnessing the results of oppression and tyranny and the effects of crime, he learned lessons of justice, sympathy, and mercy, that prepared him to exercise power with wisdom and compassion.

Once again, by accepting the rod Joseph made his lot much easier. This will always be the case when we stop trying to escape the school of life and fully accept whatever the Lord gives us in His providence.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 218:

Joseph gradually gained the confidence of the keeper of the prison, and was finally entrusted with the charge of all the prisoners. It was the part he acted in the prison—the integrity of his daily life and his sympathy for those who were in trouble and distress—that opened the way for his future prosperity and honor.

Every ray of light that we shed upon others is reflected upon ourselves. Every kind and sympathizing word spoken to the sorrowful, every act to relieve the oppressed, and every gift to the needy, if prompted by a right motive, will result in blessings to the giver.

In spite of his acceptance of this school of life, it is understandable that Joseph also desired to be freed from prison. The question was, would he fully accept the prison, knowing that this was his rod, even to the extent of refusing an escape from it? His difficulty in fully accepting this rod is revealed in his own words.

Genesis 40

¹⁴ But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house.

¹⁵ For indeed I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and also I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon.

This complaint, if it had reached Pharaoh would have caused great difficulties for Joseph. Pharaoh would have probably investigated into his case, and Potiphar would have witnessed against Joseph in order to save his own reputation and that of his household. This would have only worsened Joseph's situation.

But in the providence of God, the chief butler forgot all about Joseph and so the message never reached Pharaoh's ears. To Joseph, this disappointment was another lesson in his school.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 219:

For two years longer Joseph remained a prisoner. The hope that had been kindled in his heart gradually died out, and to all other trials was added the bitter sting of ingratitude.

In the providence of the Lord, Joseph was finally freed. And he was not only a free man—he was also made the prime minister of Egypt! All Joseph's experiences in the school of life had prepared him for this task. Had he not fully accepted his school, he would have been unfit for this tremendous task.

How grateful he was to the Lord for His over-ruling providence! Furthermore, he bore no grudges towards his brothers, who were the cause of his coming to Egypt and spending so many years in prison. Instead, he knew that all these things had been instruments in the hand of the Almighty to prepare him for his life-work—the salvation of his family and many others. This is the testimony he gave to his brothers.

Genesis 45

⁵ But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.

⁶ For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting.

⁷ And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you

in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

⁸ So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

This testimony shows Joseph's full acceptance of the school of life. By testing his brothers when they came to Egypt to obtain food, he allowed them to experience a similar school, although to a lesser degree.

Finally Joseph proved that even in his high position as prime minister he never forgot the school of life. He bound up his own fate with that of God's people.

Jesus in the School of Life

Just as Joseph was cast into the school of life to prepare him for his later work, so was Christ.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 239:

The life of Joseph illustrates the life of Christ. It was envy that moved the brothers of Joseph to sell him as a slave; they hoped to prevent him from becoming greater than themselves. And when he was carried to Egypt, they flattered themselves that they were to be no more troubled with his dreams, that they had removed all possibility of their fulfillment. But their own course was overruled by God to bring about the very event that they designed to hinder. So the Jewish priests and elders were jealous of Christ, fearing that He would attract the attention of the people from them. They put Him to death, to prevent Him from becoming king, but they were thus bringing about this very result.

Joseph, through his bondage in Egypt, became a savior to his father's family; yet this fact did not lessen the guilt of his brothers. So the crucifixion of Christ by His enemies made Him the Redeemer of mankind, the Saviour of the fallen race, and Ruler over the whole world; but the crime of His murderers was just as heinous as though God's providential hand had not controlled events for His own glory and the good of man.

As Joseph was sold to the heathen by his own brothers, so Christ was sold to His bitterest enemies by one of His disciples. Joseph was falsely accused and thrust into prison because of his virtue; so Christ was despised and rejected because His righteous, self-denying life was a rebuke to sin; and though guilty of no wrong, He was condemned upon the testimony of false witnesses.

And Joseph's patience and meekness under injustice and oppression, his ready forgiveness and noble benevolence toward his unnatural brothers, represent the Saviour's uncomplaining endurance of the malice and abuse of wicked men,

and His forgiveness, not only of His murderers, but of all who have come to Him confessing their sins and seeking pardon.

Jesus was placed under the rod for two reasons. Firstly, He needed to be a perfect example to all other children and adults, and secondly, He needed to become the perfect Saviour.

Hebrews 5

⁸ Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

In order to study Jesus' school of life, we must begin with His childhood. Even the circumstances of His birth were a school. He was born in a stall. Herod tried to murder Him, and consequently His parents had to flee to Egypt. This did not leave much room for sentimentalism. It was a stern school against self-pity, and it enabled the parents of Jesus to give Him the right kind of education.

As a child, Jesus lived in Nazareth, which was despised for its wickedness. Here was the school of life that God had chosen for His Son.

The Desire of Ages, p. 72:

The parents of Jesus were poor, and dependent upon their daily toil. He was familiar with poverty, self-denial, and privation. This experience was a safeguard to Him. In His industrious life there were no idle moments to invite temptation. No aimless hours opened the way for corrupting associations....

Christ was the only sinless one who ever dwelt on earth; yet for nearly thirty years He lived among the wicked inhabitants of Nazareth. This fact is a rebuke to those who think themselves dependent upon place, fortune, or prosperity, in order to live a blameless life. Temptation, poverty, adversity, is the very discipline needed to develop purity and firmness.

Many paragraphs of this chapter, "As a Child," from *The*

Desire of Ages could be quoted which would show the school of life that the child Jesus experienced. Turning to the ninth chapter, “Days of Conflict,” we can continue in the same vein. Here we read how Jesus was misunderstood, badly treated, and so forth. This education can be summarized in the following words:

The Desire of Ages, p. 88:

Of the bitterness that falls to the lot of humanity, there was no part which Christ did not taste.

Let us look at the wonderful way that Jesus accepted the rod.

The Desire of Ages, p. 89:

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

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

Not only during His childhood and youth was the rod applied to Jesus, but throughout His life. Because He loved Him the Father did not spare His Son the rod.

The Ministry of Healing, p. 55:

Often His incessant labor and the conflict with the enmity and false teaching of the rabbis left Him so utterly wearied that His mother and brothers, and even His disciples, feared that His life would be sacrificed.

When Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, He

experienced an extraordinary school.

The Desire of Ages, p. 114:

When Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted, He was led by the Spirit of God. He did not invite temptation. He went to the wilderness to be alone, to contemplate His mission and work. By fasting and prayer He was to brace Himself for the bloodstained path He must travel.

As the time of prayer and fasting went on, Jesus did not receive any answer that might indicate His test was over. So He continued on. For forty days He fasted and prayed. He refused to leave this school until the Father said, "It is enough." When Satan came to Him, all his temptations were aimed at inducing Jesus to leave the school of life.

Matthew 4

³ If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.

Just as Satan wanted to make Christ believe that the rod is not for true sons, but only for strangers, so he wants to deceive us. But Jesus proved Satan wrong. Exactly the opposite is in fact true—the rod is first and foremost for God's children, because it is a blessing to them.

1 Peter 4

¹⁷ For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God.

The third temptation perfectly summarized Satan's intentions.

The Desire of Ages, p. 129:

Christ's mission could be fulfilled only through suffering. Before Him was a life of sorrow, hardship, and conflict, and an ignominious death. He must bear the sins of the whole world. He must endure separation from His Father's love. Now the tempter offered to yield up the power he had usurped. Christ might deliver Himself from the dreadful future by acknowledging the supremacy of Satan.

Christ did not try to escape His school, but fully submitted to it.

The Desire of Ages, p. 121:

He awaited God's time to bring relief. He was in the wilderness in obedience to God, and He would not obtain food by following the suggestions of Satan. In the presence of the witnessing universe, He testified that it is a less calamity to suffer whatever may befall than to depart in any manner from the will of God.

Jesus understood His school and He purposefully remained in it. He also revealed to the disciples that He would not be diverted from following God's way.

Matthew 16

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

This was very unwelcome news to the disciples, who still had the tendency to run away from the school of life.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 525:

Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" Matthew 16:22. Self-pity, which shrank from fellowship with Christ in suffering, prompted Peter's remonstrance. It was to the disciple a bitter lesson, and one which he learned but slowly, that the path of Christ on earth lay through agony and humiliation.

In His answer, Jesus clearly showed His resolve and commitment to the school of life.

Matthew 16

²³ But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.

It was the patient bearing of hardships throughout His life

that prepared Jesus to make His last crowning sacrifice for humanity at Gethsemane and Calvary. By accepting this—the ultimate school of all schools—He became our Saviour as well as our Mediator in heaven.

Philippians 2

⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

⁶ Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

⁷ But made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

¹¹ And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Deliverance from Self-Pity

As we look at these wonderful examples of Joseph and Jesus we may well ask ourselves: How can we ever attain to such true greatness? Many of us have been spoiled in our childhood. Our parents and our teachers have spared the rod and now we, together with the society of today, try to flee from it. The various mechanisms of escape from the school of life can be found everywhere. What shall we do to be delivered from this spiral of self-pity, which leads us only into deeper depression and the desire to be treated more gently?

The life of Joseph may be a comfort to us, for the rod was spared in his childhood too. But even so, he accepted it once he was away from home. He made the right decision and was able to learn in later years what he failed to learn in his childhood.

In our case, we really need to see the escape mechanisms from the school of life which we use so willingly. We must become aware of this sin, and see something of its terrible results in our lives.

We must pray in faith for forgiveness for the time lost, and for a thorough cleansing from our self-pity. Then knowing that the Lord offers us this gift of deliverance, we must take hold of it by living faith.

Once we have this knowledge of our deliverance, by faith, it is important to accept the school of life wholeheartedly, whatever it may bring us. Let us take all difficulties as coming from the hand of the Almighty and never murmur against them. Instead of avoiding the hardships of life, let us rather seek those the Lord has appointed for us, so that we can better serve.

The Ministry of Healing, p. 502:

Everyone who accepts Christ as his personal Saviour will long for the privilege of serving God. Contemplating what heaven has done for him, his heart is moved with boundless love and adoring gratitude. He is eager to signalize his gratitude by devoting his abilities to God's service. He longs to show his love for Christ and for His purchased possession. He covets toil, hardship, sacrifice.

When parents, teachers, employers, the servants of God, or any person who has authority over us, utter any rebuke, let us really accept it, and not try to shield ourselves from it with vain excuses.

Finally let us make a holy covenant with God and our fellow believers that we are truly willing to be reminded to accept the school of life, or the rod, as the Lord's appointed antidote to self-pity. If we do this we will come off more than conquerors through the faith of Jesus, our Pattern.

Steps Against Self-Pity

1. Become aware of the escape mechanisms from the school of life that I use in my own life.
2. Pray in faith for forgiveness and cleansing from self-pity.
3. Lay hold, by faith, on the promise that the Lord has forgiven and cleansed me.
4. Accept the school of life wholeheartedly, whatever it may bring.
5. Seek the school of life that the Lord has appointed for my service.
6. Fully accept the rebukes that I receive, not excusing my sins and mistakes as "misunderstandings."
7. Make a covenant that I want to be reminded to accept the school of life.

