



# HEALTHY Self-Distrust

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Peter confesses his sinfulness  
in the presence of Christ  
Luke 5:8

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**T**HE theme we will mainly study is called “Healthy Self-Distrust.” The reason we call it “healthy” is because almost every term has two meanings. It can be looked at from one side or the other. Self-distrust is something that can lead a person to utter inactivity, to burying himself, even to the point of killing himself. But a “healthy” self-distrust is exactly what we need, according to God’s word.

## Healthy Self-Distrust

**The first thing to be learned  
by all who would become  
workers together with God  
is the lesson of self-distrust.**

*The Desire of Ages, p. 249*

Jesus commanded Peter to throw out his net. At first he did not want to. He obeyed his Master, but he was hesitant, and he said,

“Why should I throw out my net now in the daytime, when I didn’t catch anything all night? At night is the time to catch fish.”

But he did it, in obedience to Christ, and his net was absolutely full. Not only his, but also that of his brother Andrew, and James and John. They all needed to help, and the ship almost sank. In this miracle he recognized the almighty power of Jesus, and he was now full of self-distrust, whereas before he was full of self-trust. In this connection it is written,

**The Desire of Ages, p. 249:**

The first thing to be learned by all who would become workers together with God is the lesson of self-distrust.

We want to be a blessing to the countries we come from; we want to share with them what we have learned in the school of Jesus; we want to encourage them to fight this last battle together with us. However, we have no chance of accomplishing this unless we learn the first lesson:

The first thing to be learned by all who would become workers together with God is the lesson of self-distrust.

This is the first lesson, and yet it seems to me that this is almost the last lesson that we are learning here. We do not know exactly why, but it's a lesson we have not yet fully learned. I want to give a few examples of why this is so important for us. We have certain words that we like to use, for example,

"I have faith,"

and

"I have the victory."

If we say these things, and then we fall into sin again, what will we say then? Another example is that we say,

"I don't need a physician anymore because I have faith, I have God as my doctor."

Very often such statements are connected with a lack of self-distrust. That is because we have not learned the first les-

son, the lesson of self-distrust. So what is the lesson of self-distrust? Where does self-distrust come from and what is it?

What is healthy self-distrust? I will give a brief overview and then we will go into more detail. First of all, it is a realization of my dependence. When I say this, I'm fully aware of Jesus who expressed His dependence with the words,

**John 5**

<sup>19</sup> I can do nothing of myself.

He showed that He was absolutely dependent on His Father. So a realization of my dependence is the first part. The second part is a true judgment of myself. By judgment we mean an assessment. Can I see myself as God sees me?

The next thing is honesty: honesty toward others, and honesty toward myself. If we lack in faith, do we want to show this to others? No, to them we give the impression that we have a lot of faith. Likewise, if we do not have means, do we like to show this to others? No, we give the impression as though we have means. So, self-distrust is honesty toward others, and honesty toward myself.

We define self-distrust as freedom from self-confidence and also freedom from self-condemnation. Finally, it is freedom from presumption. These are very important points in a healthy self-distrust. We will refer to them now step by step:

1. A realization of my dependence;
2. A true judgment of myself;
3. I see myself as God sees me;
4. Honesty toward others and toward myself;
5. Freedom from self-confidence and self-condemnation;
6. Freedom from presumption.



## What is Healthy Self-Distrust?

- A realization of my dependence
- A true judgment of myself
- I see myself as God sees me
- Honesty
- Freedom from
  - Self-confidence
  - Self-condemnation
  - Presumption

### A Realization of My Dependence

We referred already to the statement Jesus made of himself:

#### **John 5**

<sup>19</sup> I can do nothing of myself.

But He says the same thing about us:

#### **John 15**

<sup>5</sup> I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without me you can do nothing.

The same dependence that He had on His Father He expects us to have on Him. Let's compare this more closely with what Jesus said of himself:

#### **John 5**

<sup>19</sup> Then Jesus answered and said to them, Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.

That does not mean that it was not possible for the Son to do anything else. He had the freedom and also the possibility to make His own plans, to go His own ways, and to work by His own power. However, He chose not to. When He says, “I can do nothing,” He means it this way:

“I cannot do it, and at the same time be the Son of God. If I am the Son of God, then I can do nothing except what I see my Father do.”

Exactly the same thing is said about the disciples.

“If you are my disciples, then you stand in the same relationship toward me.”

Let’s begin in verse 1:

### **John 15**

<sup>1</sup> I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser.

<sup>2</sup> Every branch in me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

<sup>3</sup> You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

<sup>4</sup> Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.

<sup>5</sup> I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without me you can do nothing.

Nothing. “Without me you can do nothing.” Do we realize this and recognize it? In the next quote, this verse from *John* is quoted and then the following comments are made:

### **Our High Calling, p. 146:**

We are finite, but a wonderful arrangement has been made that we may have close connection with the Infinite....Finite beings at their best can do but little, but Christ working through humanity may accomplish wonderful results.

It is a painful thought to me that I can do so little. The lim-

ited sphere of human capabilities leads me to feel indeed the words of Christ, “Without me you can do nothing.” Many are endowed with superior talents and do not use them, because they have no living connection with God....My own scanty knowledge and feeble energies drive me to Jesus, and the language of my heart is,

“Oh God, I can do nothing. I hang my helpless soul on You, Jesus Christ my Saviour. Put your grace into my heart. Attract my mind from my weakness to your almighty strength, from my ignorance to your eternal wisdom, from my frailty to your enduring might. Give me correct views of the great plan of redemption. Let me see and understand what Christ is to me, and that my heart, soul, mind, and strength are bought with a price. Christ has imparted to me that I may impart to others. Lift up my soul; strengthen and enlighten my mind that I may comprehend more clearly the character of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, that I may know that it is my privilege to be a partaker of the divine nature.”

What I found strange at first was this statement:

Many are endowed with superior talents and do not use them.

If we are dependent upon somebody else, then we don't need special powers, do we? That is how we normally think. We tend to think that we need special powers only when we act independently, but if we are totally dependent upon somebody else, for what do we need special powers or special talents? The connection here is interesting,

Many are endowed with superior talents and do not use them because they have no living connection with God.

God has given us special talents, special powers. We tend to conclude that He has given us these things so that we can act independently of Him. However, this is not the purpose for which He has given us talents and powers. For what purpose has He given them to us? So that we will act in dependence on Him and use these talents and powers in dependence on



Him.

Our talents and powers are from Him, and they are to be employed as He directs. Even though we have received talents and powers in the beginning, we need a constant flow of life to keep these talents and powers alive. When we do not connect these talents and powers with Him we are like a battery that runs out after a while. It is charged in the beginning, we have received something, but it runs out. However if we are connected with Him it's like a battery that is charged again and again.

Furthermore, if we use our talents and powers apart from Him we waste them because we use them in the wrong direction. We must use them as He directs. That's the only way they can be efficiently used, even though we may not see it properly. So, can you see that this statement is very appropriate? Yes, we need talents and powers but in spite of all these talents and powers we are still dependent on Him.

Jesus sent out the twelve disciples and later He also sent out seventy disciples to preach the Gospel everywhere around. They went out two by two, without Jesus for the first time. Up until this point they had just been following Jesus and working together with Him, but now they stood alone. When they came back they said,

“Oh Master, it works. The power You gave us is tremendous. The sick were healed and even the devils were cast out. That is exciting.”

However, Jesus dampened their excitement. He quieted it, telling them to be careful:

### **Luke 10**

<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.

In other words, Jesus was saying,

“You are in danger of self-confidence. Success will always lead you to be too confident in yourself. You must realize your dependence; you must realize that only because your names are written in the books of heaven can you do this job. As soon as you lose sight of this you will fail.”

He gave them this warning at the very moment that they were so excited and rejoicing. How much more is it necessary for us, then, to realize that when we rejoice in something it should be because we have a connection with God and not because we are so strong in ourselves.

### **Jeremiah 9**

<sup>23</sup> Thus says the Lord: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom...

When we realize how our wisdom helped us, we are warned:

<sup>23</sup> Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches;

<sup>24</sup> But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight, says the Lord.

This is the Old Testament parallel to *Luke 10:20*. Jesus said,

### **Luke 10**

<sup>20</sup> But glory not in this, that the devils are subject to you, but rather glory that your name is written in the book of heaven.

### **Jeremiah 9**

<sup>24</sup> Let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows that I am the Lord.

“Let him glory that he understands his dependence on me.”

That is the thought. Let us turn to a commentary on these words:

## **The Desire of Ages, p. 493:**

### **Luke 10**

<sup>20</sup> Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

Rejoice not in the possession of power, lest you lose sight of your dependence upon God. Be careful lest self-sufficiency come in, and you work in your own strength, rather than in the spirit and strength of your Master. Self is ever ready to take the credit if any measure of success attends the work.

Do we believe that?

“It is the self of my brother that is ever ready to take credit, but not myself, because I’m humble and I have myself under control.”

Is this how we think? Let’s not think like this. Let’s see self as “I.” It’s me.

Self is ever ready to take the credit if any measure of success attends the work.

When we read this we should fear when we have success.

## **The Desire of Ages, p. 493:**

Self is flattered and exalted, and the impression is not made upon other minds that God is all and in all. The apostle Paul says,

### **2 Corinthians 12**

<sup>10</sup> When I am weak, then am I strong.

When we have a realization of our weakness, we learn to depend upon a power not inherent.

Nothing can take so strong a hold on the heart as the abiding sense of our responsibility to God. Nothing reaches so fully down to the deepest motives of conduct as a sense of the pardoning love of Christ. We are to come in touch with God, then we shall be imbued with His Holy Spirit, that enables us to come in touch with our fellow men. Then rejoice that through Christ you have become connected with God, members of the heavenly family.

While you look higher than yourself, you will have a continual sense of the weakness of humanity. The less you cherish self, the more distinct and full will be your comprehension of the excellence of your Saviour. The more closely you connect yourself with the source of light and power, the greater light will be shed upon you, and the greater power will be yours to work for God. Rejoice that you are one with God, one with Christ, and with the whole family of heaven.

## A Realization of My Dependence

- “I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without me you can do nothing.” *John 15:5* (See *Our High Calling*, p. 146)
- “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” *Luke 10:20* (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 493)

When I had just recently acquired my driver’s license, somebody told me,

“I will never ride with someone who has never had an accident.”

I said, “What?”

“Yes, because he who has never had an accident does not realize how dangerous driving is! You know, he is always in danger of going a little bit too far in driving too fast, or not keeping proper distance or whatever; but he who has once had a bad accident, he knows. He will be careful.”

Well, I don't know if this is entirely the case in car driving because some never learn, but others learn. It is often true, once we have had a bad accident, we are more careful. Isn't it so? However, when we have been forgiven by Christ, when we have fallen and truly been forgiven, and we have a sense of being forgiven and work in that attitude, Ellen White says nothing has such a power to help us to do the right thing. Let's read this again,

**The Desire of Ages, p. 493:**

Nothing can take so strong a hold on the heart as the abiding sense of our responsibility to God. Nothing reaches so fully down to the deepest motives of conduct as a sense of the pardoning love of Christ.

Only those who are aware that they are forgiven can do a work for others. When we come to others without that awareness, we cannot help them. Impossible! Why? Because we don't realize our dependence on Christ. There is only one way to work, and that is to be constantly aware of our weaknesses. Self-distrust is the first lesson that we need to learn. Let's read these lines again:

We are to come in touch with God, then we shall be imbued with His Holy Spirit, that enables us to come in touch with our fellow men. Then rejoice that through Christ you have become connected with God, members of the heavenly family.

While you look higher than yourself, you will have a continual sense of the weakness of humanity. The less you cherish self, the more distinct and full will be your comprehension of the excellence of your Saviour.

So we see that recognizing our utter dependence on God is the first definition of self-distrust, which is the first lesson that we need to learn when we want to be workers with God.

## **A True Judgment of Myself**

Self-distrust is having a proper self-judgment. There is a

true and a false self-judgment. What is the false, and what is the true? Let's make a very brief table:

False Self-Judgment	True Self-Judgment
I am rich	I am wretched, miserable, poor
I'm in need of nothing	I am blind and naked

This is made very clear in *Revelation* 3:14-16, in the message to Laodicea. Let's read the context.

**Revelation 3**

<sup>14</sup> And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

<sup>15</sup> I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.

<sup>16</sup> So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth.

Why are you lukewarm? What is the reason for this?

<sup>17</sup> Because you say, I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

This shows a very, very bad misjudgment of myself. Let's ask ourselves the question,

“What can we do?”

Here somebody comes and tells us,

“You are poor, blind and naked.”

But we don't see it. What can we do? It's like somebody tells me that it is raining outside and I say,

“No, the sun's shining.”

But he says,

“No, but it's raining.”

What can I do? I see only sunshine. Maybe look on the other side of the house, maybe it is raining over there, that is possible, but here I see sunshine.

We have to rely on the Word of God. We have to rely on it more than on our own judgment. Therefore the false judgment is my own judgment of myself, and the true judgment is how God judges me. True self-judgment is when I see myself as God sees me.

When we talk about an awareness of our own weakness, when we talk about a healthy self-distrust, this can come about only by consulting the word of God and thereby seeing myself in the light that God sees me. Then—I am absolutely sure, there is no question about this—I will have no reason for self-glorification, whatsoever. There is no room left for that.

Another aspect of true self-judgment in self-distrust is also that we do not defend ourselves, even when we are unjustly accused of something. Let's suppose somebody says,

“You are haughty, you are unreliable, you are doing this wrong and that wrong.”

But we are only doing our best, we are conscientiously trying to do our best. What do we tend to do then? We immediately defend ourselves. We explain ourselves and declare our good intentions.

However, when we do this we begin to place an estimate upon ourselves. Immediately, once we begin the path of self-justification, we begin the path of judgment of ourselves and that is a wrong path. We cannot judge ourselves. Paul made this very clear when he was judged by others. They said,

“Paul, you are doing this wrong and that wrong.”

How did Paul react to these matters?

**1 Corinthians 4**

<sup>3</sup> But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself.

<sup>4</sup> For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.

<sup>5</sup> Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one’s praise will come from God.

The only judgment that Paul gave of himself was this:

**1 Corinthians 15**

<sup>9</sup> I am the least of all the apostles, and I am not worthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the Lord.

That was the only judgment he gave upon himself. All the rest he left to God. If that is our attitude, then we realize our dependence upon God, and so Paul did. Therefore, the false self-judgment is the judgment we make of ourselves.

**Self-Judgment – False and True**

False	True
"I am rich."	"I am wretched, miserable, and poor."
"I have need of nothing."	"I am blind and naked."
My own judgment of myself.	God's judgment of me.

*Revelation 3:17; 1 Corinthians 4:3-5*



## What is Honesty?

The next question we want to ask is,

“What is honesty?”

What needs to change in our lives so that honesty is truly there? Where are we dishonest? These are the questions we want and need to ask. The Bible says,

### **Exodus 20**

<sup>16</sup> You shall not bear false witness.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 309:**

False speaking in any matter, every attempt or purpose to deceive our neighbor, is here included. An intention to deceive is what constitutes falsehood. By a glance of the eye, a motion of the hand, an expression of the countenance, a falsehood may be told as effectually as by words.

All intentional overstatement, every hint or insinuation calculated to convey an erroneous or exaggerated impression, even the statement of facts in such a manner as to mislead, is falsehood. This precept forbids every effort to injure our neighbor's reputation by misrepresentation or evil surmising, by slander or tale bearing. Even the intentional suppression of truth, by which injury may result to others, is a violation of the ninth commandment.

But this false witness can be given even to ourselves. There is a self-deception that is practiced for such a long time that we really believe what we have deceived ourselves to believe.

What is deception of others? Deception always goes along with an intention to deceive. It can be done by words, when we make exaggerated statements, so that the others shall think better of a situation than it really is. It means that we give a hint or an insinuation calculated to convey erroneous or exaggerated impressions. It means that maybe only a “glance of the eye” could deceive. It can be done by a motion. If I ask you, for example,

“Have you removed this chair?”

—and you shake your head, I suppose you mean “No.” Maybe that’s what you calculated to make me think. That is deception. But it can also be done with simply the expression of the countenance.

A few years ago we studied more deeply into what lying is. We saw that it is half-truth, exaggeration. All this also applies here. It is to give a certain appearance of what we are not. For example,

- I’m poor, miserable, wretched, and blind but I give the appearance to others as though I am rich.
- We are not many members, but we give the appearance that we are many members.
- Let’s suppose we don’t have much money, but we give the appearance that we have much money by buying an expensive car. We do it so others shall think better of us.

We could use many examples here, of the so-called status symbols. They are used to deceive others, to make them think something that is not really there. How often is that practiced in the world? In what way we are a part of this machinery of deception?

Dishonesty is also self-deception,—ignorance of God’s warnings. It’s reading only those words that fit the inclination and closing our eyes toward everything that goes against our inclination. I simply don’t listen anymore, I go out, or whatever. I haven’t heard it. That is self-deception.

What we need in order to have true self-distrust is honesty. We cannot say that we have a wonderful victory when we don’t. We cannot say that we have great faith when we don’t. We cannot say that we have the Latter Rain when we don’t have it. We must learn to be honest in order to understand how weak and how dependent we are.

We cannot behave as though we did nothing wrong when we were sinners. Jesus has forgiven us and we must live in the consciousness of our own weaknesses. We can fall into the same sins again, unless we are constantly on guard. This requires honesty.

## Honesty – What Needs to Change?

### Deception of Others

- Intention to deceive by
  - Word: overstatement
  - Word: hint or insinuation calculated to convey erroneous or exaggerated impressions
  - Glance of the eye
  - Motion
  - Expression of countenance
  - Appearance: status symbols

### Self-deception

- Ignorance of God's warnings
- Reading only those words that fit the inclination
- Closing the eyes to everything that goes against inclination

## What is Self-Confidence?

The next question we want to ask is,

“What is self-confidence, then?”

We have defined self-distrust as the absence of self-confidence, so what is self-confidence? First of all, self-confidence means that we love sin. Yes! Self-confidence means to love sin, in the end. It means that we are blind towards the Saviour. There is a barrier between Him and us, and that is sin. We don't see Him.

It means, as we have indicated in the following diagram, a wall between me and God. It means that my thoughts turn around myself, whether positive or negative, it doesn't matter,

they turn around myself. It means that I don't see God and my fellow man; I just see myself. It means that I cannot sympathize with others, because I see only myself. It means finally that I esteem myself too highly. We could say that I judge myself too highly. Finally, it means to have a "form of godliness."

## What is Self-Confidence?



Let us turn to *2 Timothy 3* to see how it is expressed in that context:

### 2 Timothy 3

<sup>1</sup> But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:

<sup>2</sup> For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters,...

That is, not people who have self-distrust. Self-distrust is something that you don't find in the world today.

<sup>2</sup> For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

<sup>3</sup> Unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, bru-

tal, despisers of good,

<sup>4</sup> Traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

<sup>5</sup> Having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

To deny the power of godliness does not mean that we say we don't have it, it means that we actually don't have it. You see, whereas we say, "We have it," we say we have it but we don't have it. That is the haughtiness described here.

<sup>5</sup> Having the form of godliness, but denying its power. From such people turn away!

All of this is self-confidence, and as we have seen from 2 *Timothy* 3, we are living in a world that is steeped in self-confidence. Self-distrust is not a popular word today. For that reason we are going against the flow when we put this into practice.

## How Self-Confidence Hides

Self-confidence covers itself. In the next diagram is a pendulum, and because a pendulum is moving, we have it in double form. That's a string here, and that's a stone, or whatever; it goes from one side to the other. The pendulum is swinging between two extremes. One is self-condemnation and the other, presumption.

These are the two states, which can appear to be self-distrustful. Presumption not so much, but self-condemnation looks like self-distrust, but it is not; it is self-confidence. In what way? Well, instead of giving up sin, which leads man into perdition, he rather condemns himself and tries to deliver himself by his own works. Behind self-condemnation, there is quite a lot of self-justification or righteousness by works.

Very often people who have this turn to the other extreme soon afterwards, and that is presumption. The people of Israel at Kadesh are an example. At first they said,

“We cannot take this city, we cannot take this country. The Canaanites are too hard for us to conquer...”

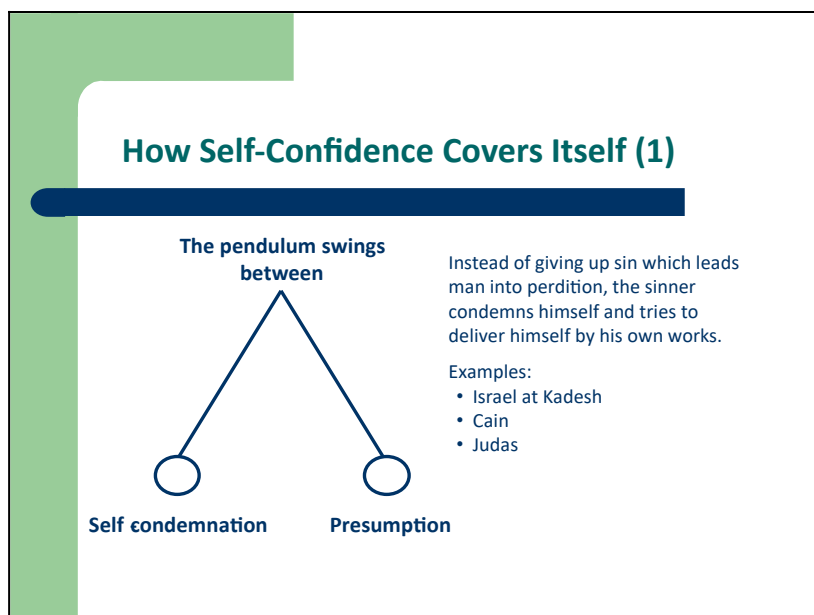
Then God said,

“Okay, then you go back. You are full of self-distrust, right?”

But that was actually distrust in God. In the next moment they said,

“We can, we can, and we have the faith!”

But it was nothing but presumption.



Cain is another example; Judas is another example, who wavered between self-condemnation and presumption. In the end, everything was based on righteousness by works. We can't save ourselves. Not by self-condemnation either, that is not what the study is about. What we are studying is a *healthy* self-distrust, which clings to the Saviour.

Next time, we want to look at another way that self-confidence covers itself, and maybe you can think about yourself, to find more ways in which self-confidence covers itself. We must know our enemy in order to be able to properly fight the sin in God's strength. We have to overcome self-confidence, and for that reason Jesus shows us what self-confidence really is.





ONE of the first lessons, the first thing to be learned as a worker for Christ is the lesson of self-distrust.

## Healthy Self-Distrust

**The first thing to be learned by all  
who would become workers together with God  
is the lesson of self-distrust.**

*The Desire of Ages, p. 249*

## How Self-Confidence Hides

Self-distrust is the absence of self-confidence. However, self-confidence covers itself. It often does not look like self-confidence. When a person condemns himself, we don't think of him as a person who is self-confident, but this is one of the many coverings.

The real background is that instead of giving up sin which leads us to ruin, we would rather condemn ourselves and in this way try to deliver ourselves from the pit by our own works. This, as we mentioned before, is also another form of self-pity. Very often the pendulum swings between self-con-

demnation and presumption, and this is a revelation of the fact that self-confidence is actually at work here.

There is another cover which is very often found and frequently used, and that is the cover of so called “faith.” Maybe we can call it presumption again, but it does not look like presumption at all because all the right things are said. When you ask a person, he says all the right things but he never does them. This often looks like faith, but it just covers up a lot of self-confidence. In order to prove my faith before myself and others, I have a show of godliness.

A very important example of this is the Pharisees in the time of Christ. Remember how they prayed long and used many words, and for what purpose? To give the impression to others that they were men of very large faith, when in fact they were not. Let us read these texts in *Luke 20:47*, *Colossians 2:23* and *2 Timothy 3:5* (which we read already). Let’s turn to *Luke 20*, from verse 45. This is how Jesus speaks to the Pharisees,

### **Luke 20**

<sup>45</sup> Then, in the hearing of all the people, He said to His disciples,

<sup>46</sup> Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts,

<sup>47</sup> Who devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.

For a pretense they make long prayers. The following text describes this problem:

### **Colossians 2**

<sup>20</sup> Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—

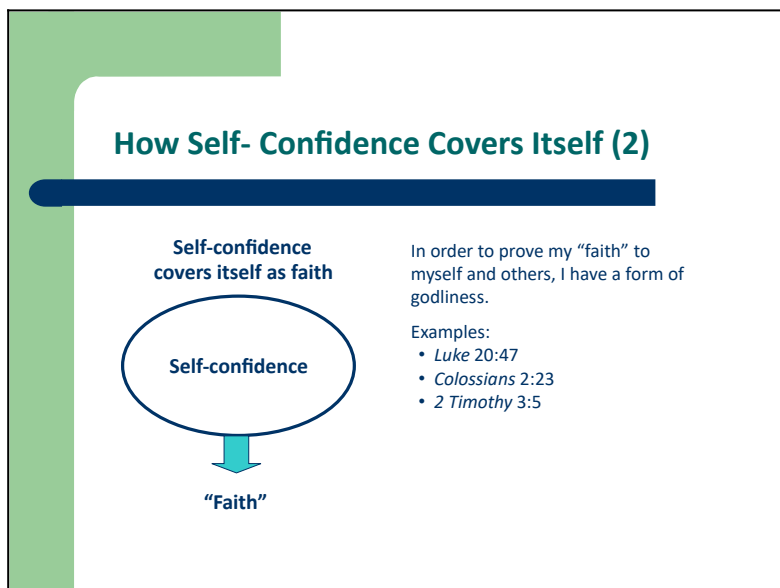
<sup>21</sup> Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,

<sup>22</sup> Which all concern things which perish with the using—ac-

cording to the commandments and doctrines of men?

<sup>23</sup> These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

This is not self-distrust. Even though it looks like the Pharisees may be very humble in this work, it is not self-distrust. Real self-distrust is something else altogether.



## How Self-Confidence is Shown

How does self-confidence show itself? I want to just use some expressions that show when self-confidence is present. You may want to add other things. Let's read these words now:

"I do not need a doctor, because I have faith."

"I'm not getting sick, because I have faith."

"I will prove it to them."

You see, when we have a discussion, self-confidence says,

"I will prove it to them."

Now another one:

“They have given me compliments.”

When I relate a story and tell how many compliments I got, that shows that there is self-confidence. Too much self is there.

“I have found the professionals.”

When we are looking around for the right people and we have found them, we say,

“I found the very people that will do the job.”

Some more:

“I do not need help. I will do it myself.”

“The others are bad, I’m good.”

## How Self-Confidence Shows Itself?

- “I do not need a doctor.”
- “I am not getting sick.”
- “I will prove it to them.”
- “They have given me compliments.”
- “I have found the professionals.”
- “I do not need help. I’ll do it myself.”
- “The others are bad. I am good.”
- “I will take care of that myself.”
- Self-defense

When my relating of events always ends like this,

“The others are bad and I am good,”

–that shows there is self-confidence, too much self-confidence.

“I will take care of that myself.”

We can also say it like this,

“I will see to it that I handle the situation.”

Any self-defense also shows that there is wrong self-confidence because I have to defend something. I’m not realizing my dependence on God.

## **How is Self-Distrust Shown?**

If this is what self-confidence looks like, what does self-distrust look like then, in contrast? Let’s just use some expressions again:

“I don’t know everything, I need help from a doctor.”

“I’m sick, I need help and healing.”

It may be spiritual or physical. When I look back to an event where I spoke of my faith, I asked myself,

“Did I give the right testimony? Did the others praise God after I helped them, or did they praise me?”

Here are some more:

“The Lord gave wisdom for others to me.”

“I need help because I tend to make mistakes.”

“I’m not better than the heathen.”

## **James 4**

<sup>15</sup> If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.

Not:

“I will see to it that this is done,”

but,

“If the Lord wills and we live, I will do this or that.”

Do you know the statement in *James* 4:15? This statement tells us to have self-distrust, to be careful, because we cannot add one minute to our lives. You cannot make sure that this and that happens. Everything that you do, do it as though this was your last moment. Do it with thoroughness and conscientious dependence on God.

This is a little indication, but not a conclusive evidence, that there is self-distrust. Likewise, the other is not necessarily always a strong evidence that there is self-confidence.

However, when we look at our own expressions and our own feelings, let's look for these things and see what is in our hearts: self-distrust or self-confidence? We need to recognize the enemy. For that reason we are dwelling on these expressions a little bit.

## How Self-Distrust Shows Itself?

- “I don’t know everything. I need help from a doctor.”
- “I am sick. I need help and healing.”
- “Did I give the right testimony?”
- “Did the others praise God after I helped them?”
- “The Lord gave others wisdom for me.”
- “I need help because I tend to make mistakes.”
- “I am not better than the heathen.”
- “If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.”  
(*James* 4:15)

Let us look at the text in *Jeremiah* 9:23-24 again, because that is an important text.

## Jeremiah 9

<sup>23</sup> Thus says the Lord: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches:

<sup>24</sup> But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight, says the Lord.

This text summarizes the whole study. We may have received gifts of wisdom, we may have received might, we may have received glory, influence and whatever else, but the important point is that we understand God—that we understand what His will is, that the whole attention of the people is turned to Him, that it is Him that exercises...

<sup>24</sup> ...lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness on the earth. In these I delight, says the Lord.

### *Jeremiah 9:23-24*

Thus says the Lord:

Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,  
let not the mighty man glory in his might,  
nor let the rich man glory in his riches.

But let him who glories glory in this,  
that he understands and knows me,  
that I am the Lord, exercising loving kindness,  
judgment, and righteousness in the earth.  
For in these I delight, says the Lord.

## How Do We Get Self-Distrust?

So, how do we get this healthy self-distrust that we need so

much as the first thing to be learned by all who become workers together with God. How do we get it? This will be an important question, since it is what we need to study, understand and practise.

First of all, let us start at the beginning. How did God bring self-distrust to man? How did He bring it near to them? Even when man was created in his innocent state, in the Garden of Eden, already God had implanted the lesson of self-distrust. It was found in the tree of knowledge.

We can read this in *Genesis* 2, when God created the earth. He described the garden, and He speaks of one tree in the garden, which was the tree of knowledge. He says to mankind,

### **Genesis 2**

<sup>16</sup> And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;

<sup>17</sup> But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

There is a lot of information in this verse. The tree of knowledge was there for one purpose—to show man his dependence on God, to bring him very close to God, and to bring men also close to one another. You may wonder why I say all these things, how can I see these purposes in a tree of knowledge?

Further information is given to us in the book *Patriarchs and Prophets* to which we now want to turn. It's in the chapter "The Temptation and Fall of Man." Before man was placed in the garden, where God knew that Satan would be, he was thoroughly warned of the danger that brought so many angels to rebellion:

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 53:**

The angels [the good angels] warned them to be on their guard against the devices of Satan, for his efforts to ensnare them would be unwearied. While they were obedient to God the evil one could not harm them; for, if need be, every angel



in heaven would be sent to their help. If they steadfastly repelled his first insinuations, they would be as secure as the heavenly messengers. But should they once yield to temptation, their nature would become so depraved that in themselves they would have no power and no disposition to resist Satan.

What a strange statement to make to a sinless being. Imagine a person who is in full possession of himself, who is sinless, who is holy, and you need to tell him that if he yields once, he will from then on be powerless and have no disposition to resist Satan.

The tree of knowledge had been made a test of their obedience and their love to God. The Lord had seen fit to lay upon them but one prohibition as to the use of all that was in the garden; but if they should disregard His will in this particular, they would incur the guilt of transgression. Satan was not to follow them with continual temptations; he could have access to them only at the forbidden tree. Should they attempt to investigate its nature, they would be exposed to his wiles. They were admonished to give careful heed to the warning which God had sent them and to be content with the instruction which He had seen fit to impart.

In order to accomplish his work unperceived, Satan chose to employ as his medium the serpent.

What were the lessons the angels gave them? How can we summarize all this?

“Stay away from the tree, because you are weak,” they said. “You are weak. Be on guard, because you are weak. Stay in communion with God, because you are weak. Stay in fellowship with one another, because you are weak.”

We did not actually read about the fellowship with one another, but it is mentioned further on.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 53:**

The angels had cautioned Eve to beware of separating her-

self from her husband while occupied in their daily labour in the garden.

What? Beware of separating from her husband?

“You are weak. Because you are weak, you cannot separate from him. You have to stay near him.”

It seems almost like mistrust or as though God could not appreciate His creatures, that He gave them so many warnings and cautioned them so much. However, He gave it for good reason. When we receive warnings and cautions, we should not think for a moment that this is unnecessary or superfluous. We need every caution. This is the lesson that God gave them.

One more lesson He gave was,

“You need the law as a protection, as a protector. The law is your protector. Keep close to it.”

On the other hand, there was a great deception that we will now read about. I’ll just describe it beforehand:

1. “I have sufficient wisdom to discern evil.”
2. “I have enough strength to withstand evil.”
3. “I do not need to rely on God’s word, because I rely on my own beauty.”

In fact that is what the serpent said to Eve,

“Do not rely on God’s word, but on your own beauty. If you disobey, you will get more wisdom, which you can rely on, more than on God.”

The law is done away with. This is a popular teaching today in the world. This is the great deception of Satan. All this comes out in the fall of man. We have to decide whether we want to accept the lesson of the Lord or the great deception. Let us now read about this:

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 53-54:**

The angels had cautioned Eve to beware of separating herself from her husband while occupied in their daily labour in the garden; with him she would be in less danger from temptation than if she was alone.

But absorbed in her pleasing task, she unconsciously wandered from his side. On perceiving that she was alone, she felt an apprehension of danger, but dismissed her fears, deciding that she had sufficient wisdom and strength to discern evil and to withstand it. Unmindful of the angels' caution, she soon found herself gazing with mingled curiosity and admiration upon the forbidden tree. The fruit was very beautiful, and she questioned with herself why God had withheld it from them.

Now was the tempter's opportunity. As if he were able to discern the workings of her mind, he addressed her: "Yea, has God said, you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Eve was surprised and startled as she thus seemed to hear the echo of her thoughts. But the serpent continued, in a musical voice, with subtle praise of her surpassing loveliness; and his words were not displeasing. Instead of fleeing from the spot she lingered wonderingly to hear a serpent speak.

Was she aware of her weakness? What was lacking here? Self-distrust. Instead, she had self-confidence. It goes on to say,

Had she been addressed by a being like the angels, her fears would have been excited; but she had no thought that the fascinating serpent could become the medium of the fallen foe.

We see very clearly, this is the great deception:

"I have sufficient wisdom to discern evil."

"I have enough strength to withstand evil."

This is a very clear expression of self-confidence and not of self-distrust.

What is the lesson, then, that we can learn from the tree of knowledge? First of all, their fall teaches us an important lesson in self-distrust. By looking at Adam and Eve we see, we can definitely not rely on our own wisdom to discern evil. We definitely cannot rely on our own strength to withstand it. It teaches us how weak we are. It teaches us how much we are dependent on God's power.

We are dependent on the law that protects us, we are dependent on Gospel Order, we are dependent on communion with Christ to not fall as Adam and Eve did. We are dependent every moment. If even they fell in their sinless state, how

## How do we get Self-Distrust? – The Tree of Knowledge (1)

### The Lesson of the Lord

- "Stay away from the tree, because you are weak."
- "Be on guard, because you are weak."
- "Stay in communion with Me, because you are weak."
- "Stay in fellowship with one another, because you are weak."
- "You need the law for protection."

### The Great Deception

- "I have sufficient wisdom to discern evil."
- "I have enough strength to withstand evil."
- "Do not rely on God's word, but on your own beauty."
- "You will get wisdom which is more reliable than God's wisdom."
- "The law has been done away with."

much more dependent are we today?

## Hiding of Sin is Not a Solution

A further lesson was given through their nakedness. Let us turn to *Genesis 3*, and see what happened after they ate of the tree.

### Genesis 3

<sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

<sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

In that moment they realized that they were naked. How did they realize this? We are informed that they had a light garment around them, which was now not there anymore. However, there was more: their eyes were opened. There was a realization of a nakedness that goes beyond just the absence of the light garment. They realized that something was very wrong. This statement “the eyes of both of them were opened” speaks of the conscience speaking to our heart,

<sup>7</sup> ...and they knew that they were naked.

What do we do when we know that we are naked, in order to deceive ourselves and others? Cover it.

<sup>7</sup> ...they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

This seems understandable: doesn't a person want to hide his sin, doesn't he want to not make public his weakness to others? Of course, it is understandable, very understandable. Nobody likes to show his nakedness in a spiritual sense, definitely, and not even in the physical sense. The physical is a picture of the spiritual.

But there's a tremendous danger of being too concerned with hiding our nakedness instead of doing God's will. When the main concern in going forward is to hide my nakedness, instead of getting rid of my sin that is the cause for my nakedness, then there is something wrong.

In the past year, we have had many confessions in several

camp meetings. These confessions were very blessed and for the first time many believers realized that hiding sins is not the solution to a problem. It has been looked upon like this a little bit. I will give more evidence of this later in a further study. Very often we have looked upon the hiding of a sin as a solution to the problem.

In fact we must admit that there are even statements in the book *God's Sabbath Rest* that give this impression. We have to correct these statements; we have to face a wrong concept that we have held in the past. It is not a solution to a problem when a sin is hidden. A problem is solved only when the sin is finally cleansed from our heart, but not when it is hidden.

The reason I say this is that the very sin that is described in this book, *God's Sabbath Rest*, that remained hidden for a while, did not remain hidden for long. It came to light afterwards. Eventually all our sins will come to light, if not in this earth, then in the judgment. There is not one sin that will remain secret. We must be very, very aware of this. To hide a sin is never a solution to any problem. The only solution is to get rid of the sin which causes our nakedness. How often do we find refuge in hiding our sin, in trying to cover our nakedness?

God showed that He could not acknowledge or recognize this hiding because we read the following:

### **Genesis 3**

<sup>21</sup> Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

And thereby He showed that their coverings were worthless. They were not acknowledged by Him; they were not recognized. As long as we hide our sins by ourselves, and seek refuge in hiding, God cannot solve our problems. God's problem-solving is not necessarily hiding. Maybe in one or the other case He will not allow to become public a sin of a person, that may be so.

I don't say that it is always wrong when sin stays secret. There are many secret sins that have been committed of which we have no knowledge, and we don't need to have knowledge of everything. It wouldn't be beneficial for us.

However, this hiding is not what justifies a person. It is not a solution to a problem. The solution to the problem is when God takes away the sin and instead gives us His covering, which is His righteousness.

Let us turn to further lessons. We learned how weak we are in our fallen condition because the weakness of Adam and Eve is now our weakness. Their fall became our fall. Finally we learned from the tree of knowledge that our only hope is in Christ.

### **How do we get Self- Distrust? – The Tree of Knowledge (2)**

- The fall of Adam and Eve teaches us an important lesson about self-distrust.
- A further lesson was given through their nakedness. (See *Genesis* 3:7, 21)
- We learn how weak we really are in our fallen condition.
- Our only hope is Christ.

When we go on looking for lessons in how to obtain self-distrust, we obviously must get it from the word of God. Where else in the Word can we look? God was very open and direct about the weaknesses of our forefathers, of the patri-

archs. When we think of the weaknesses of Abraham, how he fell into sin when he was lying to Abimelech, to the Egyptian king, when he took Hagar, we see how weak man is. This man was so strong that he could even sacrifice his own son, yet this man was weak. If he was so weak, how much weaker are we? How little can we rely on our own strength?

## The Sacrificial System

The next lesson is from the sacrificial system.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 68:**

The sacrificial offerings were ordained by God to be to man a perpetual reminder and a penitential acknowledgment of his sin and a confession of his faith in the promised Redeemer. They were intended to impress upon the fallen race the solemn truth that it was sin that caused death.

To Adam, the offering of the first sacrifice was a most painful ceremony. His hand must be raised to take life, which only God could give. It was the first time he had ever witnessed death, and he knew that had he been obedient to God, there would have been no death of man or beast.

What is the great lesson of the sacrificial system? Let's write it down step by step:

1. It's a perpetual reminder of our sin and weakness, because sin is not only what we do but what we are. The sacrificial system is a perpetual reminder of our weakness.
2. The sacrificial system is a penitential acknowledgment of our weakness.
3. The sacrificial system is a confession of our faith in the promised Redeemer. It is not good only to see our weakness, but we must also see the strength of our Redeemer, otherwise we would give up hope.
4. The sacrificial system is to impress upon the fallen (that is, the weak) race that sin causes death.
5. Finally, the sacrificial system gives a vision of the infi-



nite goodness of God.

## How do we get Self- Distrust? – The Lesson of the Sacrificial System

*(Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 68)*

- A perpetual reminder of our sin (weakness)
- A penitential acknowledgment of our sin (weakness)
- A confession of faith in the promised Redeemer
- An impression upon the fallen (weak) race that sin causes death
- A realization of the infinite goodness of God



**A revelation of our weakness  
and His strength**

This we want to read about as we go on.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 68:**

To Adam, the offering of the first sacrifice was a most painful ceremony. His hand must be raised to take life, which only God could give. It was the first time he had ever witnessed death, and he knew that had he been obedient to God, there would have been no death of man or beast. As he slew the innocent victim, he trembled at the thought that his sin must shed the blood of the spotless Lamb of God.

This scene gave him a deeper and more vivid sense of the greatness of his transgression, which nothing but the death of God's dear Son could expiate. And he marvelled at the infinite goodness that would give such a ransom to save the guilty. A star of hope illumined the dark and terrible future and relieved it of its utter desolation.

What we see here is a very, very strong lesson of self-distrust. Can you see this too? It couldn't be given stronger. God

wanted to help us in Adam. It is important that we constantly remind ourselves of that sacrifice, which is Christ. Nothing goes so deep to the motives of man, as the knowledge of sins forgiven and the love of Christ. The sacrificial system was to give a vision of the infinite goodness of God.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 493:**

Nothing can take so strong a hold on the heart as the abiding sense of our responsibility to God. Nothing reaches so fully down to the deepest motives of conduct as a sense of the pardoning love of Christ. We are to come in touch with God, and then we shall be imbued with His Holy Spirit, that enables us to come in touch with our fellow men.

What reaches down to the deepest motives of conduct? A sense of the pardoning love of Christ. This is what the sacrificial system was to teach man right from the beginning. At man's fall, the lesson of self-distrust was given in a very powerful way. It was a revelation of our weakness and of His strength.

## **Tithes and Offerings**

There's another system that God gave to mankind, to teach us dependence on Him, to teach us how weak we are. That is the system of tithes and offerings, which shows that God is the source of every blessing. It shows, then, that we are dependent receivers.

What God required of the Israelites is the temple shekel, the sin and thank offerings, and the first fruit. These systems had one purpose only: it was never to enrich God, because everything belongs to Him; He owns everything; He can create whatever He wishes. Nevertheless, He required His people to give these things. For what purpose? To teach a lesson of self-distrust. When we withhold tithes, first fruits, or any other gift, then we prevent the lesson of self-distrust. As a result, we will become self-confident. This means that we will fall, and leave God's way.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 525:**

In the Hebrew economy one tenth of the income of the people was set apart to support the public worship of God. Thus Moses declared to Israel:

#### **Leviticus 27**

<sup>30</sup> All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord.

<sup>32</sup> And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock...the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord.

But the tithing system did not originate with the Hebrews. From the earliest times the Lord claimed a tithe as His and this claim was recognized and honored. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, the priest of the highest God. *Genesis* 14:20. Jacob, when at Bethel, an exile and a wanderer, promised the Lord,

#### **Genesis 28**

<sup>22</sup> Of all that You shall give me I will surely give the tenth unto You.

As the Israelites were about to be established as a nation, the law of tithing was reaffirmed as one of the divinely ordained statutes upon obedience to which their prosperity depended.

Why did their prosperity depend on tithes and offerings? Simply because that was the lesson God gave them to show them their need of self-distrust and their dependence upon Him.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 525:**

The system of tithes and offerings was intended to impress the minds of men with a great truth—that God is the source of every blessing to His creatures, and that to Him man's gratitude is due for the good gifts of His providence.

#### **Acts 17**

<sup>25</sup> He gives to all life, and breath, and all things.

The Lord declares,

#### **Psalms 50**

<sup>10</sup> Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

## Haggai 2

<sup>8</sup> The silver is mine, and the gold is mine.

And it is God who gives men power to get wealth. *Deuteronomy* 8:18. As an acknowledgment that all things came from Him, the Lord directed that a portion of His bounty should be returned to Him in gifts and offerings to sustain His worship.

Here we have to close. Meanwhile, we can meditate about this lesson that God gave mankind and we can ask ourselves what other lessons God gave to teach us this important first lesson, if we want to be a worker with God, which is self-distrust.

THE sacrificial system was given to Adam as a perpetual reminder and acknowledgment of human weakness, and a confession of faith in the promised Redeemer. It impressed upon the weak, fallen race that sin causes death, and at the same time brought a vision of the infinite goodness of God. Both elements are necessary in order to have healthy self-distrust.

Ellen White saw many Bible characters in vision. She saw Adam and Eve, she saw their fall, and she also saw the fall of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob. She had it very clearly before her. She saw the good characteristics of these people, but after seeing all the bad things as well, how much trust would she have in the human strength? There would be no trust left.

**Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 387:**

That which I have seen of eternal things, and that which I have seen of the weakness of humanity, has deeply impressed my mind and influenced my lifework. I see nothing wherein man should be praised or glorified. I see no reason why the opinions of worldly-wise men and so-called great men should be trusted in and exalted. How can those who are destitute of divine enlightenment have correct ideas of God's plans and ways? They either deny Him altogether and ignore His existence, or they circumscribe His power by their own finite conceptions.

Let us choose to be taught by Him who created the heavens and the earth, by Him who set the stars in their order in the firmament and appointed the sun and the moon to do their work.

This sentence in particular shows the two elements of self-distrust:

“That which I have seen of eternal things, and that which I have seen of the weakness of humanity...”

She saw these things as God saw them, and what she saw deeply impressed her mind and influenced her lifework. We need such a vision too. We need to be influenced in the same manner so that our lifework can be as deep and as thorough as was hers. We need to make an end of sin, bring in everlasting righteousness. But in order to do that we must have the same vision of:

1. Eternal things, and
2. The weakness of humanity.

The only hope is that we apply the lessons God gives us in His word: in the sacrificial system, and the other lessons that we shall learn. When we see our own weakness, or the weakness of our movement, then we shall also see something of the weakness of humanity.

But at the same time, let us also look at the eternal things, to see the contrast between both. It is also necessary to see the eternal strength of Jehovah.

## **The System of Tithes and Offerings**

God gave us the system of tithes and offerings for a good reason. He knows how quickly we tend towards self-confidence and self-sufficiency, and so He gave us this blessing to keep us away from self-sufficiency. It is very important not only that we are faithful in giving tithes and offerings, but that we also do it with a right spirit.

If we give our tithes and offerings in the spirit of the Pharisees, it won't do us much good. But if we give it in the spirit of the widow who gave her two mites, it will teach us the lesson of self-distrust which God wants to give.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 525:**

In the Hebrew economy one tenth of the income of the

people was set apart to support the public worship of God. Thus Moses declared to Israel:

**Leviticus 27**

<sup>30</sup> All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord.

<sup>32</sup> And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock,...the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord.

But the tithing system did not originate with the Hebrews. From the earliest times the Lord claimed a tithe as His, and this claim was recognized and honored.

The system of tithes and offerings goes back to the very beginning. The sacrifice of the first lamb was an offering already, and they also brought the fruits as an offering to God. So the sacrificial system and the system of tithes and offerings were closely connected. It all taught this one lesson: we need to learn self-distrust.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 525:**

But the tithing system did not originate with the Hebrews. From the earliest times the Lord claimed a tithe as His, and this claim was recognized and honored. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God. *Genesis* 14:20.

Jacob, when at Bethel, an exile and a wanderer, promised the Lord,

**Genesis 28**

<sup>22</sup> Of all that You shall give me I will surely give the tenth unto You.

As the Israelites were about to be established as a nation, the law of tithing was reaffirmed as one of the divinely ordained statutes upon obedience to which their prosperity depended.

Next is stated the purpose of this system:

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 525:**

The system of tithes and offerings was intended to impress the minds of men with a great truth—that God is the source of every blessing to His creatures, and that to Him man's

gratitude is due for the good gifts of His providence.

**Acts 17**

<sup>25</sup> He gives to all life, and breath, and all things.

The Lord declares,

**Psalms 50**

<sup>10</sup> Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

**Haggai 2**

<sup>8</sup> The silver is mine, and the gold is mine.

And it is God who gives men power to get wealth.

*Deuteronomy 8:18.* As an acknowledgment that all things came from Him, the Lord directed that a portion of His bounty should be returned to Him in gifts and offerings to sustain His worship.

We may say,

“Well we understand that all things come from God.”

Theoretically we probably know this very well, but if we have this in our heart,—that everything comes from God,—how will we act? If we get an income, what will we do with this income?

Let’s suppose you get a new job, and this job brings you an income. Let’s take a high figure, 40,000 Euro. What will you do with it? Would you buy yourself a car? Would you buy yourself a projector? What are you doing? What are your thoughts? In what channel are your thoughts running?

“Well, I put away a tithe before I buy myself these things.”

Am I still recognizing God’s ownership? Am I seeing my dependence on Him?

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 525-526:**

“The tithe...is the Lord’s.” Here the same form of expression is employed as in the law of the Sabbath.

**Exodus 20**

<sup>10</sup> The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God.



God reserved to himself a specified portion of man's time and of his means, and no man could, without guilt, appropriate either for his own interests.

The tithe was to be exclusively devoted to the use of the Levites, the tribe that had been set apart for the service of the sanctuary. But this was by no means the limit of the contributions for religious purposes.

If you look at the tithe as a necessary duty that you must do in order to give a certain acknowledgment and nothing more, then you have not understood the point. It is not just a portion we are to give to the Lord. He wants everything to be put on the altar.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 526:**

The tabernacle, as afterward the temple, was erected wholly by freewill offerings; and to provide for necessary repairs and other expenses, Moses directed that as often as the people were numbered, each should contribute a half shekel for "the service of the tabernacle."

In the time of Nehemiah a contribution was made yearly for this purpose. See *Exodus* 30:12-16; *2 Kings* 12:4-5; *2 Chronicles* 24:4-13; *Nehemiah* 10:32-33.

From time to time sin offerings and thank offerings were brought to God. These were presented in great numbers at the annual feasts. And the most liberal provision was made for the poor.

We have here a few principles and offerings which we have named, that is the tithe, the temple shekel, the sin and the thank offerings; and now comes the first fruit:

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 526:**

Even before the tithe could be reserved there had been an acknowledgment of the claims of God. The first that ripened of every product of the land was consecrated to Him. The first of the wool when the sheep were shorn, of the grain when the wheat was threshed, the first of the oil and the wine, was set apart for God. So also were the first-born of all animals; and a redemption price was paid for the first-born

son. The first fruits were to be presented before the Lord at the sanctuary, and were then devoted to the use of the priests.

When Israel was commanded to conquer Canaan, the first the city that they conquered was Jericho and the whole gain they got in Jericho belonged to God. Everything. Not one little bit belonged to the people.

But weren't they starved from their wilderness wanderings? Weren't they destitute and poor in possessions? They were coming out of a situation in which they had been deprived of many things, and now for the first time there was an opportunity to feast on the fruits of this new country. They had this city in their possession, and why should they not be allowed to take something, after such a long time of drought? No, everything belonged to the Lord at this moment, everything.

Why did the Lord require this from them? Not because He was arbitrary, not because He wanted to hurt them, not because He wanted to intentionally keep them poor. He knew very well that if they would give that offering in the right spirit, it would show them their dependence.

Well, they did give the offering, except one: Achan. But did they give it in the right spirit? The answer is no, because very soon after the conquering of Jericho they did not feel their dependence upon God anymore. They acted independently. They made their own plans. They behaved as though conquering the country was to be done without God.

How quick a reversal, from one moment to the other. That shows very clearly that we are in the same danger. If we would get the same vision of the weakness of humanity that Ellen White received, we would be very quick to follow the Lord's lessons in the tithes and offerings. The first fruits were to be presented before the Lord even before the tithe could be separated. It was absolutely dedicated to the Lord right from the beginning.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 526-527:**

Thus the people were constantly reminded that God was the true proprietor of their fields, their flocks, and their herds; that He sent them sunshine and rain for their seed-time and harvest, and that everything they possessed was of His creation, and He had made them stewards of His goods.

As the men of Israel, laden with the first fruits of field and orchard and vineyard, gathered at the tabernacle, there was made a public acknowledgment of God's goodness. When the priest accepted the gift, the offerer, speaking as in the presence of Jehovah, said,

#### **Deuteronomy 26**

<sup>5</sup> A Syrian ready to perish was my father...

And he described the sojourn in Egypt and the affliction from which God had delivered Israel,

<sup>8</sup> ...with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders.

And he said,

<sup>9</sup> He has brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that flows with milk and honey.

<sup>10</sup> And now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land, which You, Jehovah, have given me.

The contributions required of the Hebrews for religious and charitable purposes amounted to fully one fourth of their income. So heavy a tax upon the resources of the people might be expected to reduce them to poverty; but, on the contrary, the faithful observance of these regulations was one of the conditions of their prosperity. On condition of their obedience God made them this promise:

#### **Malachi 3**

<sup>11</sup> I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field...

<sup>12</sup> And all nations shall call you blessed: for you shall be a delightsome land, says the Lord of hosts.

## **Liberality Leads to Self-Distrust**

Let us look at these principles in a diagram:



First stands liberality. With liberality we don't mean just doing a duty because the law says so, but being grateful that we are allowed to do it. When David was giving offerings to the house of God, even though he himself could not build it, but he did give a rich contribution of his own, what did he say? He said to God:

“Who am I and who is my family and who are my people that we are allowed to give such a thing?”

They were giving it with the right spirit and this is the only spirit that can be described as liberality. This liberality leads to self-distrust because it is a clear acknowledgment that everything belongs to God and not to me.

Next, when self-distrust is truly there, what will it generate again? Even more liberality! Both are strengthening each other. If I have the true healthy self-distrust, liberality will be the natural result. I would want to acknowledge everything. I would want to say,

“Yes it belongs to the Lord.”

So the spirit of self-distrust leads to more liberality. This also leads to prospering according to God's will. With prospering we don't necessary mean that we become rich in this earth's goods. But we will be balanced, we will be happy, we will have enough to eat and we shall lack nothing. That is the result of true liberality.

Can you see this connection between tithes and offerings and the spirit of self-distrust?

## Greed Leads to Self-Confidence

The moment that we hold back, we lose our self-distrust. It may be that we have self-condemnation as a result of holding back, but this is not true self-distrust, as we have learned.

In the case of not having liberality but greed, which is the opposite, what will this generate? We just need to look at Capitalism: the pure teaching of Capitalism and the pure application of Capitalism. To what does greed lead to? Self-confidence. People are very, very self-confident in proportion to their greed. The more greedy man becomes the more he trusts himself. There is a direct relationship between these two.

Greed → Self-Confidence → Low spiritual condition;  
often coupled with loss.

The more he trusts himself the more mistakes he will make, the more problems he will create, and this will create a fearful situation. It is “often” coupled with loss, but not always, at least not immediately. Sometimes Satan prevents loss from happening in order to get a person even deeper involved into his ways. Only at the end he then drops him and then he is really poor.

Think about the prodigal son. Satan has learned this lesson from the prodigal son. He knows that when the prodigal son is eating at the trough of the swine, that he will then run back. So he gives him a little better food for the moment so that he doesn’t go back.

I knew a person who was in danger of self-confidence and greed, and the combination of these two. She played a lottery game in the papers and as a result she won a car. What do you say about this? That is Satan’s way of doing things. He wants to keep people in the spirit of self-confidence. That is what he wants.

So it is not always coupled with loss. Sometimes there is a deception here but very often God allows these things to happen, that our material possessions are taken away so that we wake up. Let us accept this as a blessing and not as a curse.

Let us read on now, first of all as it is illustrated in God's people:

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 527:**

A striking illustration of the results of selfishly withholding even freewill offerings from the cause of God was given in the days of the prophet Haggai. After their return from the captivity in Babylon, the Jews undertook to rebuild the temple of the Lord; but meeting determined opposition from their enemies, they discontinued the work; and a severe drought, by which they were reduced to actual want, convinced them that it was impossible to complete the building of the temple.

**Haggai 1**

<sup>2</sup> The time is not come, [they said,] the time that the Lord's house should be built.

But a message was sent them by the Lord's prophet:

<sup>4</sup> Is it time for you, O you, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?

The Lord did not ask this question for His own sake. Very often these kinds of questions are posed by people who want to create sympathy for their cause. For example, if I need a big offering for a poor country, like Bangladesh or so, then I show pictures of starving people in Bangladesh, and this creates sympathy and then people give something. That is not how God does it. That is not the way that it is said here. It's in a very different manner that we have to read this.

God shows this contrast of their own wealth and the poverty of God's cause in order to help them come out of this selfish spirit. He says,

"You do *yourselves* the greatest harm by doing this."

## Haggai 1

<sup>5</sup> Now therefore thus says the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.

Consider *your* ways, not “look at the house of God, how poor it lays down all the time”, but consider *your* ways.

<sup>6</sup> You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but you have not enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourself, but there is none warm; and he that earns wages, earns wages to put it into a bag with holes.

Capitalism maybe was at its greatest about 10 to 15 years ago. There was a big boom in the economy in many respects, especially in the so-called new technologies. People got rich very quickly, and young people, too, but how self-confident they were; how self-confident and even scornful of other people. It just took a few years and the bubble collapsed and the very people that boasted so much became humbled very much, too. In a way it's good for them. I wonder if they learned the lesson?

I fear not because they couldn't learn it from the right background. The word of God is lacking to them but that time would be the ideal opportunity.

“Consider your ways, you're clothed but are not warm, you think you're very, very rich and wiser than all the other economists, but look now where you stand.”

Some of them even went to prison because of their business dealings.

## **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 527:**

And then the reason is given:

### **Haggai 1**

<sup>9</sup> You looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? says the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that is waste, and you run every man unto his own house.

<sup>10</sup> Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the

earth is stayed from her fruit.

<sup>11</sup> And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands.

### **Haggai 2**

<sup>16</sup> When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty.

<sup>17</sup> I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labors of your hands.

We must not understand this scripture as though God arbitrarily made it hard for them. The same misinterpretation can be made about the thorns and the thistles that were produced as a result of man's sin. God tells them that this is the consequence. He says "I smote you" because He takes responsibility, because He allows it to happen. That's the real background of this matter.

But the real reason for this poverty of the people, is the result of their own doing. It's a natural consequence, a natural result, but God allows it to happen for their sake, so that their eyes can be opened. Then He says,

"Now behold, look at your own ways."

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 528:**

Roused by these warnings, the people set themselves to build the house of God.

That was a help. It was an eye opener at least.

Then the word of the Lord came to them:

### **Haggai 2**

<sup>18</sup> Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid,...

<sup>19</sup> ...from this day will I bless you.

Says the wise man,



## Proverbs 11

<sup>24</sup> There is that scatters, and yet increases; and there is that withholds more than is meet, but it tends to poverty.

In other words,

“There are those who throw the seed away, and what will the result be? It increases, it gets more. There are others who hold back more than they need and what will be the result? It tends to poverty because when we keep more than we need it will mold away.”

### How do we get Self-Distrust? – The System of Tithes and Offerings

*(Patriarchs and Prophets, Chapter 50)*

- God is the Source of every blessing
- We are dependent receivers
- Tithes & Offerings
- Temple shekel; Sin & Thank offerings
- First fruits



### Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 528:

And the same lesson is taught in the New Testament by the apostle Paul:

#### 2 Corinthians 9

<sup>6</sup> He which sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which sows bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

<sup>8</sup> God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.

God intended that His people Israel should be light bearers

to all the inhabitants of the earth. In maintaining His public worship they were bearing a testimony to the existence and sovereignty of the living God. This worship it was their privilege to sustain, as an expression of their loyalty and their love to Him.

The Lord has ordained that the diffusion of light and truth in the earth shall be dependent upon the efforts and offerings of those who are partakers of the heavenly gift. He might have made angels the ambassadors of His truth; He might have made known His will, as He proclaimed the law from Sinai, with His own voice; but in His infinite love and wisdom He called men to become colaborers with himself, by choosing them to do this work.

He requires the whole cooperation of man so that we feel our dependence on Him. That's the only reason. He would not need us, but we must realize how weak we are and how strong He is. This can be seen only in cooperating with Him; it's the only way.

#### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 528:**

In the days of Israel the tithe and freewill offerings were needed to maintain the ordinances of divine service. Should the people of God give less in this age? The principle laid down by Christ is that our offerings to God should be in proportion to the light and privileges enjoyed.

#### **Luke 12**

<sup>48</sup> Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.

Said the Saviour to His disciples as He sent them forth,

#### **Matthew 10**

<sup>8</sup> Freely you have received, freely give.

## **We Need a Reminder**

I would think almost that such a thing doesn't need to be said because when liberality is from the heart it will create self-distrust and self-distrust will create more liberality. There will be a natural desire to give to God.

So why should we need these words? Why does somebody need to tell us? Shouldn't there be more liberality in the time of the gospel? Isn't this naturally coming forth?

It is but if we don't maintain that spirit of self-distrust, there will be a loss again. We have observed this again and again. When we have a camp meeting, then there is a great blessing and there is true self-distrust, there are true confessions. It lasts for a while.

Then months pass and this spirit of liberality is lost again. Self-distrust is lost. Self-confidence creeps in again and as a result a low spiritual condition comes in. Self-distrust must be maintained by constant communion with God, and these reminders would not be given if we didn't need them because of the weakness of our nature.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 528:**

Said the Saviour to His disciples as He sent them forth,

**Matthew 10**

<sup>8</sup> Freely you have received, freely give.

As our blessings and privileges are increased—above all, as we have before us the unparalleled sacrifice of the glorious Son of God—should not our gratitude find expression in more abundant gifts to extend to others the message of salvation?

The work of the gospel, as it widens, requires greater provision to sustain it than was called for anciently; and this makes the law of tithes and offerings of even more urgent necessity now than under the Hebrew economy.

If His people were liberally to sustain His cause by their voluntary gifts, instead of resorting to unchristian and unhallowed methods to fill the treasury, God would be honored, and many more souls would be won to Christ.

## **Unhallowed Methods**

What would be an “unchristian and an unhallowed method” to fill the treasury? For example: to make a lottery, to make

any amusement activity to make the people give more. Such things would be definitely unhallowed. Everything that does not create true liberality.

An unhallowed method is also to attempt to create simply sympathy and nothing more. If I show only pictures of starving people and I appeal to your sympathy then it will keep for maybe a few minutes, but then it will be over again. After a while you will become used to these pictures, and then it doesn't matter anymore, it makes no change. That is definitely not a hallowed method. It's an unhallowed method.

Also exaggerations and things like this are unhallowed methods. The only method that heaven can approve is something that creates true liberality, and that is a true appreciation of what Christ has done for us. It is the preaching of the gospel.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 529:**

The plan of Moses to raise means for the building of the tabernacle was highly successful. No urging was necessary. Nor did he employ any of the devices to which churches in our day so often resort.

He made no grand feast. He did not invite the people to scenes of gaiety, dancing, and general amusement; neither did he institute lotteries, nor anything of this profane order, to obtain means to erect the tabernacle for God.

The Lord directed Moses to invite the children of Israel to bring their offerings. He was to accept gifts from everyone that gave willingly, from his heart. And the offerings came in so great abundance that Moses bade the people cease bringing, for they had supplied more than could be used.

Here it was the Holy Spirit who worked. This is the only basis for true liberality.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 529:**

God has made men His stewards. The property which He has placed in their hands is the means that He has provided for the spread of the gospel. To those who prove themselves

faithful stewards He will commit greater trusts.

Saith the Lord,

**1 Samuel 2**

<sup>30</sup> Them that honor me I will honor.

“God loves a cheerful giver,” and when His people, with grateful hearts, bring their gifts and offerings to Him, “not grudgingly, or of necessity,” His blessing will attend them, as He has promised.

**Malachi 3**

<sup>10</sup> Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

This is not accomplished by mechanical giving. It is when the spirit of liberality is in our heart, which is the spirit of true self-distrust, of healthy self-distrust.



**G**OD has given many lessons to teach man about self-trust. When we considered tithes and offerings, we saw that through these things God has given us the privilege to cooperate with Him, to work together with Him.

## Cooperation with God

Why did Jesus even call disciples? Why did He send them out, and why does He commit His work to men, when at the same time He could commit His work also to angels who would do the job much better? The answer is given with the text that we have studied in the past:

### **2 Corinthians 4**

<sup>7</sup> We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves.

Why did God use this earthly material to present himself? Why did He come in the form of fallen flesh? Why did Jesus come in our flesh? For what reason? Why didn't He come as an angel or at least in the human flesh that Adam had before the fall? Why did He come in our fallen weak human flesh?

It is comparable to a great artist, who instead of using the most expensive materials, uses instead very cheap ones. If, for example, we would have the best guitar player here amongst us and if you would invite him and give him one of our guitars, I don't know if he would even play on it because he would be used to much better guitars, very expensive ones. If you would ask him to please give a concert, I think he would definitely refuse to give a concert unless he had his very expensive guitar.

But what kind of instrument is God using? A much worse

guitar than this. He would go and use Duncan's guitar in Kenya and He would get a fantastic melody out of it. When I hear Duncan play on his guitar I am always amazed. He plays very, very well. You know he gets something out of it. I can't: for me it sounds very shabby. But when he plays it sounds much better. The real skill of an artist is shown when he can play a wonderful song using only the lowest quality instrument. If I use a very expensive guitar even what I play sounds not bad, if I train awhile, but to use a cheap guitar and bring something out of it, that requires real skill.

God uses this contrast, He uses the cheapest material to bring out the excellency of His power. He uses weak men to show His power and our dependence on Him. That is His purpose and that is the way we should read this text:

“We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves.”

What is the earthen vessel like? It's fragile, it's dirty, it's primitive, it's nothing to be desired. But we have this treasure in that vessel,

## **2 Corinthians 4**

<sup>7</sup> ...that the excellency of the greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves.

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 297:**

This is why the preaching of the gospel was committed to erring men rather than to the angels. It is manifest that the power which works through the weakness of humanity is the power of God; and thus we are encouraged to believe that the power which can help others as weak as ourselves can help us.

And those who are themselves “compassed with infirmity” should be able to “have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.” *Hebrews 5:2*. Having been in peril themselves, they are acquainted with the dangers and difficulties of the way, and for this reason are called to reach



out for others in like peril.

There are souls perplexed with doubt, burdened with infirmities, weak in faith, and unable to grasp the Unseen; but a friend whom they can see, coming to them in Christ's stead, can be a connecting link to fasten their trembling faith upon Christ.

But before we get too puffed up again because we have such an important work to do, let's see that it is a privilege, that it is not merely an honor to be co-workers with God, it is a tremendous privilege.

### **Tithes and Offerings**

The same privilege is in the system of tithes and offerings. If we are privileged to give our portion of offerings to a certain work and the work thereby goes forward, what an honor this is! We shouldn't look at it as though we have led out, but we were really honored to participate. Can we see it? David could see it. He said,

“Who am I that I could give such a gift to the cause of God?”

It is really becoming a cooperator with God by giving my tithes and offerings. When an Israelite gave his tithes and offerings, he was to say these words:

#### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 526:**

“A Syrian ready to perish was my father;” and he described the sojourn in Egypt and the affliction from which God had delivered Israel “with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders.” And he said, “He hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. And now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land, which You, Jehovah, hast given me.” Deuteronomy 26:5, 8-11.

That he should say these things each time meant something.

It meant that he was reminded each time he gave his offerings that everything he gave (in this case, the first fruit) was first made possible by God's gifts. He wasn't giving of his own, he was giving of what he had received in the first place.

It was a clear acknowledgment that he was a dependent receiver, and that he could live only by constant provision from the Lord. That is the right spirit of liberality and that only. It is an acknowledgment of our dependence; it is an expression of true and healthy self-distrust.

## Healthy Self-Distrust in the Sabbath

This same attitude must also be in the Sabbath.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 525:**

The tithe...is the Lord's.

Here the same form of expression is employed as in the law of the Sabbath:

### **Exodus 20**

<sup>10</sup> The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.

We want to see now what the lesson of self-distrust is in the Sabbath.

### **Exodus 20**

<sup>8</sup> Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God.

<sup>9</sup> In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.

<sup>10</sup> For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day.

<sup>11</sup> Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

What is the reason given here for keeping the Sabbath?

“For in six days the Lord created heaven and the earth, and

therefore rest.”

It reminds us that God is the Creator of this earth. But that was a long, long time ago. It is six thousand years ago that God created the heaven and earth, but would we exist today if He had not created it back then? Absolutely not. So every human being that exists today should keep the Sabbath because it is an acknowledgment that his life is from God.

But we don’t need to look so far back. Even though this in itself is reason enough to keep the Sabbath, we should think of the fact that even today God is still continuing to let His life flow out so that we can live.

Creation is a continuous process. Every time a child is born it is a process of creation. There it becomes more obvious. Each time a wound heals it is also obvious. Who can make skin? Who can make it grow? You can’t create it like this, it’s impossible. You need the principle of life for this.

This mysterious principle of life is everywhere visible. In springtime when things come up again it is very visible. We would not have this if God would not continue His creative work. So the Sabbath must be kept for several reasons because God is the Creator.

This is not the only reason given. In *Deuteronomy* we have a repetition of the Ten Commandments:

### **Deuteronomy 5**

<sup>6</sup> And the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt...

<sup>12</sup> Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you.

<sup>13</sup> Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God.

<sup>14</sup> In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male ser-

vant and your female servant may rest as well as you.

<sup>15</sup> And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

What is the reason given here for keeping the Sabbath?

“Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt.”

Each time we keep the Sabbath, we remember that we were slaves in Egypt.

It is the same as with offerings. Each time the first fruit was brought or another offering was brought, the giver was to remember that his father was a Syrian, and that he had been a slave, that he was a sojourner in Egypt. The tithes and offerings were designed to show our weak state, our dependence on Him.

Likewise the Sabbath is designed to show how dependent we are, how weak we are. We are actually slaves. By nature we have been slaves, and we have been delivered and as a token, as a sign, we keep the Sabbath.

The Sabbath, like the gifts and offerings, is a direct school to teach us dependence on God, to show us our own weakness, and to overcome our habitual self-confidence.

**Education, p. 250:**

The value of the Sabbath as a means of education is beyond estimate.

What do we need to be educated in? The lesson of self-distrust.

The value of the Sabbath as a means of education is beyond estimate. Whatever of ours God claims from us, He returns again, enriched, transfigured, with His own glory.

The tithe that He claimed from Israel was devoted to preserving among men, in its glorious beauty, the pattern of His

temple in the heavens, the token of His presence on the earth.

So the portion of our time which He claims is given again to us, bearing His name and seal.

**Exodus 31**

<sup>13</sup> It is a sign, [He says,] between me and you;...that you may know that I am the Lord...

**Exodus 20**

<sup>11</sup> [Because] in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

The Sabbath is a sign of creative and redeeming power...

Let us couple this with another statement:

**The Desire of Ages, p. 493:**

What has the deepest influence on our motives of actions?  
The pardoning love of God.

Whereas we deserved death, God has forgiven us. To see His love, this has the deepest influence on our motives and actions. It helps us to see our dependence, our weakness. It creates a healthy self-distrust, and it creates thankfulness to God.

This Sabbath is a sign of His redeeming love, therefore it has the same influence.

**Education, p. 250:**

The Sabbath is a sign of creative and redeeming power; it points to God as the source of life and knowledge; it recalls man's primeval glory, and thus witnesses to God's purpose to re-create us in His own image.

The Sabbath and the family were alike instituted in Eden and in God's purpose they are indissolubly linked together. On this day more than on any other, it is possible for us to live the life of Eden. It was God's plan for the members of the family to be associated in work and study, in worship and recreation, the father as priest of his household, and both father and mother as teachers and companions of their children.

But the results of sin, having changed the conditions of life, to a great degree prevent this association. Often the father hardly sees the faces of his children throughout the week. He is almost wholly deprived of opportunity for companionship or instruction.

But God's love has set a limit to the demands of toil. Over the Sabbath He places His merciful hand. In His own day He preserves for the family opportunity for communion with Him, with nature, and with one another.

The Sabbath and the family teach the same lesson and they belong together.

**Education, p. 251:**

Since the Sabbath is the memorial of creative power, it is the day above all others when we should acquaint ourselves with God through His works.

Doing this will create a sense of our dependence upon Him.

In the minds of the children the very thought of the Sabbath should be bound up with the beauty of natural things. Happy is the family who can go to the place of worship on the Sabbath as Jesus and His disciples went to the synagogue—across the fields, along the shores of the lake, or through the groves. Happy the father and mother who can teach their children God's written word with illustrations from the open pages of the book of nature; who can gather under the green trees, in the fresh, pure air, to study the word and to sing the praise of the Father above.

By such associations parents may bind their children to their hearts, and thus to God, by ties that can never be broken.

If we want to know how to teach our children this lesson of dependence, we have the message. Unfortunately, we understand this too little, and as a result very often the children are left alone.

I've been in many churches and I saw that the adults study, they like to study, and the children run around alone. The par-

ents like to talk, and the children do their own things on the Sabbath. This is missing an opportunity. It means that we do not bind their hearts to God and to us.

“By such associations parents may bind their children to their hearts, and thus to God, by ties that can never be broken.”

We need to change the course here. Parents need to take their children on that day and say,

“We will study God’s nature, we will see how dependent we are on Him.”

Also the children need to understand how dependent they are on God by seeing first of all how dependent they are on their own parents. Then as they get older their dependence is more fixed to God rather than to their parents.

**Education, p. 251-252:**

As a means of intellectual training, the opportunities of the Sabbath are invaluable. Let the Sabbath-school lesson be learned, not by a hasty glance at the lesson scripture on Sabbath morning, but by careful study for the next week on Sabbath afternoon, with daily review or illustration during the week. Thus the lesson will become fixed in the memory, a treasure never to be wholly lost.

In listening to the sermon, let parents and children note the text and the scriptures quoted, and as much as possible of the line of thought, to repeat to one another at home.

Instead of criticizing the sermon, let us get out of it whatever we can get out of it, even if it’s imperfect.

This will go far toward relieving the weariness with which children so often listen to a sermon, and it will cultivate in all a habit of attention and of connected thought.

Meditation on the themes thus suggested will open to the student treasures of which he has never dreamed. He will prove in his own life the reality of the experience described

in the scripture:

**Jeremiah 15**

<sup>16</sup> Your words were found, and I did eat them; and your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.

**Psalms 119**

<sup>48</sup> I will meditate in your statutes.

**Psalms 19**

<sup>10</sup> More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold...

<sup>11</sup> Moreover by them is your servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

The Sabbath, therefore, is the very sign of:

- God’s creative power—that our life is dependent on Him;
- His redemptive power—that our eternal life is dependent on Him; and
- His forgiveness—that we were delivered from being slaves in Egypt.

**How do we get Self-Distrust?**

**– The Sabbath**

(*Education*, p. 250-252)

- That we may know that the Lord is God  
(*Exodus* 31:13; 20:11)
- It points to God as the Source of creation and redemption
- It is a day of communion with the Lord when we learn of our dependence on Him



It constantly reminds us and fills our hearts with gratitude for the fact that He loved us and forgave us our sins.

The great lesson of self-distrust is that we may know that the Lord is God, that He is the Source and we are the dependent receivers. It points to God as the source of creation and redemption, as we have said already, and it is a day of communion with the Lord when we can learn our dependence on Him.

These are just three principles that we get out of this chapter and our study of it.

## **The Family**

The Sabbath and the family belong together because it is on that day that we shall teach our children dependence on God. It is on that day that we connect them with the heavenly Father.

What is the lesson to be learned in the family on the Sabbath day? In what way does the family teach us the lesson of self-distrust?

## **Fellowship**

First of all, the family teaches us the need of fellowship. We have a social need. That means we are mutually dependent. We must say,

“I need fellowship, I need it.”

Some people may think,

“Well, I don’t need it. I’ll give you my fellowship if you want it, but I don’t need it.”

This is independence, a spirit of independence. When Adam was alone for quite some time God said, after a while, to him,

“Now go and name the animals.”

As he did so he became keenly aware that he was in need of fellowship. So we are too. In some cases, because sin entered into this world, our family and we cannot have too close a fellowship, because they are in the world. That can happen. We may be the only one who is interested in following Jesus. But we have then, at least, the fellowship of the church. In one thing we must be clear: we need fellowship.

## Submission

The next point is that we need to learn submission. This is also what the family teaches us: this “unpleasant” lesson of submitting to one another.

### **Ephesians 5**

<sup>20</sup> Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

<sup>21</sup> Submitting to one another in the fear of God.

Submitting means I depend on another person. Where shall we learn to submit to one another, where shall we learn this dependence?

### **Ephesians 5**

<sup>22</sup> Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

That is number one.

### **Ephesians 5**

<sup>23</sup> For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

<sup>24</sup> Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her,

<sup>26</sup> That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

<sup>27</sup> That He might present her to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

<sup>28</sup> So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own

bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.

<sup>29</sup> For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.

<sup>30</sup> For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

That means we are dependent.

### **Ephesians 5**

<sup>31</sup> For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

<sup>32</sup> This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Then it goes on, to children.

### **Ephesians 6**

<sup>1</sup> Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

<sup>2</sup> Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise:

<sup>3</sup> That it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.

<sup>4</sup> And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

## **Mutual Dependence**

Looking at this, what else do we learn? In this chapter, in the lesson of self-distrust, how do we learn this from the family?

We learn that we stand in mutual dependence on each other. The mother is dependent on the father to bring the money home, the father is dependent on the mother to keep the house in order, the children are dependent on the parents to provide them with food and shelter, so we are mutually de-

pendent.

It shows us that we cannot do it all alone. We need somebody else. We need one another. We need another person. The sheer fact that we are dependent on others is a lesson in self-distrust.

## **Seeing Our Weaknesses**

Then another very interesting point is this, that we see our own weaknesses in our parents. When I see the weaknesses of my parents, I am ashamed. I can take the attitude,

“But this is not me, I am so glad that’s not me.”

But if I look more carefully I must say,

“This is my weakness.”

If I’ve overcome this weakness, then it’s only by God’s grace. If I don’t repeat the same mistakes, even in other areas, then again, only by God’s grace. If I do not fall into the same things that they fell in, again, only by God’s grace, because that is my inheritance. That is my weakness. I, in myself, would definitely do the same thing. That is so.

Young people tend not to see this. They tend to think,

“Oh the old ones. We won’t make their mistakes.”

That is not the case. One egg looks like the others, so likewise the children do exactly what the parents do, though sometimes in other areas, certainly.

Likewise with the children. It’s embarrassing very often for the parents, when their children are disobedient, but they only bring out what is in the parents. That is a law, it’s a law of reproduction, a law of inheritance. Instead of criticizing our children too much for their weaknesses, we need to ask ourselves,

“Where is the same thing in me? Where do I have this

problem?”

This is a wonderful lesson of self-distrust. Every time another child is born, there is another lesson of self-distrust.

## Bearing Responsibility

Definitely as we bear responsibility for other people and we see our own weaknesses in them, we get another lesson of self-distrust. As Ellen White says,

### **The Ministry of Healing, p. 449:**

That which I have seen of eternal things, and that which I have seen of the weakness of humanity, has deeply impressed my mind and influenced my lifework. I see nothing wherein man should be praised or glorified. I see no reason why the opinions of worldly-wise men and so-called great men should be trusted in and exalted.

How can those who are destitute of divine enlightenment have correct ideas of God's plans and ways? They either deny Him altogether and ignore His existence, or they circumscribe His power by their own finite conceptions.

Let us choose to be taught by Him who created the heavens and the earth, by Him who set the stars in their order in the firmament and appointed the sun and the moon to do their work.

One time Ellen White said:

“When looking at humanity, I can't see how we can ever finish the work. But when looking to God, I can't see how we can fail to finish the work.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> **Editor's note:** I could not locate that paragraph. But I found one similar statement in *Life Sketches* (1915), p. 257, written while at a retreat in the Rocky Mountains: “Surrounded, as we often were, with difficulties, burdened with responsibilities, finite, weak, erring mortals at best, we were at times almost ready to yield to despair. But when we considered God's love and care for His creatures, as revealed both in the book of nature and on the pages of inspiration, our hearts were comforted and strengthened. Surrounded by the evidences of God's power and overshadowed by His presence, we could not cherish distrust or unbelief.

This is the lesson for this time especially, and the family is one of the classrooms given in which to learn it, provided that we accept that school.

## How do we get Self-Distrust?

### – The Family

(*Education*, p. 250-252)

- We need fellowship.
- We need to learn submission.
- We are dependent on each other.
- We need each other's help.
- We see our own weaknesses in our parents/ children.

We have to really see it's a lesson. This lesson is not given automatically. Just because we have a family, does not mean we are automatically in that school, and that automatically we have self-distrust. It may be that we can be very full of self-confidence, even though we are living in a family. However, this is only because we don't accept the lessons contained therein.

Let us pray that God really gives us these lessons.

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Oh, how often have peace, and hope, and even joy, come to us in our experience amid these rocky solitudes!"

**T**HIS morning we want to continue to consider the important lessons that we need to learn in this day: the lesson of trust in God and of self-distrust. These two things, stand in relation to each other.

Yesterday we looked at what lessons God gives to His people in order for us to learn self-distrust. We saw that He gave lessons right from the beginning to Adam and Eve even before they fell into sin, and then when they fell into sin He continued to give them lessons, because self-distrust is one of the most important things we need in order to be protected against sin.

Always remember that Eve fell because she had no self-distrust. Self-distrust is one thing, and trust in God is another thing. We need both; to have just one is not enough. This will become very obvious and apparent as we go on in our study. We saw that God gave the Sabbath and the family in order to accomplish this in our hearts.

## **Shall My Sins Be Kept Secret?**

Now we want to look at some Bible characters. What has God given us? He gives us the Bible history, and when we look at the weakness of David it shows that we cannot trust in humanity. I want to ask a few questions before we study the history of David:

1. Shall our sin be kept secret?
2. Does sin have consequences even after it is forgiven?

These are questions we need to answer in order to understand better what to expect, and how God gives His lessons.

I have put together a few reasons why we should keep our

sins secret, or why we should not keep our sins secret. First of all, “Yes, we should keep them secret,” for the following reasons:

- It embarrasses me so much that I cannot see God’s love anymore. That is one reason I give for keeping my sins secret, and I expect God to keep my sins secret too.
- I need some self respect, to go on in the future. If all my secret things are laid open before everybody I lose all my self-respect and I can’t go on in the future anymore.
- The knowledge of my sins causes others to lose trust in me. If they lose trust in me then I cannot have fellowship with them anymore, I cannot help them anymore, and my ministry becomes enfeebled. Therefore, I must not open my sins to others, so that they don’t lose trust in me. This is a point I often say to myself.
- I need to guard the secret of my life so that I can be an example to others. When others know what I did or what is in my heart, then I can’t be an example to them anymore.
- The knowledge of my sin leads others to follow my example. Therefore I keep it secret.

As I said, I’m not evaluating the reasons much at this point. We want to study God’s word and then see if these arguments are valid or not, or in what way they are valid. These are the reasons often given for the need to keep sins secret.

There are reasons on the other side. “My sins should not be kept secret.” Why not?

- Embarrassment helps me to see my weakness.
- I need to lose self-trust in order to flee to my Saviour.
- The knowledge of my sins causes others to lose confidence in putting trust in human strength.
- It is necessary that my brethren pray and watch because I’m weak.



- It is a warning to others not to follow my example.

So you see there could be reasons for keeping sins secret, and there could be reasons against keeping them secret.

## Should my Sin be kept Secret?

*(Patriarchs and Prophets, Chapter 71)*

YES	NO
"It embarrasses me so much that I cannot see God's love."	"The embarrassment helps me see my weakness."
"I need some self-respect to cope with the future."	"I need to lose self-trust in order to flee to my Saviour."
"The knowledge of my sins causes others to lose trust in me."	"The knowledge of my sins causes others to lose confidence in human strength."
"I need to guard the secrets of my life so that I can be an example to others."	"It is necessary that my brethren watch and pray, because I am weak."
"The knowledge of my sins would lead others to follow my example."	"It is a warning to others not to follow my example."

## Our Sins will not Stay Secret Forever

We will look at this in more detail, but before we do so one thing must be very clear: our sins will not stay secret forever. All sins will be revealed, at one point or another. We deceive only ourselves when we think that this will not happen.

Often our sins are revealed when they are committed. We may not realize it, but it is so; others see our sins very clearly. Our sins are very obvious to God, there is no question about this, absolutely no question. Adam might have thought,

"I can hide myself from God so that He doesn't see,

—but that was absolutely impossible. Cain also thought this. But God knows about the sin the moment it is committed, and more than this: He knows the secret motives and the

thoughts, even before the actions take place. Very often the things are also revealed to the angels who are watching us. Remember, we are a spectacle to the unseen worlds.

### **1 Corinthians 4**

<sup>9</sup> ...we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.

Angels cannot necessarily read thoughts but they see more than we think. They can interpret our facial expressions and our behavior. Sometimes it is also known to man, even though we may not realize it.

I'm just interested to watch, for example, children or elderly people. Very often they do something and they think that others don't see it, and yet the others see it very clearly. When I was a child I imagined that when I put my hands over my eyes no one would see me anymore, because I didn't see them. Likewise, we often think that others don't realize what we are doing, and yet our actions are rather obvious. So, often, when we commit them the sins are already seen.

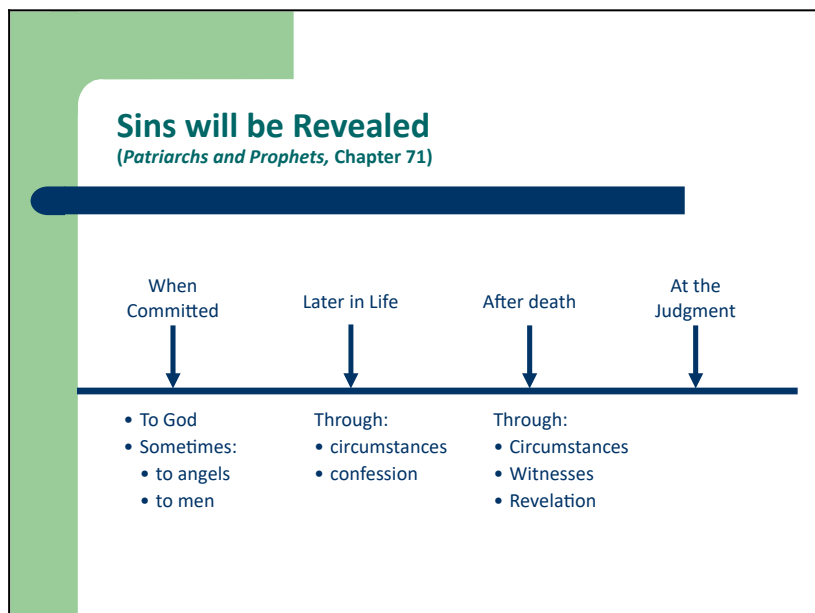
Sometimes sins are kept secret and people don't know about them, but then it comes out later in life through circumstances. Suddenly the attention is drawn to a certain fact and so it comes out.

It can also come out through my confession, which would be a better way to reveal it. Think of Achan, for example. His sin came out through circumstances that were directly guided by God. It would have been better had he made a confession beforehand.

With circumstances we also mean the testimony of witnesses who bring these things out. It could be brought out in a good way or in a bad way: by people trying to harm us or by people trying to help us, whichever. There are certain circumstances through which it can come out, and when God allows it, then it comes out. Even if it's kept secret at that stage, very

often it comes out after death.

Again it can be through circumstances, and sometimes through witnesses. Sometimes it is through revelation: God reveals it, God makes it clear. If even then the sin would not come out, there's one stage when it comes out in any case, and that is at the Judgment.



So, sin cannot be kept secret. However secret it is, it will come out. This is something we must be aware of: with all our efforts and all our desire to keep sin secret, it will come out. This point is made very clear in the Bible where it says that all our secret deeds will be revealed, be it good or be it evil.

### **Ecclesiastes 12**

<sup>14</sup> For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.

Knowing this helps us a little bit better to make an assessment of whether it is good or not to keep things secret.

One thing must be very clear to us: to keep a sin secret is

not just impossible, it should also not be the most important concern. What should be our most important concern when we know of a sin? To be delivered from the sin itself, rather than from the entanglement the sin has brought us into. That is important.

## **What are the Results of Sin?**

What are the results of sin? That is the next question we need to look at.

- Do these results still exist after we have received forgiveness?
- How far does God solve our problems?
- How does God solve our problems, when we have created these problems ourselves by our sins?
- Can we expect God to fully deliver us from our problem when we have brought ourselves into it?

The answer is, “Yes, God does handle all our problems.” But there is also a wrong concept connected with this. The concept is that God will deliver us from the consequences of sin, and thereby take away the school that we need.

The most typical example would be our first parents. When they fell into sin there were certain consequences that God still allowed to be there:

- Death: men would still die;
- The thorns and the hardness of working with the ground;
- The pain of bearing children;
- And other things as well.

These consequences were allowed as a blessing.

So, we have sin and then come the immediate results. The first result is sinfulness; every sin creates a disposition to sin, that is, sinfulness. What we do determines what we are, as

much as what we are determines what we do. You see, there's an inter-relationship.

Another immediate result is eternal death. The moment that we commit a sin we have earned eternal death. That is a matter that is very often overlooked because we don't die immediately, but the sentence pronounced will come upon us.

We also have immediate temporal results of sin which do not come in that moment necessarily but they eventually come. I call them immediate results because they certainly come as sure as there is cause and effect. Very often it is disease, the enmity of others, a bad conscience, mental disease, or when Satan gets power over the mind.

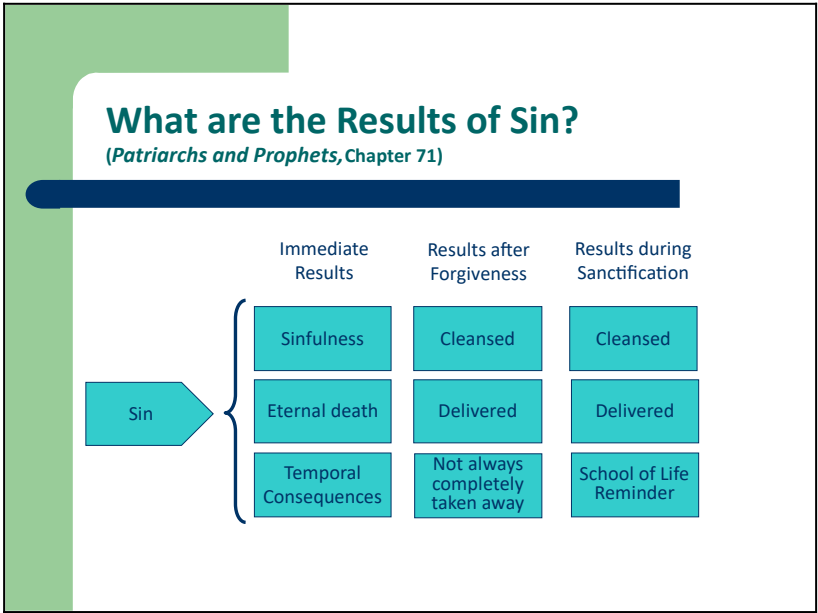
When we receive forgiveness that means we have received cleansing from the sin. True forgiveness means not only a judicial act by which we stand before God as though we had never sinned, but an actual cleansing from sinfulness. So we expect to be cleansed from that sin, and the result is that there is true forgiveness.

Likewise, we are delivered from eternal death, and that is the next point. That deliverance is done by a judicial act, because we stand before God as though we had never sinned.

So what are the results of that sin which still remain? How is it with the temporal results? That is a difficult question now. Temporal results would be, for example, sickness, shame, embarrassment. Well, certainly these are not always completely taken away. I would not say that God does not take away temporal results at all, because He often heals us though we do not deserve it, but He does not always completely take them all away.

There is a good reason for this, so let us look at the consequences of sin, those remaining during our sanctification. Again, our sinfulness is cleansed and is even further cleansed as we grow in the Lord. From eternal death we are delivered,

and the temporal results that remain are now a school of life. They are a constant reminder of our sins.



Some of the temporal results are not so temporal after all. The marks in Jesus’ hands and in His side that He received when He was crucified will remain. They are not merely temporal, they are eternal, and yet the suffering they caused is temporal. God could have taken these marks away when He translated His Son, but He left Him with this so that we have a constant reminder. It’s a school, it’s a warning against sin, it shows us our weakness, and this will help us never to sin again in the universe.

We need a reminder of our weakness, and of the love of God, and this is shown in the marks on the hands, feet and side of Jesus, which we have caused. That shows us very clearly that we cannot and must not expect that God will take completely away all the results. We will have to have some results of these sins in order to have a reminder, a school in which we can grow.

When we talk of the entanglement of the sin, we know that God will deliver us completely from the sinfulness itself, as soon as we confess it. But as far as temporal results are concerned we should not be too worried about these entanglements. Let them be, let them be even if they limit our service, because maybe our service should be limited.

I want to stress this fact: maybe our service is even more effective when we cannot serve as we think we should serve. This is because:

## **2 Corinthians 12**

<sup>10</sup> ...when I am weak, then I am strong.

When Paul was in prison everyone would look at it as though it was the end of his service, but that was the time when:

- he wrote the most beautiful, important and powerful letters;
- he witnessed before kings and emperors;
- he was used as a tool in God's hands.

So when we are weak, we are strong. Let us be very careful to understand that the temporal results of sin are not always bad for God's cause.

But God will always deliver us from the eternal results, provided we are truly repentant and accept the grace offered to us.

## **Public Confessions**

Before we go on I wish to study a little bit more concerning confessions. When we come to the sin of David we come to the question of when and how a confession should be made. With a confession, I myself open a sin to others, I make it known, and the question is always, should I do this or shouldn't I? And when should I do it? So let's study public confessions.

## Public Confession

The correct application of a God-given instrument  
for the purification and edification of the Church

You know that for a long time David did not want his sins to become public, therefore he did not make a public confession. He hid it as much as he could, even though it ate him up, as he later confessed:

### **Psalm 32**

<sup>1</sup> Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

<sup>2</sup> Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

<sup>3</sup> When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long.

David shows us very clearly that keeping sins secret is not a solution.

<sup>3</sup> My bones grew old through my groaning all the day long.

Even though it saved him from terrible shame, embarrassment and entanglement, he had no peace. We cannot have peace; keeping things secret is not a solution. At some stage



we have to make a public confession; the latest, as we have seen now, is in the Judgment. Then God will simply look at us and we will confess, you can be sure of it.

## **The Danger of Wrong Applications**

When shall we confess, then? We call confession here “a God given instrument for the purification and edification of the church.” Confession should be an instrument for the purification and edification of the church.

Unfortunately I must say that confessions do not always bear this character, even though they are honestly given. Very often confessions deprive us of all our strength, we are exhausted and, in the end, downcast. It happens so sometimes, and I wish at times that we could now come to a different end than simply these confessions. It is an instrument whereby the church can be purified and edified, but it must be rightly used. This is what we want to study here in connection with David.

There is the danger of a wrong application in making public confessions, and a warning of that danger is clearly given to us here:

### **Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 645:**

In many of our religious awakenings mistakes have been made in regard to confession. While confession is good for the soul, there is need of moving wisely.

I have been shown that many, many confessions should never be spoken in the hearing of mortals; for the result is that which the limited judgment of finite beings does not anticipate. Seeds of evil are scattered in the minds and hearts of those who hear, and when they are under temptation, these seeds will spring up and bear fruit, and the same sad experience will be repeated.

“For,” think the tempted ones, “these sins cannot be so very grievous; for did not those who have made confession, Christians of long standing, do these very things?” Thus the open

confession in the church of these secret sins will prove a savor of death rather than of life.

Especially would this be the case if those confessing continue in their sins, if they have no victory.

“Well if he does it, I can do it as well.”

That is what the sinner will then certainly argue. Thus the open confession in the church of these secret sins will prove a savor of death rather than of life.

There should be no reckless, wholesale movements in this matter, for the cause of God may be made disreputable in the eyes of unbelievers.

## The Danger of a Wrong Application

“In many of our religious awakenings  
mistakes have been made  
in regard to confession.

While confession  
is good for the soul,  
there is need of moving wisely.”

*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 645

Often in our assemblies there are unbelievers and if we reveal our weaknesses to the enemy he will certainly not make a good use of it. The good use of a confession would be to take it as a warning. A bad use would be to exaggerate even that which was confessed, and broadcast it to destroy the influence of the truth.

If they hear confessions of base conduct made by those who profess to be followers of Christ, a reproach is brought upon His cause. If Satan could by any means spread the impression that Seventh-day Adventists are the offscouring of all things, he would be glad to do it. God forbid that he should have occasion!

God will be better glorified if we confess the secret, inbred corruption of the heart to Jesus alone than if we open its recesses to finite, erring man, who cannot judge righteously unless his heart is constantly imbued with the Spirit of God. God knows the heart, even every secret of the soul; then do not pour into human ears the story which God alone should hear.

There are confessions of a nature that should be brought before a select few and acknowledged by the sinner in deepest humility. The matter must not be conducted in such a way that vice shall be construed into virtue and the sinner made proud of his evil doings.

As we have heard in the past already, if somebody boasts how much he drank or smoke, or of other sinful actions that he did, it helps nobody, it just glorifies evil. Even if it may not be intended that way, that is what it amounts to.

### **Testimonies for the Church, vol 5, p. 646-647:**

If there are things of a disgraceful nature that should come before the church, let them be brought before a few proper persons selected to hear them, and do not put the cause of Christ to open shame by publishing abroad the hypocrisy that has existed in the church. It would cast reflections upon those who have tried to be Christlike in character. These things should be considered.

Then there are confessions that the Lord has bidden us make to one another. If you have wronged your brother by word or deed you are first to be reconciled to him before your worship will be acceptable to heaven. Confess to those whom you have injured, and make restitution, bringing forth fruit meet for repentance. If anyone has feelings of bitterness, wrath, or malice toward a brother, let him go to him

personally, confess his sin, and seek forgiveness.

From Christ's manner of dealing with the erring we may learn profitable lessons which are equally applicable to this work of confession. He bids us go to the one who has fallen into temptation, and labor with him alone. If it is not possible to help him, because of the darkness of his mind and his separation from God, we are to try again with two or three others.

If the wrong is not righted, then, and only then, we are to tell it to the church. It is far better if wrongs can be righted and injuries healed without bringing the matter before the whole church. The church is not to be made the receptacle for the outpouring of every complaint or confession.

I recognize, on the other hand, the danger of yielding to the temptation to conceal sin or to compromise with it, and thus act the hypocrite. Be sure that the confession fully covers the influence of the wrong committed, that no duty to God, to your neighbor, or to the church is left undone, and then you may lay hold upon Christ with confidence, expecting His blessing.

But the question of how and to whom sins should be confessed is one that demands careful, prayerful study. We must consider it from all points, weighing it before God and seeking divine illumination. We should inquire whether to confess publicly the sins of which we have been guilty will do good or harm. Will it show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of the darkness into His marvelous light? Will it help to purify the minds of the people, or will the open relation of the deceptions practiced in denying the truth have an after influence to contaminate other minds and destroy confidence in us?

Men have not the wisdom from God and the constant enlightenment from the Source of all power that would make it safe for them to follow impulses or impressions. In my experience I have seen this done to the destruction, not only of those who acted upon this principle, but of many others who came under their influence. The wildest extravagance was the result of this impulsive work. A declension in faith fol-

lowed, and unbelief and skepticism became strong in proportion to the extreme in religious excitement. The work that is not wrought in God comes to nought as soon as the excitement is over.

The wrong way of making public confessions is by coupling them with an undue excitement. The idea is often to just get rid of the burden without considering if it is good, if it is an instrument of elevation to others and to the church. We must always ask ourselves, is it an instrument of elevation to the church?

In many of our religious awakenings mistakes have been made in regard to confession. While confession is good for the soul there is need of moving wisely.

This wisdom I hope that we will receive so that we will truly be elevated by our confessions.

There are two dangers of a wrong application, as we see in *Testimonies for the Church*:

1. The one we would call fanaticism or undue excitement, and
2. The other we would call lukewarmness.

Sister White says she sees the effort to keep things secret where we have wronged others or exerted a wrong influence on them.

Fanaticism would be if we exaggerate. It would be if we confess on the basis of impulse, and not of thoughtful, prayerful consideration. The reason for thoughtful and prayerful consideration is that we want to be a blessing to others, and not just give them our burdens. Fanaticism would be an expression of exaggerated feelings. It would be carelessness. It would be an unwillingness to be taught.

“Well, I have made my confession, now don’t you tell me anything further.”

This would be the attitude. In the end it's a lack of humility.

Lukewarmness, on the other hand, would be a failure to confess fully—to make only partial confessions, thereby giving the impression that everything is okay. It means being hypocritical. It means that we are simply lazy, we don't care. We don't even think about the influence of our wrong actions. It means being unkind. It means that my thoughts are very complicated. Some people have such a complicated way of thinking that you never know what the real situation is, and we must come away from this. We must go into the school of Christ, where things are very plain and rather simple. Lukewarmness means cowardice. It means false humility. There is no zeal. These are the aspects of lukewarmness.

## Two Dangers in an Application

### Fanaticism

- Exaggeration of facts
- Exaggeration of feelings
- Confessing from impulse
- Carelessness
- An unwillingness to be taught
- Lack of humility
- Misguided zeal

### Lukewarmness

- Failure to confess fully
- Hypocrisy
- Laziness
- Unkindness
- Complicated thinking
- Cowardice
- False humility
- No zeal

There is danger of both in confessions, the one and the other. Each confession that is made must be considered. There is also a time to make an immediate confession: when we see,

“Now is the time, now I must say something.”

It may be necessary that we don't wait for another week or so, but that we say it in that moment. In this case, maybe later we will make a more careful confession. As a general rule let us ask ourselves the question, and prayerfully so,

“Does my confession elevate the church?”

There are two reasons for making a confession, and I would say it is important to make a distinction between these two reasons. The one is that we confess because we have the victory over a sin. Such a confession would mean that we want to exalt God, that we want to give honor and glory to Him, that we want to show the power of the Gospel that has delivered us from this evil. That is good, that's a good confession, it is elevating.

### An Important Difference

- Confession because there is victory over a sin
- Looking for the help of parents or experienced believers

But there is another reason sometimes too for giving a confession and that is when we simply look for help. We look for help from others, because we are weak. We tell them,

“Here, this is my weakness, can you help me?”

If that is the reason for our confession, then it must definitely be a circle of a select few, as Sister White says. To make the whole church the recipient of my weakness when I am simply looking for help is not appropriate. This is especially because very often there are very weak ones among them.

However, if it is a confession because there is a victory over a sin, that is a different matter. That is more strengthening, more encouraging. Can you see the difference between the two? This can help us to decide whether we say it in a wider circle or a smaller circle of a select few. Very often this difference has not been considered by us.

### **Wrong Concepts About Confession**

I just want to go into a little bit more detail to explain what exaggeration in public confessions would be, so that we understand these things.

One situation would be that the confessions are the result of wrong concepts. For example, we confess because we believe that a confession itself will give us favor in the sight of God. This certainly is not the case. With our confessions we cannot atone for our sins. We cannot, it's impossible. Many people think,

“I must make a confession in order to atone for my sin.”

But that is a false concept. It is not the case. The confession will not make me better. This is using confession in order to try and gain righteousness.

Another error would be that I make a confession in order to please men. They want to hear confessions, so I give a confession. That is not elevating for the church, definitely not.

Another error is to gratify the desire for recognition. You know, everybody makes a confession, so I must make one too; otherwise I am not recognized as an honest person among my fellow believers. Such a motive would be very wrong. We



could make a confession in order to be noticed.

“Here I am, I have something to say too.”

Sometimes there is even a competition, of who has done the worst things. That can happen.

Giving an exaggerated account is an error which we have seen already.

The next is, “to glorify sin,” as Sister White puts it.

Making a confession before the wrong people, whom it does not concern, and especially before our enemies is another mistake. If David, for example, went to the enemies of Israel, and confessed the weaknesses of his people, that would be bad enough. It was also not expected of him to confess his own sins before Achish, and that is one of the reasons why God delivered him there. Achish was not a person who could handle confession properly. He could not handle it properly because he was definitely a very bitter enemy of God’s cause.

## **Mistakes in Public Confession**

### **Part 1- Wrong Concepts**

- To earn righteousness
- To please men
- To gain recognition
- Exaggerating the facts
- Glorifying the sin
- To satisfy human expectations
- Confessing before the wrong people (those whom it does not concern)
- Confessing only when pressed by circumstances
- Unnecessarily publicizing secret sins
- Superficiality (a lack of preparation through careful, prayerful study)
- Confessing before the victory is gained

Confessing only when we are pressed by circumstances, like Achan, would also be wrong.

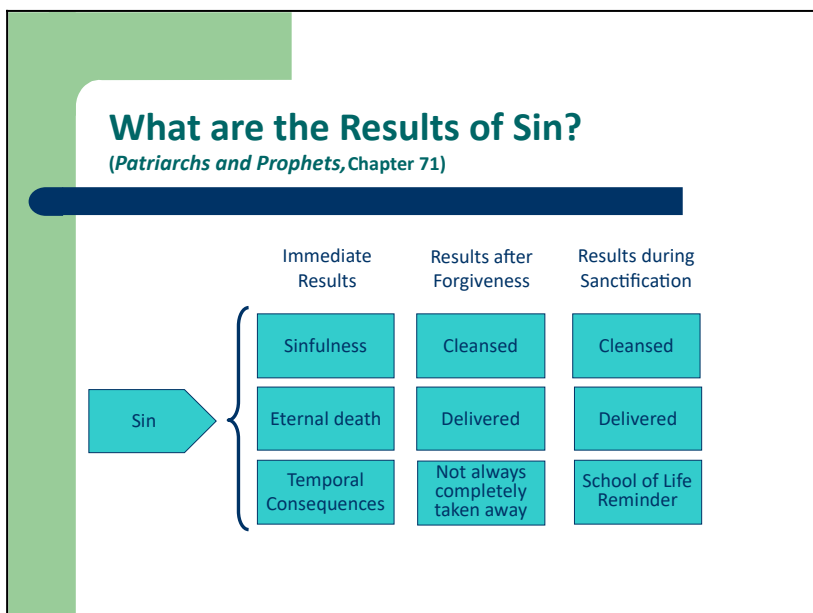
Unnecessarily publishing secret actions, in other words going into too much detail, helps nobody.

Another error is superficiality, a lack of preparation through careful, prayerful study.

Confessing before the victory over sin is obtained could also be a mistake, especially when it's before a large audience, as we have seen.

We will leave this for the moment, and in our next study we want to look at other aspects of wrong confessions, so that we can avoid them.

WE NOW want to come back to the weaknesses of humanity in connection with the consequences of sin. This was the diagram in the last study:



## A School of Life

Sin has immediate results and it also has later results. But these later results are for our best, because they are a school of life and they are a reminder of our weakness. In this connection it is necessary that we have a brief look at the experience of the apostle Paul.

### 2 Corinthians 12

<sup>1</sup> It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord:

<sup>2</sup> I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not

know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven.

<sup>3</sup> And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—

<sup>4</sup> How he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

<sup>5</sup> Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities.

<sup>6</sup> For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me.

When Paul speaks like this he shows how the human nature wants to boast. That is the reason why he writes as he does. He says,

“I could boast and maybe I am tempted to boast, but I will not boast. I refuse to boast.”

And then his battle with boasting is described in another way, from verse 7 forward:

<sup>7</sup> And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

<sup>8</sup> Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

<sup>9</sup> And He said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Here is another confirmation that our weakness must be more prominent before our eyes. It is too much the tendency of the human nature to overlook our own weakness and to think that we are strong. Therefore even this great Apostle Paul needed a constant reminder, which he called, “a thorn in the flesh.” He does not particularly say what it is, but we suppose that it was his eyesight, knowing that he had to write in

big letters to the churches because he did not see so well. We know also that he was once blind when he was at the gate of Damascus.

## **2 Corinthians 12**

<sup>10</sup> Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities in reproaches in needs, in persecutions, in distress for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Sister White says to this:

### **Signs of the Times, November 18, 1903:**

When Paul prayed that the thorn in his flesh might be removed, the Lord answered his prayer, not by removing the thorn, but by giving him grace to bear the trial. "My grace," He said, "is sufficient for you." Paul rejoiced at this answer to his prayer, declaring, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

How often do we find ourselves complaining about the consequences of sin? We may say it is understandable. Even Paul asked for deliverance of these consequences. But once he knew for what purpose he had them, he rejoiced in them. And so likewise we should understand that consequences of sin that still remain—I talk of temporal consequences, not eternal consequences—are not a reason for despair, but a reason to be thankful. He says,

## **2 Corinthians 12**

<sup>9</sup> Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities.

Let's read some other statements. Sister White herself was in such a situation. Let us read a few sentences from this.

### **Life Sketches, p. 262:**

I resolved to walk out by faith and go, clinging to the promise, "My grace is sufficient for you." God had been my helper hitherto, and why should I now doubt? The language of my heart was, "I will still trust in the strong arm of Jehovah. If like Paul I am to be troubled with a thorn in the

flesh, I will not murmur. It will cause me to feel my dependence upon God, and to walk tremblingly before him.”

Sister White understood how important it is to understand our own weakness. There is another statement:

**This Day with God, p. 67:**

It may be given to one to gain spiritual strength and discernment easily, while another has to contend with “a thorn in the flesh” (2 *Corinthians* 12:7), and at times is ready, apparently, to step off the heights over the precipice. Yet who dare say that God does not still love and regard as His child the one so sorely beset, and that His hand is not still stretched out to save?

The rest of the statements we do not need to read because they are repeating themselves. Let us come back to the other list of confessions. We come back to the thought,

“Shall we reveal our weaknesses to others, or our sins to others, or shall we not?”

We have seen that there are two reasons why confessions are made. I mean two proper reasons; everything else would be wrong reasons:

1. To glorify God, to glorify the power of the gospel to deliver from sin;
2. To seek for help.

But if it were merely for seeking for help then we would do it in a more selected circle of a few.

## **Failures to Properly Confess**

On the other hand, there is the effort to hide our sins. As Sister White says, “I recognize on the other hand that we do not make a full confession of our sins.”

**Testimonies for the Church, vol 5, p. 646-647:**

I recognize, on the other hand, the danger of yielding to the temptation to conceal sin or to compromise with it, and

thus act the hypocrite. Be sure that the confession fully covers the influence of the wrong committed, that no duty to God, to your neighbor, or to the church is left undone, and then you may lay hold upon Christ with confidence, expecting His blessing.

These failures could also be the result of a wrong concept, namely the concept, that it is God's will to keep my sins secret; a failure to confess all because sin is considered to be a private matter, where maybe it is not a private matter.

We have to find out what a private matter is, because we have learned that private sins have to be confessed privately and public sins have to be confessed publicly. So we want to know what a private matter is and what a public matter is. It would be wrong to make a confession but it is also wrong to withhold a confession.

When we have no sense of the sinfulness of sin, then there is no true repentance and the confession does not say much.

When we would attempt self-justification.

When we would blame circumstances and other people for the sin. That would be a failure to make a complete confession. When don't we do a complete confession? When we have no sense of the sinfulness of sin, and when we attempt to justify ourselves and when we blame circumstances and other people for our sins.

Also when we avoid the consequences of sin.

When we only give a partial confession.

When we confess without true repentance. This is a failure.

Confessing as a last option to save reputation. Achan in the end did confess his sin, didn't he? But it was a failure to properly confess.

An attempt to avoid saying that which should be said.

An attempt to escape from the shame as cheaply as possible.

Watering down the real issue.

A failure to call sin by its right name.

These are the failures we have to guard against. I am sure that you can find out much more. These are just some examples. We have to meditate about these things to see what we need to avoid.

Very often we also miss the golden opportunity. For example, when “now is the time to say something.” I am thinking of the case of Judas. When Jesus said very openly, “One of you will betray me,” and then everybody asked, “Is it I, is it I, is it I?”

This would have been the golden opportunity for Judas to say something. But he let it pass by and as a result he would never confess again.

## Mistakes in Public Confession

### Part 2- Failures

- Failure to confess enough because sin is considered to be a private matter
- No true sense of the sinfulness of sin (no true repentance)
- An attempt at self-justification
- Blaming the circumstances and other people for the sin
- Attempting to avoid the consequences of sin
- Giving only a partial confession
- Confessing without true repentance
- Confessing as a last option to save the reputation
- An attempt to avoid saying that which should be said
- An attempt to escape from the shame as cheaply as possible
- Watering down the real issue
- A failure to call sin by its right name
- Missing the golden opportunity



## When Should a Public Confession be Given?

When should a public confession be given, and when shouldn't it be given?

First of all the Holy Spirit is the measure of everything. I must give a public confession when the Holy Spirit impresses me to do so. I should not confess because other people say so, or simply because I am exited at the moment, but if I have a deep inward conviction that I must do it, be it pleasant or not. Then I must go forward and make this confession. And nobody can say in the end, "You must make this confession," or "You must not," because if the Holy Spirit moves me, I must do it.

For that reason it is important that as fellow believers we do not urge somebody to make a confession because we interfere with the work of the Holy Spirit otherwise. We have to be very careful with these matters.

When I have a true repentance of my sin, then I can make a confession. But if the true repentance is not there, then the confession will of necessity be incomplete. It will not be deep enough. It cannot be unless I see the sinfulness of sin.

When my sin has brought consequences to those before whom I confess. If it is the church then I confess before the church. It may be a sin that I have done so secretly that nobody knows it, but yet it has an effect on everybody else. When this is the case it would be necessary to say,

"Here, this is the reason."

Achan for example, what did he do? He stole something. You may say he did not steal from the other Israelites, did he? He stole from God, from God's treasury. Therefore to whom should he confess his sin? To God, because he sinned against God. But the effect of his sin affected everyone else, so he sinned against every Israelite, even though not directly, but indirectly through the effect of his sin. Therefore it would

have been necessary to make a frank confession. So we must be careful not to think,

“Well, because I did not directly sin against somebody else I do not need to make a confession.”

If there is an effect, which has burdened him, it may be necessary. How many people died when they attacked Ai? Thirty-six, so there would be at least thirty-six families to make an apology to. But not only to the thirty-six but to everyone, because they all experienced this defeat in Ai. They all were demoralized, they all were cast down, and he was the reason for it and said nothing. That was quite something.

We cannot excuse ourselves in saying we have not sinned directly against somebody. When we are the cause for the weakness for the church we must make a confession.

When my sin is known. Obviously then I have to say something. When my sin is known to others, and is obvious, and I keep quiet, then everybody will wonder,

“Is he seeing that he acted wrongly; is he really seeing it?”

So it is a help to say something when my sin is known to others.

When it will take away the disgrace from another person. Because of my sin it could be that another person looks very bad. He may also have done something wrong and he may have made his confession but he cannot say the whole context, the whole story, so everybody looks upon him as if he was the bad guy and yet my sin has brought disgrace upon him.

For example when the Pharisees dragged the adulteress before Christ. Were not they the cause? Didn't they push her into that sin? They would have had to confess first. So it would have taken away disgrace from this woman.

When it causes good. Then a public confession is very appropriate, when it is for the edification of the church.

When God is praised through it. When I can say something about the power of the gospel to deliver from the deepest depths.

When it contributes to the cleansing of the Church, like in the case of Achan.

When I am prepared for a deeper cleansing. In other words, when I give a confession and I do not want to have any questions asked because,

“This is the limit; I will not go further.”

That is not a good attitude in which to make a confession. The right attitude is,

“I will give my confession as far as I know and as I can see it, but I am willing to receive a deeper cleansing.”

### **When should a Public Confession be Given?**

- When the Holy Spirit impresses me to do so
- When I have true repentance
- When my sin brings consequences to the Church
- When my sin is known
- When it will take away the disgrace from another person
- When it causes good
- When God is praised
- When it contributes to the cleansing of the Church
- When I am prepared for a deeper cleansing
- When I have prepared myself through careful, prayerful study
- When my sin is a public sin

When I have prepared myself through careful, prayerful study for this, then a public confession should be given. I said this as a general rule. It could also be that there is a golden opportunity where I must say something and then I must say it, like in the case of Judas.

When my sin is a public sin.

These are some rules that should help us, to know under what circumstances we should make a confession, so that it is elevating and ennobling for the church.

### **When Should a Public Confession not be Given?**

Now, on the other hand, when should a public confession not be made?

When I have no real repentance.

When I do not have the victory over the sin.

When my confession will bring harm. It is difficult to determine this, is it not? When will my confession bring harm? We will understand this better as we go on.

When my confession pollutes the thoughts of the hearers.

When my trust in the church—in others—will be destroyed. When my trust will be destroyed. The trust of others in me would be destroyed, wouldn't it? Sister White puts this point forth that this could be one reason not to give a confession.

When I will bring disgrace upon somebody else through my confession.

When it causes evil.

When God is not praised.

When it does not contribute to the cleansing to the Church.

When I am not prepared for a deeper cleansing.

## When should a Public Confession not be Given?

- When I have no real repentance
- When I do not have the victory over the sin
- When it will cause harm
- When it pollutes the thoughts of the hearers
- When my trust in the Church or others will be destroyed
- When it will bring disgrace upon somebody
- When it causes evil
- When God is not praised
- When it does not contribute to the cleansing of the Church
- When I am not prepared for a deeper cleansing
- When I have not prepared myself through careful, prayerful study
- When my sin is not a public sin

When I have not prepared myself through careful, prayerful study, than I should refrain from a public confession, so that I will not put a burden on others; that I will not make the Church just a recipient for all my troubles.

When my sin is not a public sin.

## Different Kinds of Sins

Now we need to understand the difference between private and public sins. What is a private sin, what is a public sin? It makes a big difference.

If it is a private sin, we have learned that it needs to be confessed privately. When it is a public sin, it needs to be confessed publicly. So how do we define it?

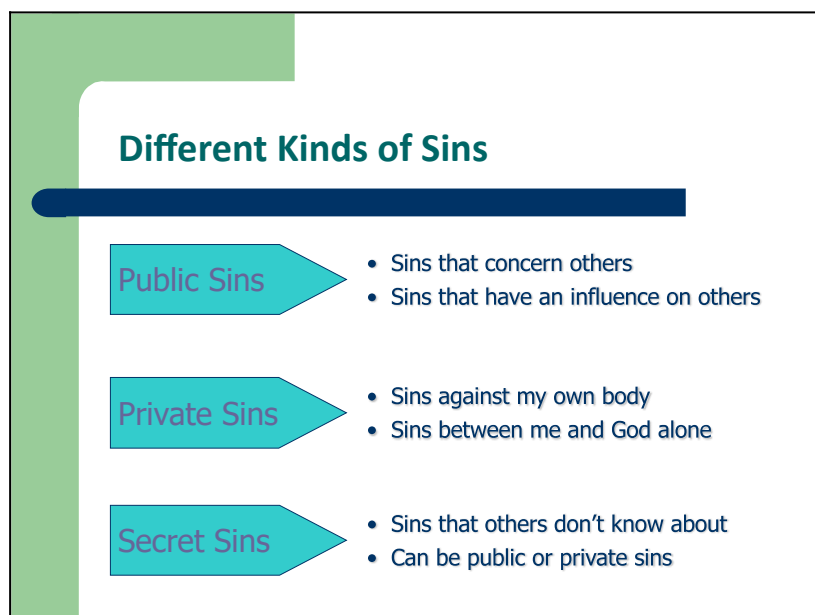
Furthermore is a private sin a *secret* sin? And a public sin, is this an *open* sin? Very often people think this is the same thing. In other words, when it is secret is it private? And when it is known, is it then public?

When my sin is not a public sin, then I should not give a public confession. So what is a public sin? It is a sin that concerns others. It is not a sin that is necessarily known to others but it concerns others.

For example, if I have told a lie to someone, then it definitely concerns someone else because I have lied to them. But they may not know that I have lied, so it is secret and yet it concerns them. Even though it is secret, it is public.

The other point is that public sins have an influence upon others. Private sins on the other hand are sins that are just concerning me; sins on my own body, for example; sins that concern matters between God and me alone.

Secret sins, what are these? These could be sins that others do not know about. They could be public sins or they could be private sins. Secret sins could be both; both sins could be secret. A public sin could be secret and a private sin could be secret. So we must make a difference between a private sin and a secret sin.



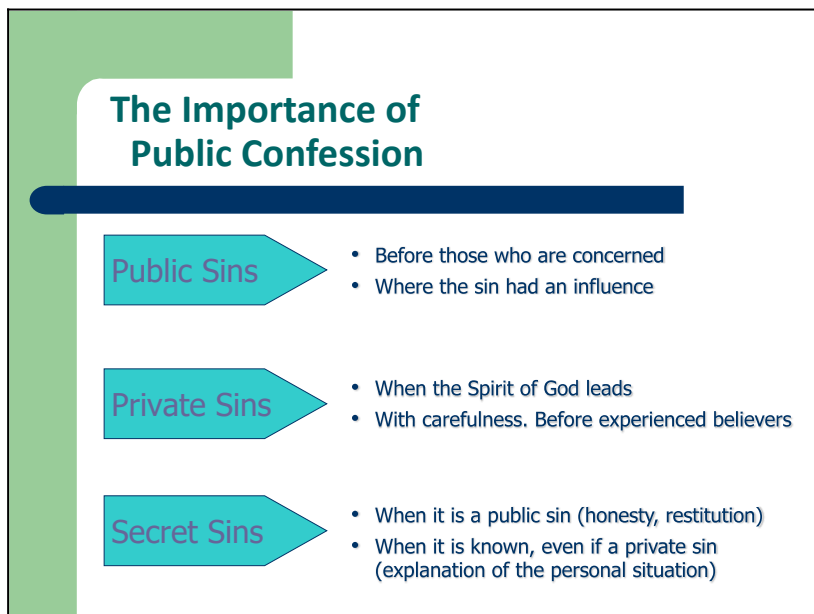
When we read in the Spirit of Prophecy about private sins that should not be confessed, we need to understand this difference, otherwise we will make wrong applications. It is not just a battle with words; there is a very important distinction.

## The Importance of Public Confession

The importance of public confessions is that they are given before those who are concerned and that we give them there where our sin had its influence.

Private sins are to be confessed publicly only when the Spirit of God especially leads in this matter. Private sins are usually confessed only privately, but sometimes it is valuable for the Church when they are given before the Church, but only when the Spirit of God leads especially. And they are to be given with carefulness and usually before experienced believers, because we must be careful not to expose our weaknesses to the enemies of the cause.

And secret sins; obviously we should make them public



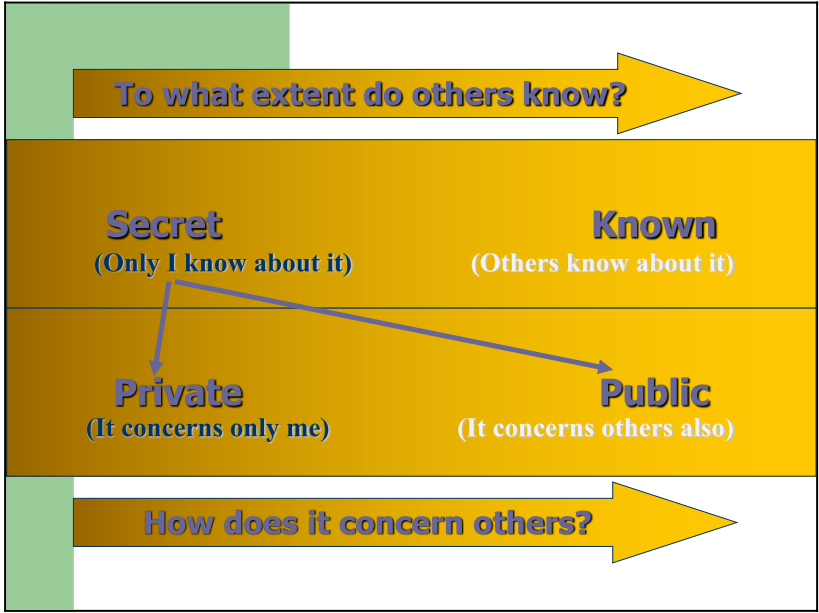
when they are public sins. Honesty requires this. Also restitution requires this. A confession is a way of restitution to undo the influence I have made.

Furthermore, when it is known to others, even the private sin must be confessed. That means an explanation of the personal situation. If others have seen it, I must give an explanation. Where is my position? Is my position that I see this wrong or that I justify it? I owe it to others to say,

“This is my position on that matter.”

### Summary of Types of Sins

Let’s summarize this in a diagram.



First of all I ask the question:

“To what extent do others know that sin?”

And in this extent it is either secret or known. Secret means, I only know it and known means others know about



it. The other question is:

“How does it concern others?”

This makes a sin a private or a public sin. When it is private, it concerns only me and when it is public it concerns others also. A secret sin can be a private sin or a public sin. And a known sin can also be private.

## The Purpose of Public Confession

So what is the purpose of public confessions?

It is to inspire faith. That means to demonstrate that sin can be overcome. If this gospel worked in my brother it can also work in me.

It is to create abhorrence of sin. That means to give a clear trumpet sound of warning.

It means to restore trust, giving proof of true repentance, making restitution.

### What is the Purpose of Public Confession?

- To inspire faith
  - To demonstrate that sin can be overcome
- To create abhorrence of sin
  - To give the trumpet a clear warning sound
- To restore trust
  - Give proof of true repentance
  - Make restitution
- To remove hindrances
  - Restore the reputation of others
  - So that God’s blessing can flow
- To look for help
  - To deepen the understanding and repentance of sin
  - To make a covenant of true watchmanship

The other purpose is to remove hindrances; restoring other peoples reputation, so that Gods blessing can flow.

Another purpose is to look for help in order to deepen the understanding and repentance of sin and making a covenant of true watchmanship.

It is important that we understand the purpose of public confessions so that we understand when we shall give them and when not. So let us think about these purposes of public confession. If we understand these purposes then we can make our confessions intelligently.

**T**HERE are several things that we could study from David's life.

His brave behavior when he was a youth, when he killed a lion and a bear to protect his sheep.

The experience when he fought against Goliath, the strong giant. Whereas every other soldier in Israel trembled and shook, David went forward. Here we see how he relied on the Lord. He did not do these jobs, he did not kill the lion and the bear nor did he kill Goliath by his own strength, but he did it by the strength of the Lord.

## **The Trap of Self-Confidence**

This is very obvious when we see how it was done. But every success needs to be carefully, jealously guarded, because there is a danger that after success we become self-confident again. David was not free from this danger.

He did not fall into the trap of self-confidence immediately because he very humbly accepted the anointment as king. He did not rush forward to the throne, he did not say,

“Here, I am the king now.”

But he knew that he would go only when God's time was ready. Humbly he stayed in his position at home as a shepherd until he was called.

But the very fact that he was called, stirred up the jealousy of King Saul, and David was persecuted and hunted, almost as a deer. He was somebody who had to run away all the time. The time came when he could hardly trust anyone, because anyone who would betray him would get a big reward from the king. So he wondered,

“Who can I trust, and who can I not trust?”

At last he came to the conclusion that he could trust nobody, not even the high priest. Through the deception which he practiced then in order to protect himself, the high priest got into great trouble and was even killed together with the whole city.

This story teaches us that even a man who could accomplish such great deeds because he trusted in the Lord, can fall back again into self-confidence. Self-confidence in this case was not expressed in rushing to the throne, but it was expressed in looking for its own way to find refuge. It was expressed in his own problem-solving when it came to protecting and defending himself.

David did not attempt to solve his problems by himself all the time. It was a mixture. Sometimes God helped him and sometimes he would again turn to his own ways.

Finally he found refuge with the enemies of God, with King Achish. As you know he lied to this king. What he did was a triple mistake:

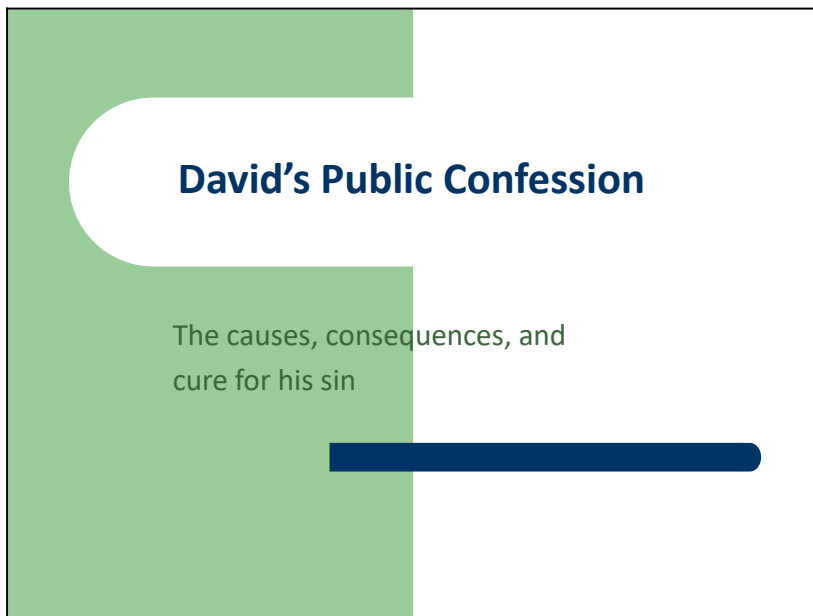
1. He entrusted himself to God's enemies, which was very bad. He did not understand the great controversy properly anymore. He was so personally involved that he lost his greater vision for the great controversy.
2. He exposed to the enemies of God the weaknesses of God's people, which is the worst thing that we can do: it is a betrayal of the cause.
3. Even though Achish was a heathen, and an enemy of God, David still lied to him. He behaved as though he was now fighting against God's people, whereas he actually would never do this. This lie he carried on till the very last.

It is true that God delivered him from the situation for the moment. For the sake of His own glory, for the sake of His

own honor, David was delivered, but not at all because of any merit in David. In fact David himself had to bear the punishment of his lying when he came back and saw his city destroyed.

## David's Public Confession

So we want to study David's life in more detail, to see in what way the principles apply. And then we want to apply this whole story to some of the misconceptions we have held in the past regarding confessions and keeping sins secret.



But in order to do so, I want to show you in a very positive and definite way when and how sins should be confessed. This is important. We need to get a very firm hold on it.

We have some examples from the Bible of false confessions or negligence. You can review these in your thoughts. They are:

- Achan (*Joshua* 7:16);

- Ananias and Sapphira (*Acts* 5);
- David at Ziklag (*1 Samuel* 27 & 30 - this was an experience where David definitely failed to make a proper confession);
- Simon Magus (*Acts* 8);
- Confession to a priest (Catholic Church) as earning justification by works.

### Examples of False Confessions or Negligence

- Achan (*Joshua* 7:16)
- Ananias and Sapphira (*Acts* 5)
- David at Ziklag (*1 Samuel* 27 & 30)
- Simon Magus (*Acts* 8)
- Confession to earn justification by works

But David also made a good public confession (*Psalms* 51). So did Peter, when Jesus questioned him (*John* 21). And so did Daniel (*Daniel* 9), Nehemiah (*Nehemiah* 9) and Job (*Job* 42). There are certainly more examples, such as Isaiah (*Isaiah* 6), and Paul (*Ephesians* 3:8), but these are very strong powerful witnesses of a true confession.

I would like to mainly study David's good confession with you. For that purpose let us turn to *Psalms* 51. He prayed this prayer after he sinned. The principles we applied to true confession and when a confession should be given, are applied

here. This Psalm is a public confession. That is what a public confession looks like and how it should look like.

### **Psalm 51**

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

<sup>1</sup> Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your loving-kindness; according to the multitude of your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.

Can you see true confession here? Was he concerned with the consequences? He was concerned with the sin itself: “Blot out my transgressions.”

<sup>2</sup> Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

“Don’t just put away the entanglement so that my sins don’t get revealed, but cleanse me from my sin, for I acknowledge my transgressions. Not that I want You to keep them secret please, but I acknowledge them and my sin is always before me.”

Do you know that this confession was given to the chief musician? What does this mean? It went into the songbook. Suppose you made a confession here before the Church and it would be put into our songbook. Not only a general confession, but very specific:

“The sin of Andreas, when he committed murder...”

...or something like this. And it would be in the songbook and we would sing it from time to time. Would you like this? That is what had happened. It was even sung while David lived.

<sup>3</sup> For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

<sup>4</sup> Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.

- <sup>5</sup> Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.
- <sup>6</sup> Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.
- <sup>7</sup> Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- <sup>8</sup> Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice.
- <sup>9</sup> Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.
- <sup>10</sup> Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
- <sup>11</sup> Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me.
- <sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me by your generous Spirit.
- <sup>13</sup> Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You.
- <sup>14</sup> Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of your righteousness.
- <sup>15</sup> O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth your praise.
- <sup>16</sup> For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering.
- <sup>17</sup> The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise.
- <sup>18</sup> Do good in your good pleasure to Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem.
- <sup>19</sup> Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering; then they shall offer bulls on your altar.

Would you like to have this said about you in the songbook and then sang every now and again? Can you see that this is exalting, elevating, uplifting; and it is a warning against sin? It fulfills the purpose of a public confession. It is not depressing; it is not saying,

“I have done this and this.”



## Examples of Public Confessions

- David in *Psalms* 51
- Peter when Jesus questioned him (*John* 21)
- Daniel (*Daniel* 9)
- Nehemiah (*Nehemiah* 9)
- Job (*Job* 42)
- Isaiah (*Isaiah* 6)
- Paul (*Ephesians* 3:8)

It is showing how deep he desires repentance. And he shows how impossible it is in his own righteousness to overcome it. It shows how thoroughly it shall be a warning to others. He desired to make his sin public in this way, so that others should be warned. That was the spirit of David.

And I wish that this is our spirit when we make a public confession. This will help us to have confession meetings in our social meetings that will be elevating and ennobling. Isaiah, by the way, is another one who made a true confession, and also Paul.

Now I would like to look into David's public confession, not just in this Psalm:

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 717:**

The Bible has little to say in praise of men.

Why is that?

Little space is given to recounting the virtues of even the best men who have ever lived.

Why is this?

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 717:**

This silence is not without purpose; it is not without a lesson. All the good qualities that men possess are the gift of God; their good deeds are performed by the grace of God through Christ. Since they owe all to God the glory of whatever they are or do belongs to Him alone; they are but instruments in His hands.

More than this—as all the lessons of Bible history teach—it is a perilous thing to praise or exalt men;

Why is it perilous?

For if one comes to lose sight of his entire dependence on God, and to trust to his own strength, he is sure to fall.

Can you see how it is emphasized again how important it is to be aware of our dependence on God?

Man is contending with foes that are stronger than he.

**Ephesians 6 [margin]**

<sup>12</sup> We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in high places.

It is impossible for us in our own strength to maintain the conflict; and whatever diverts the mind from God, whatever leads to self-exaltation or to self-dependence, is surely preparing the way for our overthrow.

The tenor of the Bible is to inculcate distrust of human power and to encourage trust in divine power.

That is the whole message of the Bible from the beginning to the end. This was the message given in the garden of Eden, this was the message given through the sacrificial system, this is the message given in the New Testament, and this is the message also of David; it is the message of the whole Bible:

...to inculcate distrust of human power and to encourage trust in divine power.

Since we repeat this thought all the time, some may get a little tired and weary and say,

“Hey, we are only looking at the negative side of the matter all the time. Can’t we study something positive?”

Distrust in man’s power seems to be all negative—distrust, distrust, distrust, but this is the greatest obstacle to receiving the power of the Holy Spirit, and once we understand this and see the obstacle in our life then we can really go forward with confidence. “With confidence” does not mean that we have trust in ourselves; it means that we have trust in God’s power.

Once Moses took the plow into his hand, he did not look back. He did not deviate from his work; he did not leave his work when it got difficult, when the situation got tense. But can we stand such a test, such a trial? We have to go through Jacob’s trouble; we have to face a lot of difficulties, and for that reason our school may be a little bit wearisome. Let us accept this. Let us say,

“Yes, I need it!”

Let us apply this in every phase of our life, in our own education, in the education of our children and even in our worships. We need to see where we still have self-confidence and self-exaltation.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 717:**

It was the spirit of self-confidence and self-exaltation that prepared the way for David’s fall. Flattery and the subtle allurements of power and luxury were not without effect upon him. Intercourse with surrounding nations also exerted an influence for evil.

According to the customs prevailing among Eastern rulers, crimes not to be tolerated in subjects were uncondemned in the king; the monarch was not under obligation to exercise the same self-restraint as the subject. All this tended to lessen David’s sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. And

instead of relying in humility upon the power of Jehovah, he began to trust to his own wisdom and might.

What led to Eve's fall? Exactly that. Didn't she have enough wisdom to discern evil and enough strength to withstand it? And the same led to David's fall. One of the most important lessons to be learned from David's life, but also especially from the fall of David, is the lesson of distrust that we need to have in human power, and the lesson of trust in God's power.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 717:**

It was the spirit of self-confidence and self-exaltation that prepared the way for David's fall. Flattery and the subtle allurements of power and luxury were not without effect upon him.

I think we don't see ourselves in the position of power and the position of luxury, even though these things are relative. Luxury you could say is everything that is better than my neighbor or anybody else who may live in the world. And don't we have privileges that others don't have? And power; we can have a very small power, even if it's only over our own children, but there is power already. But that is not much, okay. But how about flattery? How is it with praise?

According to the customs prevailing among Eastern rulers, crimes not to be tolerated in subjects were uncondemned in the king. The monarch was not under obligation to exercise the same self-restraint as the subject. All this tended to lessen David's sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

Do we have that kind of temptation, that we are in a position where we can do things that others cannot? Maybe we see ourselves in this because we are God's special children and as God's special children He loves us. He loves us also when we make mistakes. But do we have the same attitude when others make mistakes? That is the question. Or the other way around, do we see that every sin, every shortcoming is causing a great pain in the heart of God and deserves

eternal death?

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 717:**

All this tended to lessen David's sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. And instead of relying in humility upon the power of Jehovah, he began to trust to his own wisdom and might. As soon as Satan can separate the soul from God, the only source of strength, he will seek to arouse the unholy desires of man's carnal nature. The work of the enemy is not abrupt; it is not, at the outset, sudden and startling; it is a secret undermining of the strongholds of principle. It begins in apparently small things—the neglect to be true to God and to rely upon Him wholly, the disposition to follow the customs and practices of the world.

## **Trust in God's Power**

What does trust in God's power mean, which is a characteristic of true repentance, in contrast to that which David did not have? "Trust in God's power" is often not fully understood. It is not just a negative; it is not just distrust in ourselves. Trust in God's power is more than this. Let us take some examples.

Here we have distrust: I have distrust in my own strength—and would you say this is good? Yes, that is good. Add to this doubt of God's power and what will be the result? If we add the two things together: I distrust myself and I doubt God's power. It will lead to doubts, to depression, to pessimism. I will always say,

"It's not possible; no, can't be done; no, can't be accomplished."

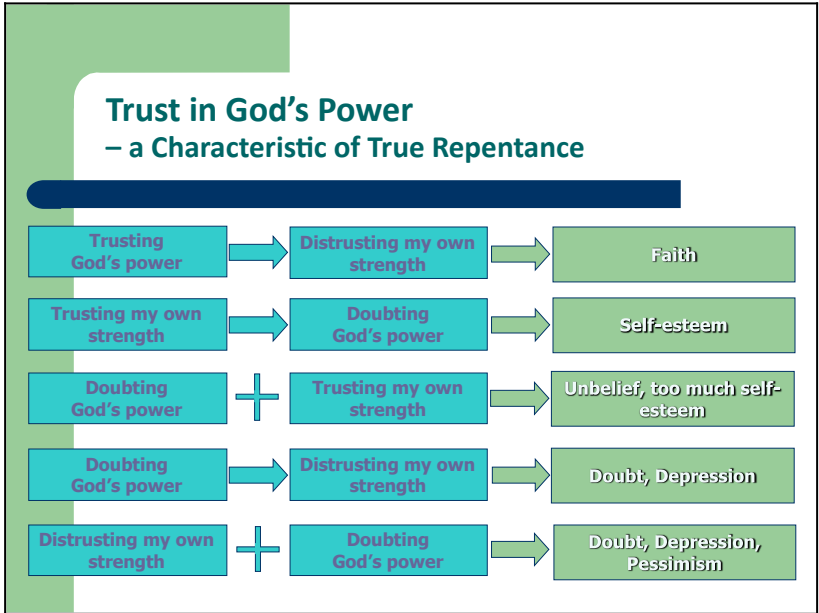
Pessimism is the great point. We can study a lot about distrusting our own strength, but it must not be accompanied by doubt in God's power. Very often that creeps in.

Let's take another example. Here we doubt God's power, and because we doubt God's power we also distrust our own

strength. That is the same result; it leads to doubts and depression. Whether I add it or whether the one leads to the other it doesn't matter, it all has the same result.

Let's take doubt in God's power and trusting my own strength. That is something we find very often in the world. If I doubt God's power, obviously I trust my own strength instead. And the result is: too much self-esteem, too much self-confidence, and unbelief.

If I trust my own strength it leads often to doubt of God's power. It's not just an addition to it, but it leads to it. Too much self-confidence leads to the point that I cannot trust God and this is self-esteem.



The only right thing is to trust God's power, which leads to distrusting my own strength, and this is faith. So, the emphasis of our study and the emphasis of our prayers and thoughts must be always to trust in God's power. This will lead to distrusting my own strength.

The prayer of Elijah when he prayed for rain shows this principle. The more he prayed the more he trusted God's power. But the more he trusted God's power, the less he trusted himself. God became more and more and he himself became less and less. So, a true genuine trust in God's power is that which leads to faith.

The relationship between trust in God's power and my own strength is this: he who does not distrust his own strength does not have the right trust in God. That is the conclusion we must draw out of this. That is where the real lack lies, when we have too much self-confidence.

Distrusting my own strength doesn't always mean that I trust in God's power, necessarily. It's not automatically so. I can be a terrible pessimist, believing that I can do nothing and therefore accomplishing nothing. Yes, I distrust myself, but this doesn't mean that I trust God's power.

### **The Relationship between Trust in God's Power and my own Strength**

- The more you trust your own strength, the less you will trust God's power.
- Distrusting my own strength does not always mean that I really trust God's power.
- The key to growth is not concentrating on distrusting our own strength but establishing a deeper trust in God's power.
- Genuine trust in God as well as my own experience teaches me to distrust my own strength.
- When my trust in God diminishes, I trust more in my own power, and then I stumble and make mistakes.

The key for growth is not that we concentrate on distrust-

ing our own strength, but that we establish a deeper trust in God's power. Genuine trust in God as well as my own experience teaches me distrust in my own strength.

When I look back to my own experience and I see how I have failed, then I see how little I can trust human power. When I look back to the history of my forefathers, of my own parents and their parents, I see how little I can trust in human strength.

When my trust in God diminishes then I trust more in my own power and then I stumble and make mistakes.

## **Factors that Strengthen Self-Trust**

Which factors then strengthen trust in my own strength?

### **1. *Praise of Humanity***

What was it that led to David's trusting himself more? Can you still remember? It was praise. He was praised for being so skilful a soldier. In fact he didn't even need to go himself anymore, because he had his skilful generals. He had already proven himself to be the skilful soldier.

And when we have the custom of praising man we do not know how much harm we cause to that person. It may be an innocent remark. It may be that we just praise a child for having prayed very well and this can create quite a disturbance to the point where the child can't properly pray anymore, because it always thinks now in terms of recognition, in terms of self-esteem.

I still remember when I was a child I was asked once to give a testimony of my faith. I was a youth almost, twelve or so, and there was some praise added to this. I found it very difficult to handle because I felt when I gave it, I gave it naturally, but I felt when I give it again I must please those people who praised me.

This does not apply only to children; it applies also to



adults. A remark of praise can bring a lot of turmoil into that person. We have to be very careful with this, very careful! There is nothing to be praised.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 171:**

The Bible has little to say in praise of men.

And what do we read? This is not without reason; this is not without cause. We read about Absalom:

**2 Samuel 14**

<sup>25</sup> In all Israel there was no one who was praised as much as Absalom for his good looks; from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.

Well, that is concerning the outward appearance, for which a man can do very little. I would say this is even the less harmful of praises. A more harmful praise is where a person has accomplished something. Let's say his special cleverness has brought him something or his physical strength has brought him something and he is praised for these things.

How often do we have this custom in the world to praise? Applause is just one of these. The whole atmosphere in which we live is confidence in man; the whole atmosphere where we stay and live. You can't go to a concert today without finding this atmosphere—praise of man. You can't go anywhere where you don't find this principle, whether it's in sports or in society, in school, everywhere. Praise of man is abounding; it is in the very air that we breathe. For this reason we have to be very much on guard.

The next is the frequent expression or recognition of my abilities. It's the same thing. It is praise: a frequent expression or recognition of my abilities.

**2. Flattery**

Flattery is one step further than praise. Praise is simply an acknowledgment of the accomplishments. Flattery is giving praise with a purpose of deceiving a person. Flattery means I

want to give him more praise than he deserves so that he is especially drawn to me. So subjects flatter their kings so that the king is merciful to them.

Flattery is dishonesty right from the beginning, but this is what we often receive in certain positions. A teacher may receive flatteries so that he gives good grades to his students. A king receives flatteries so that he gives favors to his subjects. A ruler of a city receives flattery so that he gives special privileges to those who give him flattery.

### **Proverbs 29**

<sup>5</sup> A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.

We may want to gain some advantages when we flatter somebody, but what we actually do is to spread a net for his feet.

To be courteous and kind and especially friendly towards people in high position does not mean that we flatter. What did Daniel say to king Darius?

### **Daniel 6**

<sup>2</sup> O king, live for ever.

This was not flattery. This was a customary way to address the king, which simply expressed courtesy towards him.

Likewise when Paul would address Festus, what did he say?

### **Acts 26**

<sup>25</sup> Most noble Festus.

The address of special customary friendliness is not flattery. That is simply an acknowledgment of the position in which the people stand.

But flattery is more. Flattery is giving them the impression that they are something when they are nothing. And that is laying a snare for them.

### **3. Success in the Work**

That may sound strange, but it is so. Success in the work is a mighty contributor to self-confidence. For that reason we must be very careful how we handle success when we have it. When I give a study and people come and say,

“That was a good study! Thank you for the good study.”

I need to be very careful because I realize I have success in the work, but at the same time I realize that it is not due to my presenting the study. It is due to the presence of the Holy Spirit. But it’s a temptation nevertheless.

Every success in the work is a temptation in itself.

#### **The Desire of Ages, p. 360:**

As the disciples had seen the success of their labors, they were in danger of taking credit to themselves, in danger of cherishing spiritual pride, and thus falling under Satan’s temptations.

A great work was before them, and first of all they must learn that their strength was not in self, but in God. Like Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, like David among the hills of Judea, or Elijah by the brook Cherith, the disciples needed to come apart from the scenes of their busy activity, to commune with Christ, with nature, and with their own hearts.

This is concerning Jesus calling them apart after He sent them out and then He said:

#### **Luke 10**

<sup>20</sup> Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

That is what we read in the beginning. It shows how important it is to constantly be aware of our dependence, even when we have success.

#### **4. A High Position**

In the world, a high position is being king, being president, being governor, being CEO, or similar. That is a high position. Or having a special profession that is more highly regarded than other professions.

In the church we should not have high positions because we are all brethren. But often the position of the minister is looked upon as though it is a high position even though it's not. But that is a wrong concept. Yet because the minister is looked upon as though he had a high position, he himself is also tempted to look on it like this. Then again this terrible element of trusting in my own strength comes in.

#### **5. The Possession of Strength**

If somebody is especially strong (physically, mentally, or spiritually) then this is a temptation to rely on this strength.

#### **6. Power and Luxury**

After David had won so and so many battles it was not necessary anymore for him to go out himself, because now the victory was basically won. It's only a few battles that were left to clean up the rest, and this he could leave to his generals. Meanwhile he could have an easy life.

And that placed upon him another temptation altogether. In Church history, when Satan put pressure on the church via persecution in the first centuries, and the church bravely resisted this pressure, he then used another tactic by suddenly taking away this pressure and giving them ease. Persecution suddenly stopped in the time of Constantine and Christianity was recognized by the state. It was just a few years prior under Diocletian when the Christians were heavily persecuted. Now came this emperor who made Christianity an honored religion in the state. The pressure was suddenly released. What temptation this brought to the believers! It was something they couldn't handle.

The same you see with David. First being in battle having to fight in faith and now suddenly ease and luxury. These changes are difficult to handle for the human nature.

You can also say it the other way around. We live today in a time of relative peace and if suddenly we would be thrown into a war that would also be hard for us, in the other direction. Change is always something that puts stress on the human nature and is a temptation to trust in our own strength and we must be aware of this.

### **7. Familiarity with False Habits**

In the time of David it was customary that the king could do things that the subjects could not do. Even today in Islam, the Imam—that is a special religious teacher—can have many wives, more than an ordinary person. The very fact that you can have many wives and the fantasies that go along with this leads to familiarity with sin and therefore sin becomes no longer sinful.

For a king in the time of David it was okay if he just took the wife of somebody else. He was the king; he could do this; but not an ordinary man, he couldn't do that. Not that these were the maxims of Israel, but these were the maxims of the surrounding kings, that was the familiarity, that was what he lived in.

Today we live rather isolated here in Dickendorf. When we would have to attend school like our children, when we would have to go to work as many go to work, we would be constantly surrounded by sins; sensuality of every kind. This familiarity with false habits is quite a danger because it tends to undermine pure and noble principles.

All the servants of God who remained pure were aware of this danger and for that reason they literally fled into prayer. John the Baptist would flee into the wilderness because he knew that familiarity with evil would undermine principles.

Jesus saw the absolute need to go into prayer in the evening, because He felt if He would not get a fresh hold on God He would lose His pure vision. That is something we have to be aware of.

Familiarity with false habits is a factor that leads us to trust too much in our own strength.

### **8. The Adoption of Wrong Habits**

The adoption of wrong habits is another factor. It may come ever so slowly at first, but strengthened more and more, it will definitely lead us to have too much trust in our own strength.

### **9. A Wrong Reaction to Disappointments**

We have briefly discussed this here before. The disappointment of 1844 when Jesus did not come as the believers expected led many to react in this way:

“We will not allow this thing to happen to us one more time.”

#### **Which Factors Strengthen Trust in my own Strength?**

- Praise (2 *Samuel* 14:25)
- Frequent recognition of my abilities
- Flattery (*Proverbs* 29:5)
- Success in the work (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 360)
- A high position
- The possession of strength
- The possession of power
- An easy life
- A luxurious life
- Familiarity with false habits
- The adoption of wrong habits
- A wrong reaction to disappointments

And so they added house to house and farm to farm to have some security for the next calamity. And this stockpiling for the time of trouble separated them from God. They relied on their own strength.

The same occurred after the flood. After mankind multiplied again they felt that they must do something to secure themselves against another flood and so they gathered together in Babylon against God's counsel, and they built a tower in defiance of God's promise to not send a flood anymore. They wanted to make sure that such a thing would not happen to them again. This wrong reaction to disappointments often leads to trust in my own strength.

## **Consequences of David's Sin**

What were the consequences of David's sin?

### **1. God's Name Dishonoured**

First of all God's name was dishonored. David was one who was specially chosen by God. Everybody knew this. He was not just elected by the people or he did not come into office by force, but he was especially ordained by God. So, did God make a mistake when He ordained this man? How can God ordain such a person? God's character is called into question, and His name is dishonored.

Also, David was not just chosen by God, he was honored by God. How can you honor such a person? Is God biased? Why doesn't He honor another person?

And finally, David should represent God's character. That's the claim that existed, that he was a picture of what Jehovah is. Is this God's character? Is God hiding His real intentions, as David hid his real motives? Is God a destroyer as David destroyed? God's name was dishonored in many respects. It's a very, very sad story.

## **2. Trust in God Decreased**

The next consequence was trust towards God decreased more and more. Naturally, if God does not know whom He chooses, if God is biased, if this is God's character—then how can I trust this God?

These things did not come suddenly but they crept into the people more and more. There was a decline in spirituality in Israel. We need to see these consequences very clearly so that we also understand our situation better, because this has been very much our experience.

## **3. Abhorrence of Sin (Piety) Decreased**

The next point is Israel's piety decreased. The abhorrence of sin decreased. Sin was not as abhorrent anymore. If even God's favored could do such things, then my smaller sins must not matter.

And seemingly at first there were not many consequences in David's own life. He continued to live in luxury and ease. Then even later when he felt the consequences, very few saw the depth of his true repentance. This is one of the reasons why he wrote *Psalms* 51, why he put this in the songbook for everybody to sing, so that people would clearly see that sin needs to be abhorred.

## **4. Encouragement to Transgress God's Law**

Others too were encouraged to transgress God's law, because there was not this abhorrence of sin anymore. Not only did the "smaller sins" not matter so much, but larger sins could be indulged in, without feeling guilty.

## **5. Administration of Justice was Weakened**

David's conscience and consequently his administration of justice were marred. This led him to not be able to administer his duties properly anymore. His administration became very loose and lax. If there was somebody doing a crime he could reckon with the fact that it wouldn't be punished. If some-



body needed justice the king was simply not available. Things got very out of hand.

The children likewise did not get the necessarily discipline anymore, and if they got discipline they got it very hard and harsh. So there was no proper handling of situations anymore.

## **6. Confidence in David's Judgment Decreased**

Not only was David himself less able to handle this administration, the confidence in David's jurisdiction also decreased. That means people wondered,

"Can this man really judge properly?"

## **7. Concealing Sin Considered a Solution**

Finally, David had concealed his sin for a long time until he couldn't conceal it anymore. In fact the people began to talk about it already, even before Nathan was sent to David. It was almost general knowledge already and he still tried to conceal it.

The concealment of sin was regarded as a solution for the problems instead of trust in God's mercy. And that is the reason why David stated:

### **Psalms 32**

<sup>3</sup> When I tried to keep it secret my bones waxed old, I was in despair.

He is declaring:

"Keeping your sin secret is not a solution to the problem. It burns you up."

In a way, he was much happier when it was discovered, when Nathan came to him and he had to say, "Yes it was me," than he was before, because now at least it was in the open. But before that, he had tried to conceal it and it would consume him, literally.

But who understands this? How often do we think that concealment is a solution of a problem? It is not!

## The Consequences of David's Sin

- God's name was dishonored
  - David was chosen by God – Did God make a mistake?
  - David was honored by God – Was God biased?
  - David represented God's character – Was this God's character?
- Trust in God decreased more and more
- Israel's piety decreased
- Abhorrence of sin decreased
- Others were encouraged to transgress God's law
- David's conscience was weakened, and consequently his administration of justice was marred
- Confidence in David's judgment decreased
- Concealment of sin was regarded as a solution to problems instead of trust in God's mercy

Let us continue to read David's story in *Patriarchs and Prophets* and apply it to ourselves:

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 712:**

Flattery and the subtle allurements of power and luxury were not without effect upon him. Intercourse with surrounding nations also exerted an influence for evil.

Or in other words, familiarity with sin.

According to the customs prevailing among Eastern rulers, crimes not to be tolerated in subjects were uncondemned in the king; the monarch was not under obligation to exercise the same self-restraint as the subject. All this tended to lessen David's sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. And instead of relying in humility upon the power of Jehovah, he began to trust to his own wisdom and might.

As soon as Satan can separate the soul from God, the only Source of strength, he will seek to arouse the unholy desires

of man's carnal nature. The work of the enemy is not abrupt; it is not, at the outset, sudden and startling; it is a secret undermining of the strongholds of principle. It begins in apparently small things—the neglect to be true to God and to rely upon Him wholly, the disposition to follow the customs and practices of the world.

When a fellow believer suddenly comes, let's say, with some earrings, it seems like a little thing, but it speaks of something already. When he suddenly comes with some jewelry on his neck and fingers, it tells of something. There is already a familiarity with the world. There is an adaptation of its customs; small at first, but it is there.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 718:**

Before the conclusion of the war with the Ammonites, David, leaving the conduct of the army to Joab, returned to Jerusalem. The Syrians had already submitted to Israel, and the complete overthrow of the Ammonites appeared certain. David was surrounded by the fruits of victory and the honors of his wise and able rule.

It was now, while he was at ease and unguarded, that the tempter seized the opportunity to occupy his mind. The fact that God had taken David into so close connection with himself and had manifested so great favor toward him, should have been to him the strongest of incentives to preserve his character unblemished. But when in ease and self-security he let go his hold upon God, David yielded to Satan and brought upon his soul the stain of guilt.

He, the Heaven-appointed leader of the nation, chosen by God to execute His law, himself trampled upon its precepts. He who should have been a terror to evildoers, by his own act strengthened their hands.

This cannot be over-estimated. It happens again and again. Let's look in world history at the moment. The nations want to stamp out terrorism, but they use the very same means that terrorism uses. What is the example given? That it is okay to practice the means of terrorism. What is the reaction? The

hands of terrorism are strengthened. So, this will increase terrorism. For sure it will increase!

There was a statistic published that said terrorist acts had decreased. Everybody was shaking their heads and saying,

“That can’t be! We hear more and more about terrorist acts in the news.”

And then after a few months the statistic was corrected:

“No sorry, it is increasing!”

When I try to stop a wrong act by doing the same things, I increase it. If I want to stop violence in my child, but I use violence to beat him, I only create more violence.

So by his sin, David strengthened the hands of the evildoers. He did not mean to do it, but he actually did. So, what we do is more important than what we say. How we apply our administration is more important than the content of what we say.

**L**ET US continue to read the story of David in order to see ourselves, our own weakness. I want to compare this again with Achan. Achan himself was a sinner. He did something that was not good, but it would be wrong to point the finger at Achan and say,

“Here, it was him.”

All Israel had to see themselves in that sin. When they stoned Achan, they really had to stone themselves.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 718:**

Amid the perils of his earlier life David in conscious integrity could trust his case with God. The Lord’s hand had guided him safely past the unnumbered snares that had been laid for his feet.

But now, guilty and unrepentant, he did not ask help and guidance from Heaven, but sought to extricate himself from the dangers in which sin had involved him. Bathsheba, whose fatal beauty had proved a snare to the king, was the wife of Uriah the Hittite, one of David’s bravest and most faithful officers. None could foresee what would be the result should the crime become known. The law of God pronounced the adulterer guilty of death, and the proud-spirited soldier, so shamefully wronged, might avenge himself by taking the life of the king or by exciting the nation to revolt.

The issues were larger than simply the guilt itself. The consequences were larger than just David himself; it was larger even than David and his family. The consequences involved the whole nation.

If that “proud-spirited soldier” would have excited a revolt, it would have involved the whole nation. The nation would have been split. Some would probably have said,

“No, David must not die because he is the king.”

And others would have said,

“Yes, he must die because that is what our law says.”

There would have been a split in the nation immediately. That would have been quite a test for them and David was trembling—trembling very much! One of the things that human nature tends to do when we are pressed very sorely in such a circumstance is to seek a way out by our own ways, by our own works, and this is exactly what he did.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 718-719:**

Every effort which David made to conceal his guilt proved unavailing. He had betrayed himself into the power of Satan; danger surrounded him, dishonor more bitter than death was before him. There appeared but one way of escape, and in his desperation he was hurried on to add murder to adultery. He who had compassed the destruction of Saul was seeking to lead David also to ruin. Though the temptations were different, they were alike in leading to transgression of God’s law.

David reasoned that if Uriah were slain by the hand of enemies in battle, the guilt of his death could not be traced home to the king, Bathsheba would be free to become David’s wife, suspicion could be averted, and the royal honor would be maintained. Uriah was made the bearer of his own death warrant. A letter sent by his hand to Joab from the king commanded,

#### **2 Samuel 11**

<sup>15</sup> Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire from him, that he may be smitten, and die.

Joab, already stained with the guilt of one wanton murder, did not hesitate to obey the king’s instructions, and Uriah fell by the sword of the children of Ammon.

## **Sinning to Cover Sin**

We abhor this act, and I understand why, but in the mind of

David it could be justified to some degree. First of all, by killing this one man, or by sacrificing this one person, you would save a much greater evil that would result. So, in order to avoid greater evil, you had some collateral damage, unfortunately. But you had to accept this in order to accomplish the greater good. It could easily be justified by reasoning like this:

“It was no murder because God could have protected Uriah. Didn’t He protect His children in the hottest battle everywhere? So, he did not directly murder him, he just allowed him to come into a difficult situation, that’s all. After all, Uriah died honorably. You know, he was a real hero in the sight of everybody.”

But no matter how nice a cover was put on it, it was murder, and it was murder for the purpose of covering sin.

Let us suppose that somebody who knows that it is wrong, would nevertheless commit adultery and get a child from another man. And because the shame would be so great among the fellow believers, that very person would be counseled to abort the child. What would this be? It would be murder for the sake of concealing sin.

This has happened more than once in history. We tend to cover it but we must call it by its name. I’m not saying that God cannot forgive and restore—He did so in the case of David. But before He does so, we must be able to call sin by its name. It is murder.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 719:**

Heretofore David’s record as a ruler had been such as few monarchs have ever equaled. It is written of him that he “executed judgment and justice unto all his people.” *2 Samuel* 8:15. His integrity had won the confidence and fealty of the nation.

But as he departed from God and yielded himself to the wicked one, he became for the time the agent of Satan; yet he still held the position and authority that God had given

him, and because of this, claimed obedience that would imperil the soul of him who should yield it. And Joab, whose allegiance had been given to the king rather than to God, transgressed God's law because the king commanded it.

When we think of this in terms of the results of the sin, we may think,

“Well, to sacrifice the one life is a lesser evil than to let all the other horrible results happen.”

However we justify it, it is a human way of problem solving.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 719-720:**

David's power had been given him by God, but to be exercised only in harmony with the divine law. When he commanded that which was contrary to God's law, it became sin to obey.

#### **Romans 13**

<sup>1</sup> The powers that be are ordained of God.

But we are not to obey them contrary to God's law. The apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, sets forth the principle by which we should be governed. He says,

#### **1 Corinthians 11**

<sup>1</sup> Be followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

An account of the execution of his order was sent to David, but so carefully worded as not to implicate either Joab or the king.

#### **2 Samuel 11**

<sup>19</sup> [Joab] charged the messenger saying, When you have made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king,

<sup>20</sup> And if so be that the king's wrath arise,...

<sup>21</sup> ...then say, Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.

<sup>22</sup> So the messenger went, and came and showed David all that Joab had sent him for.

The king's answer was,

<sup>25</sup> Thus shall you say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another: make your battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it:



and encourage you him.

Bathsheba observed the customary days of mourning for her husband; and at their close,

<sup>27</sup> David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife.

He whose tender conscience and high sense of honor would not permit him, even when in peril of his life, to put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, had so fallen that he could wrong and murder one of his most faithful and most valiant soldiers, and hope to enjoy undisturbed the reward of his sin. Alas! how had the fine gold become dim! how had the most fine gold changed!

From the beginning Satan has portrayed to men the gains to be won by transgression. Thus he seduced angels. Thus he tempted Adam and Eve to sin. And thus he is still leading multitudes away from obedience to God. The path of transgression is made to appear desirable;

#### **Proverbs 14**

<sup>12</sup> ...but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Happy they who, having ventured in this way, learn how bitter are the fruits of sin, and turn from it betimes. God in His mercy did not leave David to be lured to utter ruin by the deceitful rewards of sin.

For the sake of Israel also there was a necessity for God to interpose. As time passed on, David's sin toward Bathsheba became known, and suspicion was excited that he had planned the death of Uriah.

It became known among Israel, but David somehow didn't catch it. He was just living in his own prison, the prison of his guilty conscience, and he could not see what was going on outside. His sin toward Bathsheba would have to be made known somehow. It was very difficult to conceal this because:

- Right after her customary days were over, he took her as his wife;
- After a time which everyone could reckon, she had the child. Everybody could calculate and say that there must

be something wrong.

- Next would come the question, “Where is Uriah?”, “Why did he die?”, “What happened to him?”

And so suspicion was raised.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 720:**

It tended to lower the standard of godliness in Israel, to lessen in many minds the abhorrence of sin; while those who did not love and fear God were by it emboldened in transgression.

Here we have another result of the sin of David. It emboldened those who did not have the love and fear of God. It strengthened their hands; it strengthened the hand of the enemies of God.

## **Nathan's Rebuke**

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 720:**

Nathan the prophet was bidden to bear a message of reproof to David. It was a message terrible in its severity. To few sovereigns could such a reproof be given but at the price of certain death to the reprover.

We tend to think, well, Nathan was a prophet and he was telling one of the members of the church of Israel what their sin was. But he was not an ordinary person. It was the king, and in those days the king was a person of absolute authority. A king was a dictator and he could do what he wanted. Everybody would have obeyed him. David could have said:

“Here, take this man out; he is insane! Kill him!”

And that would have been the end of Nathan.

Nathan delivered the divine sentence unflinchingly, yet with such heaven-born wisdom as to engage the sympathies of the king, to arouse his conscience, and to call from his lips the sentence of death upon himself.

Nathan was very wise. First of all, Nathan did not fear to

give the message of God. The fact that he was wise did not betray any fearfulness in him. The reason why he went tactfully to the king, why he aroused David's sympathies first, and then his conscience, was to help the king. It was not to protect himself. To have David draw out the sentence of death upon himself was much wiser than if Nathan would have done so.

It is much more effective when the guilty one condemns himself. That is why in the last judgment, God will not pronounce the judgment himself. Who will pronounce the judgment upon the sinner? The sinner himself! That is much more convincing. It makes the matter very clear.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 721:**

Appealing to David as the divinely appointed guardian of his people's rights, the prophet repeated a story of wrong and oppression that demanded redress.

**2 Samuel 12** [margin]

<sup>1</sup> There were two men in one city, [he said,] the one rich, and the other poor.

<sup>2</sup> The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds:

<sup>3</sup> But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

<sup>4</sup> And there came a traveler unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.

The anger of the king was roused, and he exclaimed,

<sup>5</sup> As the Lord lives, the man that has done this thing is worthy to die.

<sup>6</sup> And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

Here David's sense of justice was aroused, and he was even willing to condemn the rich man to death for the sake of taking the poor man's only lamb. But he did not have the clarity

to apply this same justice to himself.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 721:**

Nathan fixed his eyes upon the king; then, lifting his right hand to heaven, he solemnly declared,

**2 Samuel 12**

<sup>7</sup> You are the man.

<sup>9</sup> Wherefore, [he continued,] have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight?

The guilty may attempt, as David had done, to conceal their crime from men; they may seek to bury the evil deed forever from human sight or knowledge; but:

**Hebrews 4**

<sup>13</sup> All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

**Matthew 10**

<sup>26</sup> There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.



Nathan rebukes David: "You are the man."

(Source: *Historiae Sacrae tam Veteris*, 1700)

When we read this story, how do we feel? Do we feel relieved that we are not David, that we have not done exactly the same thing as he? Or do we feel condemned because we see ourselves in this? This sin, even though it is very unpleasant to deal with, is something we ourselves must identify with. We need to have our eyes opened to see wherein we have failed in a similar manner. Every sin that we have covered or tried to cover is eating up our strength.

### **Matthew 10**

<sup>26</sup> There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.

There is nothing that can be covered forever. As we have seen, all sins will become open anyway. It is just a question of when.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 721:**

Nathan declared:

#### **2 Samuel 12**

<sup>7</sup> Thus says the Lord God of Israel, I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul.

<sup>9</sup> Wherefore have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

<sup>10</sup> Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house...

<sup>11</sup> Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house, and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them unto your neighbor...

<sup>12</sup> For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.

It was very brave on the part of Nathan that he could speak out so directly and so openly to the king, and it was good for the king as well.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 722:**

The prophet's rebuke touched the heart of David; conscience was aroused; his guilt appeared in all its enormity.

His soul was bowed in penitence before God. With trembling lips he said,

**2 Samuel 12**

<sup>13</sup> I have sinned against the Lord.

## Every Sin is Against God

Those were his first words,

“I have sinned against the Lord.”

He might have said:

“I have sinned against Uriah, I have sinned against Bathsheba, I have sinned against the nation.”

But his first words were:

“I have sinned against the Lord.”

He began to have a true concept of his sin.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 722:**

“I have sinned against the Lord.” All wrong done to others reaches back from the injured one to God. David had committed a grievous sin, toward both Uriah and Bathsheba, and he keenly felt this. But infinitely greater was his sin against God.

What does it mean that his sin toward God was infinitely greater? Every sin is primarily and firstly directed against God, because by sinning we misrepresent His character, especially those of us who bear His name. When we call ourselves children of God, and we act contrary, we steal God's property.

In the case of David, obviously the life of Uriah belonged to God. The sin was not just in stealing Bathsheba from Uriah, it was stealing everything from God. It also means that we kill God's property. Therefore, the sin was directed against God first of all. Uriah belonged to God. If a man raises his hand to kill another man, even if it is done in a war or as the executioner of an official death sentence, he is taking away that

which God alone can give.

I find it very, very strange how the death sentence can be justified. The justification commonly given is that it is a deterrent against sin. But think about this: you raise your hand to take away that which does not belong to you, which you cannot give. If I have given life to that person, I can take it away again. But I haven't given it—another One has given it. To take that life means we enter into God's sphere, to do His job which He has to do. To do this is bad enough, but to do it in order to cover up personal sins, is a double crime.



It is also a sin against my neighbor because I misrepresent God's character. My neighbor now has greater difficulties in seeing God's true character. Stealing God's property is a sin against my neighbor, and killing God's property is a sin against my neighbor. When sinning against my neighbor, I'm even more guilty towards God the Creator than I am towards my neighbor.

That is the principle David clearly saw when he sinned. His

first words were:

“I have sinned against God, and I have done very, very wickedly against Him.”

## Judgments Begin

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 722:**

Though there would be found none in Israel to execute the sentence of death upon the anointed of the Lord, David trembled, lest, guilty and unforgiven, he should be cut down by the swift judgment of God. But the message was sent him by the prophet,

#### **2 Samuel 12**

<sup>13</sup> The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.

Yet justice must be maintained. The sentence of death was transferred from David to the child of his sin.

Thus the king was given opportunity for repentance; while to him the suffering and death of the child, as a part of his punishment, was far more bitter than his own death could have been. The prophet said,

<sup>14</sup> Because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto you shall surely die.

When his child was stricken, David, with fasting and deep humiliation, pleaded for its life. He put off his royal robes, he laid aside his crown, and night after night he lay upon the earth, in heartbroken grief interceding for the innocent one suffering for his guilt.

<sup>17</sup> The elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not.

Often when judgments had been pronounced upon persons or cities, humiliation and repentance had turned aside the blow, and the Ever-Merciful, swift to pardon, had sent messengers of peace. Encouraged by this thought, David persevered in his supplication so long as the child was spared.

What do you think about the attitude of David now, of his interceding for the child as he did? It might seem almost hyp-



ocritical because he mourned so much for something that was to be taken away from him, but yet he had taken away life from another person with hardly a thought. He had much less scruples in the killing of Uriah, and now he was pleading for the child.

“You know, he should have thought about this before.”

That’s the attitude we could take towards David, couldn’t we? But he finally saw his own guilt in the whole matter and he felt as though he himself killed this child. And because of this he pleaded for it as he did; not because it was his own child, but because it was the very object of God’s wrath against sin. It was the very object of the result of his sin, and he felt greatly troubled that others should have to suffer for his sin. That is the reason why he prayed as he did.

Maybe there were also some fatherly feelings in the matter, mixed among these things, “because it is my child.” Would he have prayed for another child like this in the same way? If it was suffering because of his sin, would he have done this as fervently? We don’t know. We will have to find out one day in heaven. But we can give David credit that he felt true repentance in this matter, which is clearly expressed in *Psalms* 51.

The repentance that started here was not an act that was immediately finished; it would go on. Repentance is an ever-deepening experience, and we can never say,

“Now I’m finished. I’ve seen the depth of my sin and I don’t need to repent anymore.”

That would be self-sufficiency; that would be self-confidence. How easily do we put an end to our repentance by saying,

“Yes, now I have it. Now I have the victory. Now this cannot happen to me any more. Now I am over it. This is past. It is not a part of my life anymore.”

Such expressions can create confidence in ourselves, which only creates more self-sufficiency, more self-confidence, and this is most dangerous.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 722:**

Upon learning that it was dead, he quietly submitted to the decree of God. The first stroke had fallen of that retribution which he himself had declared just; but David, trusting in God's mercy, was not without comfort.

## **Why was This Record made Public?**

Very many, reading the history of David's fall, have inquired, "Why has this record been made public? Why did God see fit to throw open to the world this dark passage in the life of one so highly honored of Heaven?"

What could be the reason that God did such a thing? Is there any benefit? It's very unpleasant and disturbing to have to deal with such a sin. We read the *Psalms of David* and we say they are inspired and we pray them and sing them. There is a good reason for all this. It is so that we do not trust in human power. The main reason is just what we are studying here—that if the Bible has to teach one thing above anything else, it is to have less trust in human power. That is the first lesson to be learned.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 722:**

The prophet, in his reproof to David, had declared concerning his sin, "By this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme."

Blasphemy is especially directed against God. It means to speak against God. It could also be directed against the people of God, but the speakers are the enemies of the Lord, so He is blasphemed. Sometimes it is directed against the messengers of the Lord, but it was actually directed against the Lord himself, because He is standing behind those messengers.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 722:**

Through successive generations infidels have pointed to the character of David, bearing this dark stain, and have exclaimed in triumph and derision, "This is the man after God's own heart!" Thus a reproach has been brought upon religion, God and His word have been blasphemed, souls have been hardened in unbelief, and many, under a cloak of piety, have become bold in sin.

That is no theory; it is reality. People have used this as an example to reject the Bible and God.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 723:**

But the history of David furnishes no countenance to sin. It was when he was walking in the counsel of God that he was called a man after God's own heart. When he sinned, this ceased to be true of him until by repentance he had returned to the Lord. The word of God plainly declares,

**2 Samuel 11** [margin]

<sup>27</sup> The thing that David had done was evil in the eyes of the Lord.

And the Lord said to David by the prophet,

**2 Samuel 12**

<sup>9</sup> Wherefore have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight?...

<sup>10</sup> Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house; because you have despised me.

Though David repented of his sin and was forgiven and accepted by the Lord, he reaped the baleful harvest of the seed he himself had sown. The judgments upon him and upon his house testify to God's abhorrence of the sin.

The consequences that fell on David were double. First of all, the very fact that the whole sin was made open was a terrible consequence in itself. You can imagine how he lost respect in the eyes of the others; and how difficult he would find it to approach them in the future, especially as their king, because they would constantly think of his sin. He would be constantly aware that they were aware.

Secondly, the death of his child was another consequence. And thirdly, there was another death still promised. Fourfold it would be repaid him and this really happened in the death of a few other sons—namely Absalom, Amnon, the baby that already died, and there was another child in the time of Absalom. Still more calamity would come and David did not know exactly how and where, but he knew it would come to his house. It was a terrible thought.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 723:**

The judgments upon him and upon his house testify to God's abhorrence of the sin.

Why did God do all this? It was a strong lesson for David, and for Israel, and for us, that we cannot depend on humanity. We have to see our dependence upon God every moment, and our repentance must constantly deepen. That is our only chance.

Though David repented of his sin and was forgiven and accepted by the Lord, he reaped the baleful harvest of the seed he himself had sown.

## **Consequences of Sin are not Removed**

This teaches us another lesson. When we repent of our sin, and truly feel sorry for it, and put it away, God will not always remove the results. Because these consequences are for our good. In the past, we have had the idea that He will remove the results, but David's experience teaches otherwise.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 723-724:**

Heretofore God's providence had preserved David against all the plottings of his enemies, and had been directly exercised to restrain Saul. But David's transgression had changed his relation to God. The Lord could not in any wise sanction iniquity. He could not exercise His power to protect David from the results of his sin as He had protected him from the enmity of Saul.

There was a great change in David himself. He was broken

in spirit by the consciousness of his sin and its far-reaching results. He felt humbled in the eyes of his subjects. His influence was weakened. Hitherto his prosperity had been attributed to his conscientious obedience to the commandments of the Lord.

But now his subjects, having a knowledge of his sin, would be led to sin more freely. His authority in his own household, his claim to respect and obedience from his sons, was weakened. A sense of his guilt kept him silent when he should have condemned sin; it made his arm feeble to execute justice in his house. His evil example exerted its influence upon his sons, and God would not interpose to prevent the result. He would permit things to take their natural course, and thus David was severely chastised.

For a whole year after his fall David lived in apparent security; there was no outward evidence of God's displeasure. But the divine sentence was hanging over him. Swiftly and surely a day of judgment and retribution was approaching, which no repentance could avert, agony and shame that would darken his whole earthly life.

Those who, by pointing to the example of David, try to lessen the guilt of their own sins, should learn from the Bible record that the way of transgression is hard. Though like David they should turn from their evil course, the results of sin, even in this life, will be found bitter and hard to bear.

God intended the history of David's fall to serve as a warning that even those whom He has greatly blessed and favored are not to feel secure and neglect watchfulness and prayer. And thus it has proved to those who in humility have sought to learn the lesson that God designed to teach. From generation to generation thousands have thus been led to realize their own danger from the tempter's power. The fall of David, one so greatly honored by the Lord, has awakened in them *distrust of self*. They have felt that God alone could keep them by His power through faith.

That's the whole purpose for studying this: we need this experience of "distrust of self".

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 724:**

Knowing that in Him was their strength and safety, they have feared to take the first step on Satan's ground.

Even before the divine sentence was pronounced against David he had begun to reap the fruit of transgression. His conscience was not at rest.

In the next chapter, we will consider the reasons why David's sin had been exposed so publicly.

**T**HE purpose of studying the history of David is in order to clearly see the weakness of humanity. It gives us a truer sense of self-distrust on the one hand, and a stronger trust in God on the other hand.

One of the major reasons for our weakness, our failings, and for delaying the coming of Christ, is that we have too much self-confidence. It is sometimes hard to see this because in our own estimation, we are not so self-confident. Especially since we often have discouragements.

But discouragement is not self-distrust; it is something else. It is even often self-confidence, because the pendulum swings between total discouragement on the one hand, and presumption on the other. What we need is the true or the healthy self-distrust. This we shall learn from David, and even from David's fall.

## **The Reasons for the Judgments**

We have studied his fall and something of his repentance, but we want to study it further now.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 723:**

For a whole year after his fall David lived in apparent security; there was no outward evidence of God's displeasure. But the divine sentence was hanging over him. Swiftly and surely a day of judgment and retribution was approaching, which no repentance could avert, agony and shame that would darken his whole earthly life.

Those who, by pointing to the example of David, try to lessen the guilt of their own sins, should learn from the Bible record that the way of transgression is hard. Though like David they should turn from their evil course, the results of sin, even in this life, will be found bitter and hard to bear.

When we read this, we must not think for a moment that God is pleased to give us or to allow these results of sin to fall upon us. He does not like to see us suffer. There is no question. Neither does God arbitrarily steal things so that we should suffer. That is not His character.

But when these things come He does not prevent them—for our own good. This we shall see more clearly as we go on. We have another very interesting statement in the Spirit of Prophecy; I'll turn to this for a moment:

**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.

Now apply this to David for a moment. Apply this to a sinner who cannot avert the consequences of his sin even with repentance. Even in the case of genuine repentance, the consequences of sin could still continue. Would the sinner still choose these things to come upon him if he could see the end from the beginning? A sinner truly repents, but in spite of his repentance the consequences of sin still come upon him; would he still say:

“This is exactly what I would want...”?

I read a letter a few days ago, from a brother who realized that God wanted to save him out of an entanglement of sin. However, it happened in a way that he did not expect. It happened in a way that brought terrible consequences upon him; and he said,

“Had I known how God would answer my prayer I would not have prayed it.”

I understand this from seeing the consequences that came upon him. But is this in agreement with the statement here?



Certainly not. It requires faith to speak this way. It really requires faith, because we cannot sometimes see beyond the moment. We just see the terrible situation which we are in. For that reason we seem to be depressed.

In those moments, it is our duty not to rely on our feelings, but to rely on the word of God. That is a problem that many of us have. Instead of relying in the word of God, we rely on feelings; we rely on sight and circumstances. We must come away from this. Let us by faith grasp this fact:

**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.

In the case of David as we shall see; so likewise in the case of others, the consequences of sin had a definite purpose.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 723:**

Swiftly and surely a day of judgment and retribution was approaching, which no repentance could avert, agony and shame that would darken his whole earthly life. Those who, by pointing to the example of David, try to lessen the guilt of their own sins, should learn from the Bible record that the way of transgression is hard. Though like David they should turn from their evil course, the results of sin, even in this life, will be found bitter and hard to bear.

When we just read this and nothing more, the outlook of the Christian life seems to be rather dreary, rather dark and hopeless.

“Well, we have to suffer, we have to suffer.”

As a result of this, many people look down; they can never look up; they never can be cheerful and happy; they do not see the purpose of these things. You can read this statement from two angles. You can read it this way:

“Oh, what do I have to suffer?”

Or you can read it this way:

“This is God’s means to bring about a glorious purpose.”

A glorious purpose indeed! If I can see this by faith, I will not make a sour face because of such a statement, but I will be rather curious,

“Now what is the lesson behind it?”

Wouldn’t you like to know what the glorious purpose is that was fulfilled in David’s case? Why did he suffer the consequences of his sin in spite of his repentance? Why was it not possible that any repentance could avert the results of sin? There was a glorious purpose to be fulfilled, and if we see this glorious purpose, then we shall praise the Lord for it. If we find rebellion in our hearts because God allowed this, there is a problem.

“Why did God allow these things to happen even though this man had repented?”

If we feel that God is unjust or hard or cruel, or anything like this, then we are on the wrong side. We’re on the side of the rebel and we should ask for deliverance.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 724:**

God intended the history of David’s fall to serve as a warning that even those whom He has greatly blessed and favored are not to feel secure and neglect watchfulness and prayer. Thus it has proved to those who in humility have sought to learn the lesson that God designed to teach.

So there is a lesson in the very fact that David reaped the result of his sins. There is a lesson in it. What is the lesson?

From generation to generation thousands have thus been led to realize their own danger from the tempter’s power.

If the consequences that God allowed in the life of David would avert one person from sinning, then it would be worthwhile already. Do you believe that? If you were David would you want it to be this way? What is our attitude? Are we just selfishly thinking of ourselves, or are we really here in order to further God's cause? Do we want to make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness? Or do we want to save our skin? For what reason are we Christians?

We are Christians in order to make an end of sin; and that means regardless of what happens to us, the main thing is that God's name is glorified. If I can't participate in this joy, then I'm not a true Christian. We must realize this.

From generation to generation thousands have thus been led to realize their own danger from the tempter's power.

I wonder how many people were kept from sinning because they studied David's life. They studied the consequences of sin. This is a good result. This in itself is glorious enough. This in itself would be worthwhile to suffer everything.

### **The Judgments that Fell on David**

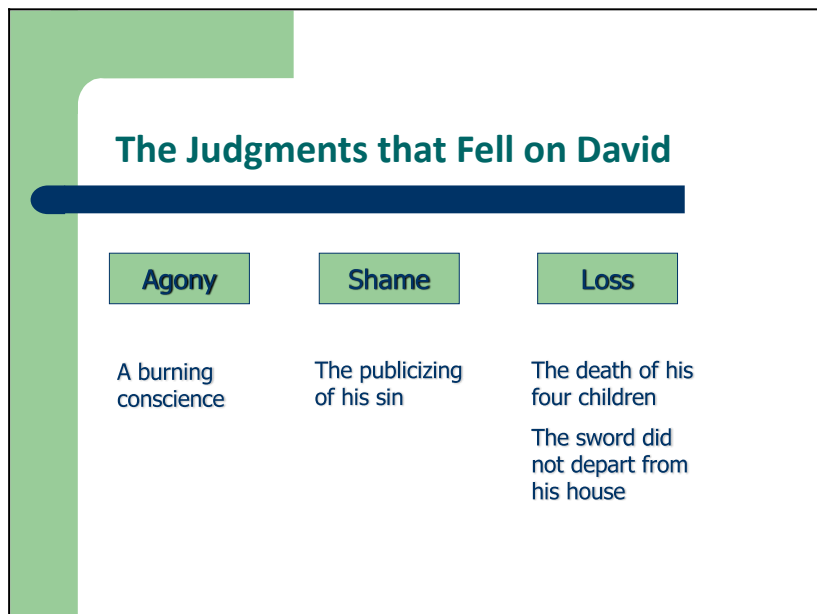
Let us very briefly look at the judgments that fell on David after he had fallen. What were these?

Sister White says that agony and shame, and I would add loss to this as well, were the three basic judgments that came upon him. Agony means that there was a burning conscience. We cannot begin to appreciate what agony David went through unless we have been in a similar situation. A burning conscience ate him up, as David himself said,

"When I was trying to be quiet, my bones waxed old."

The shame was connected when his sin was publicized. It became known and even he himself published it in a song, and everybody knew it. The loss he experienced with the death of his four children.

As we shall see more clearly as we go on, the sword never departed from his house. This he constantly expected to come, and it did eventually come in full force. These were the terrible consequences that fell on David.



Many wonder how David could fall into such sin, and yet be counted as one of the prophets in the Bible. They wonder about how many of his books are still there, that he still was able to remain a king in Israel; but we should see also the results of his sin, not just the one side. It was harder for him certainly to remain king, than if he would have stepped down. It would be harder even for him to live on than to simply lie down and go to rest after what he had experienced.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 724:**

From generation to generation thousands have thus been led to realize their own danger from the tempter's power. The fall of David, one so greatly honored by God, has awakened in them distrust of self.

That is exactly what we are looking for here—it is what we

need. Mind you, self-distrust does not mean to be rebellious against God. It does not mean to be cast down, to be discouraged, or to accuse God of being unjust. Self-distrust is the opposite of this. Self-distrust means that I distrust myself, but I see justice in all God's dealings.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 724:**

They have felt that God alone could keep them by His power through faith. Knowing that in Him was their strength and safety, they have feared to take the first step on Satan's ground.

Even before the divine sentence was pronounced against David he had begun to reap the fruit of transgression. His conscience was not at rest. The agony of spirit, which he then endured, is brought to view in the thirty-second psalm. He says:

**Psalms 32 [RV]**

<sup>1</sup> Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

<sup>2</sup> Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

<sup>3</sup> When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.

<sup>4</sup> For day and night your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture was changed as with the drought of summer.

And the fifty-first psalm is an expression of David's repentance, when the message of reproof came to him from God:

**Psalms 51**

<sup>1</sup> Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

<sup>2</sup> Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

<sup>3</sup> For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

<sup>7</sup> Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

<sup>8</sup> Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice.

<sup>9</sup> Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

<sup>10</sup> Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

So this psalm shows very clearly that David understood that his sin was not just incurring guilt. It was changing his very nature. What he desired is not simply deliverance from the condemnation of his sin, but he desired deliverance from the condition of his sin.

### **Psalms 51**

<sup>10</sup> Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

<sup>11</sup> Cast me not away from your presence; and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

<sup>12</sup> Restore unto me the joy of your salvation.

Not once did he pray,

“Please deliver me from the consequences of that sin.”

When he speaks of salvation, he means salvation *from* sin. He means a clean heart, but never salvation *from the consequences* of sin.

<sup>12</sup> Restore unto me the joy of your salvation; and uphold me with your free Spirit.

<sup>13</sup> Then will I teach transgressors your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You.

<sup>14</sup> Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of your righteousness.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 724:**

Thus in a sacred song to be sung in the public assemblies of the people, in the presence of the court—priests and judges, princes and men of war—and which would preserve to the latest generation the knowledge of his fall, the king of Israel recounted his sin, his repentance, and his hope of pardon through the mercy of God.

He himself published it in this way. It shows that he did not

rely on secrecy anymore. He wanted it to be published for one reason only—that it works as a deterrent from sin. He wanted salvation not only for himself but also for others:

**Psalms 51**

<sup>13</sup> Then will I teach transgressors your ways, and sinners shall be converted unto You.

He is not expressing a longing to be a great preacher, but rather that his experience would teach transgressors:

<sup>13</sup> ...and sinners shall be converted unto You.

That was his whole desire.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 725-726:**

Instead of endeavoring to conceal his guilt he desired that others might be instructed by the sad history of his fall. David's repentance was sincere and deep. There was no effort to palliate his crime,...

What is palliate? To water it down, to explain it away. There was none of this in David—not at all.

...no desire to escape the judgments threatened, inspired his prayer. But he saw the enormity of his transgression against God; he saw the defilement of his soul; he loathed his sin. It was not for pardon only that he prayed, but for purity of heart. David did not in despair give over the struggle.

That is the other side which shows true repentance. A person who gives up in despair, has no true repentance. He may have a measure of self-distrust, but it is not coupled with real trust in God. For that reason it is not the same as the healthy, true self-distrust that we are studying here.

David did not in despair give over the struggle. In the promises of God to repentant sinners he saw the evidence of his pardon and acceptance.

**Psalms 51**

<sup>16</sup> For You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it: You delight not in burnt offering.

<sup>17</sup> The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

Though David had fallen, the Lord lifted him up. He was now more fully in harmony with God and in sympathy with his fellow men than before he fell. In the joy of his release he sang:

**Psalm 32**

<sup>5</sup> I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

<sup>7</sup> You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance.

Many have murmured at what they called God's injustice in sparing David, whose guilt was so great, after having rejected Saul for what appeared to them to be far less flagrant sins. But David humbled himself and confessed his sin, while Saul despised reproof and hardened his heart in impenitence.

It's not the amount of sin or the greatness of sin that determines where we stand, but it's our relationship to it. Do we really repent of it? Or are we stubborn? It could be a small sin, which we cling to stubbornly, that brings about our downfall.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 726:**

This passage in David's history is full of significance to the repenting sinner. It is one of the most forcible illustrations given us of the struggles and temptations of humanity, and of genuine repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Through all the ages it has proved a source of encouragement to souls that, having fallen into sin, were struggling under the burden of their guilt.

Thousands of the children of God, who have been betrayed into sin, when ready to give up to despair have remembered how David's sincere repentance and confession were accepted by God; notwithstanding he suffered for his transgression; and they also have taken courage to repent and try again to walk in the way of God's commandments.



I find it interesting how humbly this is expressed here, “they have taken courage to repent.” It’s not self-understood, “yes, of course I repented”- as though this is a light thing. It takes courage to go this way. And we will not say,

“Of course I walk now in the way of God commandments, of course I don’t fall anymore.”

This is self-confidence. Of course we must determine “to walk in the way of God’s commandments.” With God’s help yes, with fear and trembling, they walk in these ways, but not in self-confidence.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 726:**

Whoever under the reproof of God will humble the soul with confession and repentance, as did David, may be sure that there is hope for him. Whoever will in faith accept God’s promises, will find pardon. The Lord will never cast away one truly repentant soul. He has given this promise:

#### **Isaiah 27**

<sup>5</sup> Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me.

#### **Isaiah 55**

<sup>7</sup> Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God; for He will abundantly pardon.

## **Why Could Repentance not Avert Judgment**

This is the conclusion of the chapter. I wish to go over the last paragraphs of this chapter with you, so we summarize it. We must have it very clearly before our eyes. We see the judgments that fell on David were agony, shame, and loss. We need to ask the question,

“Why could repentance not avert judgment?”

We have read it here. What is the reason that repentance could not avert judgment?

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 724:**

Swiftly and surely a day of judgment and retribution was approaching, which no repentance could avert,

People point to David's sin to lessen their guilt:

"I'm not so bad, because look what he did. I didn't do what he did. I didn't take another man's wife, and then have him killed. I didn't do that. You see, I sinned, but not so bad."

People often make a reference to the sin of David. We can consider this experience of David from two different angles:

1. To realize how weak we are—how weak human nature is.
2. To refer to the sin of David to excuse ourselves, "Look what he did, look what he did, look what he did."

We must be careful, how we mention the sins of David. People often point to them to lessen their guilt. But when we consider David's experience, we learn that the way of transgression is hard; the results of sin are hard and bitter to bear even in this life. It's one thing to refer only to the sin; it's another thing to consider also the consequences that he bore as a result of the sin.

Some think that God is not so strict because of mercy. They think that because God is so merciful, He overlooks sin—sometimes, at least.

"Surely he overlooks it in my case. He will not be so strict with me."

But men are not to feel secure in this. We cannot neglect watchfulness and prayer. We cannot neglect to make things right. We cannot play with God's mercy. That's impossible. We have to realize that we cannot feel secure and that we cannot neglect watchfulness in prayer.

If we learn this from David's experience, then the purpose

of that history in the Bible is fulfilled for us. That reminds me of the statement that Paul made:

### **Philippians 2**

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

If that is the result of David's history for us, then he did not suffer what he suffered in vain. David would have wanted it to be this way.

Thousands realize now their own danger; they are awakened to self-distrust. They realize that God alone can keep them. That is, He can keep us by His power through faith. We cannot rely on humanity. We cannot rely on our human nature.

### **Why could Repentance not Avert Judgment?**

- People point to David's sin to lessen their guilt
  - They learn that the way of transgression is hard
  - The results of sin are hard and bitter to bear even in this life
- Some think that God is not so strict because of mercy
  - They are not to feel secure
  - No one can neglect watchfulness and prayer
- Thousands have been awakened
  - Realize their own danger
  - Are awakened to self-distrust
  - Fear to take the first step on Satan's ground
- God alone can keep us by His power through faith

Furthermore, thousands now fear to take the first step on Satan's ground. That is good. There must be a fear to take the first step on Satan's ground, because the first step brings the

second step, and so on.

## Signs of True Repentance

The next question we want to consider together is:

“What are the signs of true repentance according to this chapter?”

What did you see? How do you know that David’s repentance was true? We cannot look into the heart of another person, but there are certain signs which show whether the repentance is true or not. In some cases you immediately know that it’s not a true repentance. If David, for example, would have lamented because of the results of sin, if he would have desired to escape the results of sin rather than sin itself, then you would know that his repentance is not really true.

The signs of true repentance revealed in the case of David are:

- There was no effort to palliate sin. If, for example, I use David’s transgression to lessen my guilt, then this is a sign that there is no true repentance, because that is a palliation of sin.
- There is no desire to escape the judgments or consequences of the sin. David did not ask for, nor desire, to escape the judgments.
- Seeing the enormity of the transgression against God. We will see the defilement of the soul; not just the guilt that the action has incurred, but the defilement of the soul.
- We will loathe our sin. We will have an abhorrence of sin. Loathing means to hate it, to shudder when you even only think of it. There is a true loathing of the sin. Not because of the consequences, but because of the sin itself; because of what it did to the Saviour, and to the loved ones, and to God’s creatures.
- We will pray not just for pardon, but also for purity of

heart. I'm just summarizing what we have already read, so it is deeply impressed in our minds.

- There is no despair. This is also very important. If a person gives up, if he despairs, then he has no true repentance. There is no giving up of the struggle. Many people say,

“It’s no use to continue the struggle, look at me, look at what I did.”

When we give up the struggle it is a sure sign that there is no true repentance.

- When we have true repentance, we rely on the promises of God. You know how David, after all this, relied on the promises of God. He fully realized:

“This is my only stronghold.”

And he held fast to it with all his might.

## Signs of True Repentance

- No effort to palliate sin
- No desire to escape judgments
- Seeing the enormity of the transgression against God
- Seeing the defilement of the soul
- Loathing sin
- Praying not only for pardon, but for purity of heart
- No despair
- Not giving up the struggle
- Relying on the promises of God
- Being more fully in harmony with God
- Being in sympathy with his fellow men

- He was now more fully in harmony with God, than ever before.
- And he was also more in sympathy with his fellow men

than ever before. A person who has been forgiven as David was, and who has true sorrow for his sin, a true repentance, will never be hard toward his fellow men. He'll never have an accusative, judgmental, or legalistic spirit, or anything like this. He will have sympathy for his fellow men.

These are some signs of true repentance. Harmony with God is also a very important element. Can we see this? Can we measure ourselves against this, to determine whether our repentance is true, or not? Certainly. These points give us a better way of measuring the depth of our own repentance.

### **Why was David's Sin Revealed?**

The next question we want to ask is:

“Why was David’s sin revealed? Why wasn’t it kept secret?”

His sin brought a terrible shame upon David. It brought terrible shame upon Israel, and upon the cause of God. Through many generations, even to the end of time, infidels are always using this as an example of how the people of God are. “Here look are them.” Why would God reveal such a thing? Why wouldn’t He keep it secret? The answer was given in the chapter, do you still remember?

- God revealed the sin to show that sin is not condoned. God must show very clearly that He cannot excuse sin, and that He cannot in any way say that sin is okay. Sin is not okay, and that becomes very clear in God’s method of dealing with it.
- This means that righteousness is confirmed. The righteousness of God needs to be confirmed.
- The consequence of sin is a warning to all of us.
- Sin was revealed so that true repentance is revealed, that we know what true repentance looks like.
- Sin was revealed so that God’s character is justified. The

way that God dealt with it truly shows something about God's character.

- In this revelation of sin, we see the combination of righteousness and love. Righteousness that could not excuse sin, but love that could cleanse from the sin. This combination of both is very clearly revealed in the case of David.
- It is revealed to show that God pardons abundantly—as we have read in this last sentence: “For he pardons abundantly.” In fact, Paul even goes so far to say,

### **Romans 5**

<sup>20</sup> Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

In other words, God works against the sin by giving a revelation of His goodness in even greater terms.

- It is revealed to encourage others to seek repentance as David did, and in exactly the same way. It is an incentive and an encouragement to do this too, when we have fallen. Very often Satan comes and says:

“You cannot come back, it's hopeless.”

But when we see that David could come back, we can come back too.

- It is revealed as an encouragement to others to try to walk again in God's commandments.
- It is revealed to show that the church is cleansed through this experience.
- Finally, it is shown that hiding and concealing are not solutions to the problem. Never. We can never say that this is a wonderful solution to a problem when our sins are kept secret. It is not. At the very latest, the judgment will reveal everything, for all things must be open and clear in order to finish the great controversy. We have to understand that hiding and concealing is not a solution to problems.

## Why was David's Sin Revealed?

- To show that sin is not condoned
- Righteousness is confirmed
- The consequences of sin are a warning
- True repentance is revealed
- God's character is justified
- Righteousness and love are revealed
- Reveals that God pardons abundantly
- Encourages others to seek repentance as David did
- Encourages others to try to walk again in God's commandments
- The Church is cleansed
- Hiding is not a solution

## What Leads to True Repentance?

What leads to a true repentance? That is our great question here. In closing I want to ask:

“Is it an awareness of the consequence of sin, or is it an awareness of the goodness of God? Which is it?”

The contrast between light and darkness reveals the character of God to the point where the great controversy can be ended, so it is a keen awareness of the consequences of sin that reveals God's goodness and leads to repentance.

The goodness of God would be nothing to us if we would not be aware—keenly aware—of the consequences of sin. Where is the goodness revealed, if there are no consequences of sin? What does the goodness do? We cannot appreciate it, you see? That's the point.

We can appreciate the goodness of God only when we are keenly aware of the consequences of sin—not only the temporal, but also the eternal consequences. Not only the conse-



quences to our own lives, but to the lives of others, and especially to Jesus Christ. That is what works true repentance.

## What Leads to True Repentance?

An awareness of the consequences of sin

An awareness of the goodness of God

- The contrast between light and darkness reveals the character of God to the point where the great controversy can be ended.
- It is a keen awareness of the consequences of sin that reveals God's goodness and leads to true repentance.

So the combination of both an awareness of the consequences of sin, and an awareness of the goodness of God, lead to true repentance. Both of these we see in the case of David. This is why the story is so uplifting and encouraging.



## Psalm 51

(Source: Bibel in Bildern, 1860)

<sup>3</sup> Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

<sup>2</sup> Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

<sup>3</sup> For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

<sup>4</sup> Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight: that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge.

<sup>7</sup> Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

<sup>8</sup> Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice.

<sup>9</sup> Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

<sup>10</sup> Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

<sup>11</sup> Cast me not away from your presence; and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

<sup>12</sup> Restore unto me the joy of your salvation; and uphold me with your free spirit.

<sup>13</sup> Then will I teach transgressors your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You.

**W**E WOULD like to understand better in what way David was delivered and in what way his experience helps us to gain an experience of self-distrust, which we need so much.

We turn now to *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapter 72, “The Rebellion of Absalom.” This chapter continues with David’s sin and repentance. We see his weaknesses, even after his repentance, but likewise his strength. This chapter shows the depths to which repentance can lead a man and it also shows the limits.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 727:**

“He shall restore fourfold,” had been David’s unwitting sentence upon himself, on listening to the prophet Nathan’s parable; and according to his own sentence he was to be judged. Four of his sons must fall, and the loss of each would be a result of the father’s sin.

The shameful crime of Amnon, the first-born, was permitted by David to pass unpunished and unrebuked.

The crime of Amnon was incest. It was dishonoring his sister and since it was in the same area of sins of sensuality, how would David react to it? What would David think of it when he saw his son committing a sin in the same area in which he had fallen? He would think:

“Well in principle he is doing the same as I did.”

Because he felt true repentance, he would remember how he had fallen, and not have a judgmental spirit and say:

“How could he do such a thing?”

He would see his own sin as greater than that of his son,

surely. But, at the same time, it would have been necessary to severely punish it, as he himself received punishment as well.

## **David's Inability to Rebuke His Sons**

But David refused to administer the rod which he accepted for himself. I don't know if punishment would have meant the death of Amnon in this case, but it definitely would have meant that his position would be a different one than the honored son of the king.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 727-728:**

The shameful crime of Amnon, the first-born, was permitted by David to pass unpunished and unrebuked.

Not just unpunished, but also unrebuked!

The law pronounced death upon the adulterer, and the unnatural crime of Amnon made him doubly guilty. But David, self-condemned for his own sin, failed to bring the offender to justice. For two full years Absalom, the natural protector of the sister so foully wronged, concealed his purpose of revenge, but only to strike more surely at the last. At a feast of the king's sons the drunken, incestuous Amnon was slain by his brother's command.

Twofold judgment had been meted out to David. The terrible message was carried to him,

### **2 Samuel 13**

<sup>30</sup> Absalom has slain all the king's sons, and there is not one of them left.

<sup>31</sup> Then the king arose, and tore his garments, and lay on the earth; and all his servants stood by with their clothes rent.

The king's sons, returning in alarm to Jerusalem, revealed to their father the truth; Amnon alone had been slain; and they...

<sup>36</sup> ...lifted up their voice and wept: and the king also and all his servants wept very sore.

But Absalom fled to Talmai, the king of Geshur, his mother's father.

Like other sons of David, Amnon had been left to selfish

indulgence. He had sought to gratify every thought of his heart, regardless of the requirements of God. Notwithstanding his great sin, God had borne long with him. For two years he had been granted opportunity for repentance; but he continued in sin, and with his guilt upon him, he was cut down by death, to await the awful tribunal of the judgment.

David had neglected the duty of punishing the crime of Amnon, and because of the unfaithfulness of the king and father and the impenitence of the son, the Lord permitted events to take their natural course, and did not restrain Absalom. When parents or rulers neglect the duty of punishing iniquity, God himself will take the case in hand. His restraining power will be in a measure removed from the agencies of evil, so that a train of circumstances will arise which will punish sin with sin.



The servants of Absalom put Amnon to death.

(Source: *Historiae Sacrae tam Veteris*, 1700)

## Results of Parental Neglect

What is better, to be punished by parents or rulers, or to be punished by God?

When parents or rulers neglect the duty of punishing iniquity, God himself will take the case in hand.

That's worse. When it says that God will take the case in His hand it does not mean that God arbitrarily inflicts some punishment, neither should the parents arbitrarily inflict punishment. There must be consequences in the life; the law as God gave it must be strictly applied. If this is neglected, then the school of life will hit the child.

We are to experience the school of life as children. If we don't experience it there, it will come later in life. But it will come much harder, we can't escape this school of life, it will come. If parents neglect it, they don't do a favor to the child, they make it worse for him. I sometimes tell our young people,

"Take a cold shower every morning."

That is mild, to turn the water to cold at the end of the shower. If they one day would become a prisoner, you know what could happen? They could get a cold shower every day, in order to make them humble and submissive. That's one kind of mild torture. If you are used to cold showers, you will not be shocked.

Well, you don't necessarily have to go into a prison, maybe you have to go as a missionary, let's say to Colombia. They don't have heaters as we do, and when we are high up in the Andes, it's cold and there is only cold water, nothing more. You can stay dirty, that's an option maybe, but maybe it's not. So, if you are used to cold showers, wonderful, you do it. You can neglect this training now, but it will be harder later, that's for sure. I only want to use this as an object lesson.

You can take the lesson and apply it to your children. What does the Bible say?

### **Proverbs 13**

<sup>24</sup> He that spares his rod hates his son.

He hates him. Why does he hate him? Because he makes it harder for him. He seems to make it easier for him, but in fact, he makes it harder.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 728:**

When parents or rulers neglect the duty of punishing iniquity, God himself will take the case in hand. His restraining power will be in a measure removed from the agencies of evil, so that a train of circumstances will arise which will punish sin with sin.

The worst of all is the fact that Amnon was lost forever. He died an impenitent sinner. He will not be in heaven. Who knows, if David had applied the rod to him, if he couldn't have been saved? But the fact that he did not do it meant that sin could only be controlled by extinguishing it. Sin destroyed itself and that was the end of it, so that it would not spread a more baleful influence throughout the country.

The whole situation was a very sad testimony of the neglect of parents. "Parents or rulers" it says here. Who are rulers? It could be a king, it could be a minister, or a mayor, but it could also be a church leader. Kings and rulers have duties, and to neglect them means to hate the children.

## **Unwise Punishment of Absalom**

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 728:**

The evil results of David's unjust indulgence toward Amnon were not ended, for it was here that Absalom's alienation from his father began. After he fled to Geshur, David, feeling that the crime of his son demanded some punishment, refused him permission to return.

At least he wanted to do something to bring this thing to an end. But we sense already that David trod a wrong path in administering punishment. This kind of punishment was not a real punishment, it was simply separating him from his son. David was himself running away from the school of life, because to punish his son would be hard for him.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 728:**

And this had a tendency to increase rather than to lessen the inextricable evils in which the king had come to be involved. Absalom, energetic, ambitious, and unprincipled, shut out by his exile from participation in the affairs of the kingdom, soon gave himself up to dangerous scheming.

At the close of two years Joab determined to effect a reconciliation between the father and his son. And with this object in view he secured the services of a woman of Tekoah, reputed for wisdom. Instructed by Joab, the woman represented herself to David as a widow whose two sons had been her only comfort and support.

By the way, what kind of punishment would you give to Absalom, who murdered his brother Amnon? It's difficult to determine. I don't think that the death penalty was on this, because what he did was simply revenging his sister. But he shouldn't have taken judgment into his own hands.

However, the very fact that he took judgment into his own hands showed a dangerous tendency: the tendency to rule, to become ruler, to become judge of Israel, to exalt himself. Self-exaltation was the real problem of this young man. David should have seen this. He should have immediately worked against it.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 728-729:**

In a quarrel one of these had slain the other, and now all the relatives of the family demanded that the survivor should be given up to the avenger of blood.

**2 Samuel 14**

<sup>7</sup> And so, [said the mother,] they shall quench my coal which is left, and shall not leave to my husband neither name nor remainder upon the earth.

The king's feelings were touched by this appeal, and he assured the woman of the royal protection for her son.

After drawing from him repeated promises for the young man's safety, she entreated the king's forbearance, declaring that he had spoken as one at fault, in that he did not fetch



home again his banished.

<sup>14</sup> For, [she said,] we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither does God respect any person; yet does He devise means, that His banished be not expelled from Him.



A wise woman from Tekoah pleads for Absalom  
(Source: *Historiae Celebriores*, 1708)

This tender and touching portrayal of the love of God to-

ward the sinner—coming as it did from Joab, the rude soldier—is a striking evidence of the familiarity of the Israelites with the great truths of redemption. The king, feeling his own need of God’s mercy, could not resist this appeal. To Joab the command was given,

<sup>21</sup> Go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again.

Absalom was permitted to return to Jerusalem, but not to appear at court or to meet his father. David had begun to see the evil effects of his indulgence toward his children; and tenderly as he loved this beautiful and gifted son, he felt it necessary, as a lesson both to Absalom and to the people, that abhorrence for such a crime should be manifested.

What do you say to this? It was a type of punishment, sure; but it was not the right one. It was not a solution which would have helped Absalom get back on the right track.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 729:**

Absalom lived two years in his own house, but banished from the court. His sister dwelt with him, and her presence kept alive the memory of the irreparable wrong she had suffered. In the popular estimation the prince was a hero rather than an offender. And having this advantage, he set himself to gain the hearts of the people.

His personal appearance was such as to win the admiration of all beholders.

### **2 Samuel 14**

<sup>25</sup> In all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.

It was not wise for the king to leave a man of Absalom’s character—ambitious, impulsive, and passionate—to brood for two years over supposed grievances. And David’s action in permitting him to return to Jerusalem, and yet refusing to admit him to his presence, enlisted in his behalf the sympathies of the people.

With the memory ever before him of his own transgression of the law of God, David seemed morally paralyzed; he was weak and irresolute, when before his sin he had been coura-

geous and decided. His influence with the people had been weakened. And all this favored the designs of his unnatural son.

## **Necessity of Courage and Decision**

It is important that those who have responsibility are not weak and irresolute, but courageous and decided. In my own experience that is where my weak point is; I need to be courageous and decided. Decided means to make the right decision at the right moment and not to waver or linger.

Sometimes we fear to hurt somebody and then we waver or linger, and we must not do this. We must be courageous and decided.

His influence with the people had been weakened.

Did it matter? Should this affect how David educated his children? No, he still would have had to apply justice, even if his influence had been weakened. One thing we must say in favor of David, it is not easy to apply justice when you are aware of your own sin, and when you know that the others know of it also. It's in the room, this charge:

"Well, how can he judge, having done the same thing?"

That's constantly there, unspoken; it's like a barrier which is very difficult to get around. But it's important that we simply close our eyes and forget ourselves and do what God did. That is important to do in this moment. We have to obey the Lord. We have to go against our feelings.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 729:**

Through the influence of Joab, Absalom was again admitted to his father's presence; but though there was an outward reconciliation, he continued his ambitious scheming. He now assumed an almost royal state, having chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. And while the king was more and more inclined to desire retirement and solitude, Absalom sedulously courted the popular favor.



Absalom assumes a royal state.

(Source: Child's History of King Solomon, 1868)

It suited the king that another took over; he was tired and he leaned back. But this lethargy should not have existed. He should have pressed forward. Absalom should never have had these people to go before him, he should never have had royal honors. He was not worthy of these things.

#### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 729:**

The influence of David's listlessness and irresolution extended to his subordinates; negligence and delay characterized the administration of justice. Absalom artfully turned every cause of dissatisfaction to his own advantage. Day by day this man of noble mien might be seen at the gate of the city, where a crowd of suppliants waited to present their wrongs for redress. Absalom mingled with them and listened to their grievances, expressing sympathy with their sufferings and regret at the inefficiency of the government. Having thus listened to the story of a man of Israel, the prince would

reply,

## **2 Samuel 15**

<sup>3</sup> Your matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear you; adding,

<sup>4</sup> O that I were made judge in the land, that every man which has any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!

<sup>5</sup> And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him.

Because the king of Israel was irresolute, often the people could not get their rights, this was true. But it was not right then for Absalom to put himself in that place. He was acting out the exact role of Lucifer in heaven, when Lucifer drew the attention of the angels to himself, instead of to the Son of God. How different was John the Baptist, who said,

## **John 3**

<sup>30</sup> He must increase, but I must decrease.

John fastened the attention of the people to the Saviour. This should have been the role of Absalom. He could have said,

“You have something to be clarified, let’s go to the king. Yes, he is lethargic, I know this.”

But he didn’t need to say all those things to the subjects. He could have shook the king, and said,

“Come, you must do something, you must wake up.”

That would have been a faithful friend. In fact what David was missing here was a faithful friend, who would say to him the right thing at the right moment. That is unfortunate.

## **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 730:**

Fomented by the artful insinuations of the prince, discontent with the government was fast spreading. The praise of

Absalom was on the lips of all.

## David's Strength and Victory

We won't follow the whole story. We know how he revolted, how he went against Jerusalem finally, and how David gave way. We just want to read a little bit of how David felt when he was fleeing from Jerusalem. While he was going out, the priests came with the ark, and the Ark of the Covenant was the sure sign of victory. In whoever's camp it was, he considered it an omen of victory. So when the ark came, everybody rejoiced,

"This is the guarantee of victory, here is the presence of God, it is with us!"

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 732:**

At sight of the ark, joy and hope for a brief moment thrilled the heart of David. But soon other thoughts came to him. As the appointed ruler of God's heritage he was under solemn responsibility. Not personal interests, but the glory of God and the good of his people, were to be uppermost in the mind of Israel's king.

God, who dwelt between the cherubim, had said of Jerusalem, "This is my rest" (*Psalms* 132:14); and without divine authority neither priest nor king had a right to remove therefrom the symbol of His presence. And David knew that his heart and life must be in harmony with the divine precepts...

He had some experiences in the past with transporting the ark, do you remember? It had taught him a lesson. He wouldn't repeat that mistake, that's for sure.

...else the ark would be the means of disaster rather than of success. His great sin was ever before him. He recognized in this conspiracy the just judgment of God.

Can you see how selfless he was? That shows that his repentance was genuine.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 732-735:**

The sword that was not to depart from his house had been unsheathed. He knew not what the result of the struggle might be. It was not for him to remove from the capital of the nation the sacred statutes which embodied the will of their divine Sovereign, which were the constitution of the realm and the foundation of its prosperity.

He commanded Zadok,

#### **2 Samuel 15**

<sup>25</sup> Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again, and show me both it and His habitation:

<sup>26</sup> But if He thus say, I have no delight in you; behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seems good unto Him.

That is selflessness. He was not looking for an escape from the consequences of his own sin. Then he sent the priests back as spies. There was also a counselor which he sent back. Then we have the story of Shimei, how he accused David:

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 737:**

Conscience was uttering bitter and humiliating truths to David. While his faithful subjects wondered at his sudden reverse of fortune, it was no mystery to the king. He had often had forebodings of an hour like this. He had wondered that God had so long borne with his sins, and had delayed the merited retribution.

And now in his hurried and sorrowful flight, his feet bare, his royal robes changed for sackcloth, the lamentations of his followers awaking the echoes of the hills, he thought of his loved capital—of the place which had been the scene of his sin—and as he remembered the goodness and long-suffering of God, he was not altogether without hope. He felt that the Lord would still deal with him in mercy.

How many people who suffered what David suffered, would have accused the Lord, and rebelled against Him? But there was not a trace of this in David. He just saw the long-suffering and the goodness of God. That is something, isn't it? That



is a sign of true repentance.



David flees from Jerusalem in sorrow, but with hope.

(Source: Bible in Picture and Story, 1889)

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 737-738:**

Many a wrongdoer has excused his own sin by pointing to David's fall, but how few there are who manifest David's penitence and humility. How few would bear reproof and retribution with the patience and fortitude that he manifested.

He had confessed his sin, and for years had sought to do his duty as a faithful servant of God; he had labored for the upbuilding of his kingdom, and under his rule it had attained to strength and prosperity never reached before. He had gathered rich stores of material for the building of the house of God, and now was all the labor of his life to be swept away? Must the results of years of consecrated toil, the work of genius and devotion and statesmanship, pass into the hands of his reckless and traitorous son, who regarded not



the honor of God nor the prosperity of Israel? How natural it would have seemed for David to murmur against God in this great affliction!

But he saw in his own sin the cause of his trouble.

This is self-distrust. This is what we need.

The words of the prophet Micah breathe the spirit that inspired David's heart.

**Micah 7**

<sup>8</sup> When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.

<sup>9</sup> I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He plead my cause, and execute judgment for me.

And the Lord did not forsake David. This chapter in his experience, when, under cruelest wrong and insult, he shows himself to be humble, unselfish, generous, and submissive, is one of the noblest in his whole experience. Never was the ruler of Israel more truly great in the sight of heaven than at this hour of his deepest outward humiliation.

That is true greatness, and this is the measurement of true greatness. That's how we shall view it. That's how God views it, and that's how He wants us to view it too.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 738:**

Had God permitted David to go on unrebuked in sin, and while transgressing the divine precepts, to remain in peace and prosperity upon his throne, the skeptic and infidel might have had some excuse for citing the history of David as a reproach to the religion of the Bible. But in the experience through which He caused David to pass, the Lord shows that He cannot tolerate or excuse sin.

And David's history enables us to see also the great ends which God has in view in His dealings with sin; it enables us to trace, even through darkest judgments, the working out of His purposes of mercy and beneficence. He caused David to pass under the rod, but He did not destroy him; the furnace is to purify, but not to consume. The Lord says,

## **Psalm 89**

<sup>31</sup> If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments;

<sup>32</sup> Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.

<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.

Can you now see the glorious purpose that God was fulfilling in allowing the judgments to fall upon David? And wouldn't you, if you were David, wish that these things came exactly as they came?

### **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...

How true this was here. David understood this, he accepted it with his whole heart. Therefore he is considered such a great man in the word of God. His greatness is not in the many victories he won as a soldier, but in the self-distrust that he showed.

## **2 Corinthians 12**

<sup>10</sup> ...when I am weak, then am I strong.

That is the principle revealed in the life of David.

THE important principle revealed in the life of David was that in times of trouble, he revealed distrust of himself, and great faith in God. Even if these troubles were brought on by his own sins, he still looked to, and accepted whatever the Lord allowed.

## Application to Us

Now we want to apply this principle to ourselves, because we are in a similar situation. In the last year there were some very embarrassing confessions made in the area of sensuality, the same area in which David also fell. It was very difficult to even listen to these things, it was humbling. Certainly in those who remain true to the message it creates a sense of self-distrust, especially with the lessons that we have this year. But we need to see also where these things began and how they started.

I want to turn now to the book *Entering into God's Sabbath Rest*,<sup>2</sup> to chapter 17, "Undeserved Deliverance," and the next chapter as well. I want to simply read a few things and I want to tell you some of the background history of what is being described. You cannot know this, you just read the history and you read the text here, but there is a history behind it. It is important that we understand this.

### **God's Sabbath Rest, p. 260:**

Not only is man unwilling to appear before God just as he is; he is also afraid to come. Because of the incorrect views of God's character which Satan has been promoting ever since

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<sup>2</sup> **Editor's Note:** The book, *Entering into God's Sabbath Rest*, has since been revised to correct the misconceptions discussed in this chapter, and to bring the truths up-to-date with what is revealed in these studies on healthy self-distrust.

he rebelled in heaven, men tend to see God as a being of awesome righteousness and strict justice who will exact full punishment for every evil committed. Men are thus led to believe that God will not relieve them of their problems until they have endured all that they deserve. Naturally, those who are deceived by these sophistries will have neither the faith nor the courage to cast their burdens on the great Burden-bearer.

The thought in this chapter is, how important it is to lay our burdens on the Burden-bearer, and how completely He solves our problems once we have laid them there.

**God's Sabbath Rest, p. 260:**

If God was the Problem-solver only for those who deserved this service, then men would rarely, if at all, receive this blessing.

Was God the Problem-solver of David? Certainly, but did He solve his problems in the way that we would expect, necessarily? He did not solve his problems by taking away the consequences of his sins, and this is sometimes what we expect.

We understand that when we are forgiven, we stand before God as though we had never sinned. This is true. But then we assume there will therefore be no consequences—provided we have truly repented. We have thought that if the sin is forgiven and put away, then God should also deliver us from the consequences of that sin.

This is the concept that we have had and this is the concept also which we will find in this book. I don't know if it is intended like this, but that's how it is expressed.

“Yes, I am forgiven and then it's all over.”

We have learned that it is the judgmental person and the legalist who looks down upon sinners as though they cannot be forgiven; we have learned that it is the Pharisees who said to the sick man, “Well, that is the finger of God and you must

suffer it now.”

Knowing all this, obviously we do not wish to participate in that kind of spirit. And it is not with such a spirit that we now study the events that Fred describes. We want to see God’s goodness, we want to see His glory. When I speak now the weaknesses of our Brother Fred, then I would like us to understand that I don’t do this in order to cast him or us down, but only for two reasons:

1. That we understand something of the weakness of humanity, and
2. That we understand how God deals with such problems.

It is important that we see the goodness of God in this whole matter—that is essential.

**God’s Sabbath Rest, p. 260:**

However, the mercies of God are not bestowed on people because they are deserving, but because of His great love. Provided men fulfill the simple conditions, nothing can prevent the outflow of divine grace to the needy.

God yearns for every soul to enter into His Sabbath rest, but He knows that they never will until they learn to put away Satan’s arguments and come to Him just as they are, with all their problems.

It is in His mighty and effective capacity and willingness to succor Satan’s victims, that God is repeatedly revealed in the Scriptures. No story illustrates this better than David’s. Time after time, David resorted to his own devices until a complex, threatening, and seemingly insoluble problem accumulated.

What was about to befall him was thoroughly deserved and God would have been completely justified in simply leaving him to suffer the consequences. But, when David finally gave the desperate impasse to God, He solved it for him with the smoothness, simplicity, and perfection that one would expect for a guiltless person. David’s escape from danger and recrimination was as total as it was unmerited.

Fred is not referring here to the incident when David sinned with Bathsheba, but to the sin when he was in Ziklag, that is the background.

**God's Sabbath Rest, p. 260:**

What Jehovah did for David, He will do for every one of His children if they will but cast their problems on Him and leave them there.

What do we expect when we read such a thing? We expect that God will solve our problems with the smoothness, simplicity and perfection that would be given to a guiltless person. We would expect, when we read this, that God will take away the consequences, wouldn't we?

In a way, God did solve the problems of David with such smoothness, simplicity and perfection—but in another way than we would define smoothness, simplicity, and perfection. It is not so easy as it appears. As Ellen White stated, it was hard for David to bear these things, it was difficult. These are the elements that need to be very clearly seen.

What Jehovah did for David, He will do for every one of His children if they will but cast their problems on Him and leave them there. It is well worth the time and study to acquaint ourselves with the Almighty's responses to the undeserving David, in order to develop the faith and courage to come to Him when we need Him most.

There was an occasion when I really needed to know what God had done for David. Like the errant king-elect, I had engineered myself into a fearful and frightening entanglement for which there seemed no solution. I knew I deserved all that was about to befall me, but I also knew from David's experience how to approach God at such a time and what to expect from Him. It was with calm assurance rather than troubled uncertainty, that I presented my difficulties to the Almighty, and I was not disappointed.

In the light of that experience I make the strongest recommendation that every believer become thoroughly ac-

quainted with the way the Lord delivered His people in the past, and be assured that what He did for them, He waits to do for us if we just give Him the opportunity!

The incident that he describes here, and describes again in the next chapter, happened in the year 1975 and it was a similar sin to that of David. I don't need to tell you all the details. I will tell you in the next session, how the situation of the sin of Fred came to light nine years later.

But, the entanglement of Fred that he describes happened in 1974, and as I said already it was a similar sin to that of David and he escaped seemingly unmarred from it at that time. His sin became known to some, a few believers here in Germany, who do not live anymore. They have meanwhile passed away, so they cannot be witnesses. Maybe there are other witnesses, I don't know, but they are not members of our church now.

It seemed that everything was over after awhile. Nothing bad happened. It didn't come to public knowledge and everything went on. That seems to be a smooth escape without any problems, without any hindrance. This is the background of that little experience that he describes. He refers to this again in the same chapter, when David fled from Saul, and he finally fled to the enemies of Israel:

**God's Sabbath Rest, p. 263:**

David now faced a serious problem. He knew that the power of the king would lead all men to betray him, not because they had anything against him, but because they feared the wrath of the monarch if they did not obey him. Therefore David felt he could trust no one, including the high priest. He had no desire to fall into the murderous hands of the jealous, enraged monarch, and was eager to take whatever steps were necessary to avoid such an unpleasant outcome.

So this was a problem urgently requiring a solution. He had the choice of providing one himself, or of looking to God for it. Had he chosen the latter, then nothing could have

gone wrong, but looking to himself, disaster was sure to follow. At this point, David forgot the procedures he had so faithfully and courageously followed at the slayings of the lion, the bear, and the Philistine giant. Reverting to human methods again, he relied upon his own resources instead of casting the whole burden on the Lord to await His specific orders.

There were only two devices at his command to which he could turn to save himself. One of these was force; the other, deception. Force was of no value, for his personal might was minimal compared to Saul's, who had at his disposal tens of thousands of battle-hardened warriors, and David had no illusions of the outcome of any encounter with them. But he could turn to deception. Unable to trust even the high priest not to report him to the king, he gave a deceptive answer to the embarrassing question this man of God asked him.

That cost the life of this man, and of many others as well, as we know. The whole lying of David is described here. We'll jump to page 265:

**God's Sabbath Rest, p. 265:**

This incident clearly demonstrates once again the evil consequences to God's cause when men resort to their own problem solving. Every such repeated witness should cause those who search the Scriptures to shun such procedures like the plague.

Surely, if David had foreseen the outworking of what he had done, he would never have resorted to such methods. Unfortunately, when the decision has to be made, no one knows just what the consequences will be, so the only safety lies in letting God determine how the problem will be met.

From Nob, David fled to the only place which, in his judgment, could offer him any safety—the land of the Philistines. God was certainly not in command of these movements, for He would never have sent David to his enemies. David's own logical processes must have been in a confused state for him to imagine that he could go safely among the people whose champion he had humiliated and destroyed. It was not the



character or spirit of the Philistines to forget an injury done or miss the opportunity to exact revenge, no matter how long they had to wait.

Thus David created another problem for himself, for when he arrived in Gath, he found his life endangered. David fled to Achish, the king of Gath; for he felt that there was more safety in the midst of the enemies of his people...

God did not interfere with David. While he chose to be his own problem-solver, the Lord simply stood by until His servant gave Him back His rightful position. Meanwhile, David was passing from danger to greater danger, busily adding confusion to confusion.

All this is described. You know the story and I think we know these pages as well. We'll read from page 266:

**God's Sabbath Rest, p. 266:**

It is extremely comforting to know that even though David brought all this trouble upon himself, God thought of him not in terms of condemnation, but in terms of education.

That is very true. This is the correct way to view the rod. It is not a means of condemnation, it is a means of education. It is a means of bringing us closer to Him, and the love of God is revealed in the whole thing. If we just think in terms of revenge, or in terms of legal justice:

"Yes, this is just, he deserved it, this must happen..."

...then we are on the wrong side, definitely.

**God's Sabbath Rest, p. 266:**

The loving Father saw the opportunity to teach him lessons which would prevent the recurrence of these costly mistakes. Consistent with the usual human response to God's educational work, David proved to be a slow but eventual learner.

A failure to remove the mind from the immediate and demanding witness of sight and circumstances, and focus it instead on God's wonderful promises and His faithful fulfill-

ment of them in the past, is common to all defeats experienced by God's children in testing times. Every believer has some such experience he can recall, and there are also the great revelations of God's works recorded in the Scriptures. We must never forget that what the Lord did for those wonderful men and women, He is eagerly waiting to do for us today.

The thought that's repeated again and again is that we must not take God's plans into our own hands.

Finally, David was required to march with Achish towards Israel, which was very embarrassing for David because he would never think of fighting against his own people. Let's begin to read again on page 270:

**God's Sabbath Rest, p. 270:**

**1 Samuel 23**

<sup>5</sup> So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

Had David followed these procedures in the encounter with the high priest and in selecting the place to which to flee, he would have enjoyed the same success gained here against the Philistines.

No fault can be found with the way David went about the Lord's business when he relieved Keilah. It represented a recovery from a period when he had lapsed into his own devisings and had been cursed with evil consequences.

However, many would find God's response surprising and somewhat perplexing. They feel that before God could again fully trust David and manifest His power on his behalf, David must demonstrate, during a lengthy period of probation, that he was worthy of Jehovah's blessings.

This is how men treat their fellow men, but it is not how God relates himself to His children. All David had to do was recognize his sin, make contrite confession of it, restore where possible what he had taken, and follow correct procedures when seeking solutions to his problems. As soon as he

took these steps, the Lord immediately worked for him, treating His servant as though he had never sinned. Such is the wonderful love and compassion of our heavenly Father.

We can say “yes” to this, provided we understand that God also expresses His love by allowing the rod of correction, too.

Before long, an even greater test was to come to David. It was reported to Saul that David was hiding in the wilderness of Engedi.

## **The Consequences Skipped**

Now we come to chapter 18, “Entangled and Delivered.” This is what I want to dwell more heavily on; this is where he marched against the Israelites together with the Philistines. However, he did not actually fight; God delivered him from this—that was the deliverance. David had entangled himself, but he was delivered again. The Philistine lords remonstrated against David’s men marching with them, and David still played the hypocrite; finally the king gave way, and then we read:

### **God’s Sabbath Rest, p. 287:**

What a perfect problem-solver God is! Here, in His dealings with the unworthy David, is the revelation of the perfection of our heavenly Father’s ways; the demonstration of how He can and will untangle the worst difficulties, provided the problem is given into His hands. So total was David’s deliverance that even Achish remained ignorant of the deceptions practiced upon him. One looks in vain for at least some punishment to have been imposed upon David...

Is this right? That is not right; that’s not the end of the story. He came home to his city and it was totally destroyed, and all the wives and children were taken away. God did not impose it on him, but it was the consequence.

...but he returned from the battlefield as completely free as if he had never sinned against either God or the king. It must have seemed too good to be true, but it was real

enough. With what adoration and praise for His wonderful Deliverer must David have marched back to Ziklag again.

This story provides a contrast between the outworking of human and divine planning and problem-solving. When the differences are seen, they should provide the cure for the persistent problem of men replacing God in this role. If they did, then how swiftly would God's work be finished and Jesus return!

It is God's intention that David's recorded experiences shall teach us the folly of following our own ways, and the infallible perfection of His procedures. The Lord wants us to know that when, through our own misguided foolishness, we get ourselves into deep waters, the only way of escape is to cast the problem into His hands.

Once it is wholly given to Him, He can speedily solve it. By so doing, He will expose Satan's lie that Jehovah turns His back on those who seek His deliverance from troubles brought on themselves by their own devising. Satan would have us believe that God obtains great satisfaction from seeing His children suffer the consequences of their disobedience.

While we can agree with most of what has been said here, I must say it seems that something of a true description of the ways of God is lacking here. It is as though escaping from a problem unscarred is the most important thing. That's the whole impression readers must get when they read this. There is no school of life.

Furthermore, the short history where David was delivered from Achish is not the whole story of the life of David—there is more to it, much more. The destruction of Ziklag is only an example.

## **Fred's Description of His Experience**

**God's Sabbath Rest, p. 287:**

I am deeply and sincerely grateful to God for the preservation of the records of God's dealing with David in both his

sins and his recovery from them. The knowledge of God's ways thus gained literally saved my life. It happened as follows...

Now Fred describes his own experience. As I said already, it was a sin that was the same as that of David's sin with Bathsheba; it was in the area of sensuality. The questions that we would have to ask here are,

"Why was not the story of David and Bathsheba used to describe Fred's own experience? Why did he use the story of Achish?"

In the story of Achish, the sin seemed to be kept secret—that was the main thing. The sin wasn't made public, it didn't blow up; he was delivered without it blowing up. But the sin with Bathsheba did blow up—that's the difference. We may ask the question,

"Why didn't it blow up with Achish?"

I don't know all the reasons. However, one of the reasons could be because Achish was an enemy of Christ and, as such, he wouldn't have dealt properly with the knowledge, so God left it this way. Eventually these things will come to light, and Achish will, in the judgment, be one of the accusers of David, you can be sure of this. He will say,

"This man, he has lied to me—how can he deserve heaven?"

That won't be easy for God to answer.

**God's Sabbath Rest, p. 287-289:**

My life, like David's, had been a mixture of divine and human plan-making. Sometimes I looked to God with steady gaze, but at other times I had undertaken this work myself. For a while, I seemed to do quite well working out my own affairs, but the time inevitably arrived when my troubles accumulated and matured.

This is what happened in 1975, as I said before; it is exactly

what he is referring to.

Then I found that things which I thought had been favorable moves were simply the marshaling of the enemy to battle. Having placed himself on vantage ground, he was ready to spring his well-prepared trap.

I could see no way out of the dilemma. Ruin faced me. I saw the ending of my career and the precipitation of much sorrow and distress upon my loved ones, friends, and fellow-believers.

Can you say the same of David? Certainly.

It was a time of great stress and terrible apprehension. I looked with regret on my past course and longed to live my life over again with the wisdom gained through experience. I knew, however, that no deliverance could be found in this direction.

I also knew that I thoroughly deserved the punishment about to fall on me as the result of following my own ways, and was quite reconciled to suffering it. I wasted no time in self-justification, for I was fully aware that I could not honestly blame anyone but myself. This candid recognition of the situation removed any disposition to seek deliverance. Instead, I was resigned to my well-deserved fate.

But, what did deeply concern me was the realization that I would not bear that punishment alone. God's cause and many innocent people—members of the family, fellow-believers, and others—would also suffer terribly. When I saw the extent to which the guiltless would be caused to suffer with the guilty, then I was stirred to seek deliverance, not for my sake, but for theirs.

Satan, of course, was determined that the maximum damage be done to all concerned, and he was quick to argue that I could expect no mercy from God and that He certainly would not deliver me. The enemy told me that I had gotten myself into this entanglement and it was up to me to free myself from it first, and then go to God, confess my errors, plead for His forgiveness, and let Him be the plan-maker from then on.

Satan knew perfectly well that if I added more of my own plan-making and problem-solving to what had brought me as much trouble as I then faced, I would only be plunged into a more desperate situation still, for God cannot save us when we are working to save ourselves. The only problems He can solve are those which are totally given to Him.

Had I not known the wonderful ways of God as revealed in His dealings with David, when the latter abandoned all attempts to solve the difficulties himself and gave the entire problem to God, I would surely have followed Satan's suggestions. Had this been the case, I would certainly not be writing this testimony today. Ruin for life, such as also faced David, would have been my fate.

Seeing the utter folly of attempting to solve the dilemma myself, I resolved that, even if I should perish, I would not turn to my own works to obtain deliverance. Either God would save me, or no one would, so total was my committal to the Sabbath rest principles.

Seeing as never before the evils of human plan-making, I was able to confess with an extraordinary depth of contrition the sins which had marred my past course. I acknowledged that the trouble crushing me was entirely self-afflicted, and that I fully deserved all the loss, sorrow, and suffering which was threatening me. I pleaded with God to defer it, not for my sake but for the sake of the innocent parties who would be caused to suffer because of my sins, and for the sake of God's cause upon which an evil reflection would be cast.

I prayed with a strong and active memory of what God had done for David, and I argued to myself that what God did for him was the revelation and the promise of what He would do for me. By faith, I threw myself on the mercies of a sin-pardoning Redeemer who delights to solve the problems brought to Him, no matter how undeserving the suppliant might be.

As I did so, a plan formed in my mind, not as a result of my own devising, but from another and mightier intelligence. It was a beautiful plan, requiring that I adopt a certain course of action, while others, unprompted by myself, would have

to simultaneously take steps crucial to the success of the solution without their knowing either the problem they were being used to help solve, or why they were doing what they were doing.

The counterpart to this in David's experience was the action of the Philistine lords who protested to the king without realizing that they were the major instruments in achieving David's deliverance. It is an incredible experience to watch others carrying out God's will in this way without their knowing the significance of their actions. It breeds a deep appreciation for the Lord's capacities as a problem-solver.

When God employs individuals, such as the Philistine lords, to enact a vital part in solving a problem, He must work within certain specific limitations. As He never employs force to achieve His purposes, He cannot actually take control of the persons concerned. But He is fully aware of the fears, desires, and needs of different people, and He knows to what extent they will respond to the suggestions carried to them by the Holy Spirit.

Let's continue on page 290.

**God's Sabbath Rest, p. 290:**

The plan worked so well that we are in danger of thinking that God arbitrarily chose a solution, and then manipulated each participant to play his designated part whether he wanted to or not, but God never works that way. He screened and rejected all the possibilities which could not work, and then selected the one that, under the circumstances, could not fail.

In my case, when the plan formed in my mind, I realized that either God or Satan was its source, although, for the moment, I could not decide which. I was alert to the danger that Satan has the power to offer solutions...

In the next paragraphs he describes the difference between when God gives a plan and when Satan gives a plan, and how we can distinguish between these. I don't think we need to go into details on this because it would be a little bit distracting.



After a while he recognized that it was God's plan that he got—this is the conclusion of this. We continue again on page 291:

**God's Sabbath Rest, p. 291:**

When this has been done, perfect protection from being deceived and misled is assured, for, if the plan came from God, He will successfully implement it, but if not, He will lay it aside and the scheme will come to nothing. This is a simple matter for Him, provided the problem is in His hands.

At perfect peace in the knowledge that the problem is safely in the Lord's hands, do what the day requires.

He continues with his own experience on page 292, the third paragraph:

**God's Sabbath Rest, p. 292:**

As the Lord worked on my problem, I saw it dissolve like mist before the morning sun. The way was opened for total disentanglement, with no loose ends left anywhere. My Saviour guarded the secrets of my life as effectively as He kept Achish in ignorance of the deceptions David had practiced upon him. I escaped the punishments so thoroughly deserved, and this generated within me a loving service which exceeded all that I had previously rendered. It is no use trying to convince me that God is a judgmental, destroying God. I know Him far better than that. It is sin that destroys, not God.

There are several reasons why I read this paragraph with you. What we find here is a one-sided picture. It is not just the goodness of God that leads us to repentance. What is it? It's the goodness of God and also the knowledge of the consequences of sin. It's only in the light of the consequences of sin that we can see the goodness of God, and this leads us to repentance.

When this is missing we have cheap grace in the end—that is the result of it. It's a way out that is not substantiated by the realities of life, because the consequence of sin is death.

That is something we have to really grasp. Now we understand also why the situation with Achish is explained, and not the situation with Bathsheba; because this situation explained that the thing was kept secret—that is one of the key points here:

“The secrets of my life were as effectively guarded as in the case of David with Achish.”

That is not true; they were not guarded. Nine years later they were blown out in full blast to the whole world. I need to tell you how this came about now.

## **The History of Fred's Sin**

As I said already, in 1975 these sins happened. I do not know all the details of this—I just know that was the kind of sin that took place, and a few more details that I do not need to tell you here.

Then in 1984, Fred was traveling in North America to the camp meetings. He was a guest of a young couple who had come to the truth rather recently. The man was a former minister in the Adventist church in the French part of Canada, and they were very enthusiastic for the message—very enthusiastic, and maybe even also somewhat ambitious.

Fred, who was at their house, wrote some things in his diary which were a revelation of his problems which still existed at that time. As far as I understand, it was a fictitious letter written to another woman.

As the lady of the house—the hostess—wanted to clean the room, she saw the diary and read it. Then she read everything before and after as well. She got quite shocked, because for her, a world caved in. For her, Fred was the messenger, he was impeccable, he was perfect, and he was just living out what he taught—but now she saw something different and she was very, very depressed as a result.

She didn't know what to do. She showed it to her husband and he initially reacted very well. He reminded her of the fact that their anger must not be turned against Fred but against sin, and that it is important that they don't deal with this wrongly. So they kept it in their hearts for a while, until after the camp that was just taking place.

Then Fred continued to travel, and they wrote a letter to Fred in which they revealed what they had read in this diary. They also had read another letter, which was a bit strange, I thought, but that's what happened. Margaret, Fred's wife, had written a letter which he received at their house. The husband opened it—accidentally, he says—and he read it through and then he gave it to his wife to read before they gave it to Fred.

So they got together some information which was compromising to Fred himself. Anyway, they revealed all this in their letter written to Fred. The next thing was that they met at a camp meeting in Arkansas, and there they talked about it. For the lady, for the sister—former sister, because they are not with us anymore—this camp meeting was very difficult because she could hardly concentrate on the studies; she would always think of this sin, and she couldn't concentrate.

They tried to speak with Fred during this time, and as they spoke they received another outlook of the whole matter, even to the point where they fully forgave Fred for his sins. He confirmed to them that he was struggling with the problem and that he wanted to fully lay it away. They accepted this and left it at that. After a few more weeks he traveled back to Australia.

Meanwhile, unknown to him, this couple could not keep it to themselves—they shared this information with a person who already had great difficulties with the truth, a person who had left the camp-meeting because he was so upset with

what Fred preached.<sup>3</sup> He now found this a wonderful opportunity to destroy Fred's influence as much as he could. He immediately went about his work—the thing now began to bloom and to spread in North America. Very soon, tidings came to Australia and people began to phone Fred, and also his wife.

What happened next was that Fred responded. He expressed his disappointment because they had promised him that they would not say anything, that they would keep this secret. Then there was further correspondence.

What happened next is that there was a great crisis in North America, of which some of the believers who are here are aware and could testify. Many left the faith. It was also a time when Fred did not come to the camp meetings. For two years—1985 and 1986—he was very physically and mentally exhausted, partly because of years of travel, but more so because of the event that took place and the terrible revelations that were now going out all over the world.

Those who were so eager to spread the news would not keep it just in North America, but they would send it to other places as well. A pack of letters was sent to me, and in 1985 when I knew that Fred wouldn't come, that was quite something.

At first, I determined not to speak to the believers about this thing; I determined to keep it for myself. But as I realized that some of our enemies would come to the German camp meeting in 1985, I felt obliged that I had to inform the believers, which I did. Generally speaking, I must say the German believers reacted very well. There was no wild reaction; it was very calmly received.

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<sup>3</sup> In 1984 the theme taught at many of the camp-meetings was the *History and Prophecies of the Movement*. Also, the theme of *Child Salvation* was first introduced. For some people, this last theme cut across their previously-held theories, and they had great difficulty with it.

It seemed that Fred had gotten the victory over this problem after these terrible revelations in 1985. But I need to tell you that it was not so. He may have gotten a temporary victory, but it was a sin he fell into again later. It was a thing that unfortunately lasted until 1989. In 1992, we had a court case in Australia and, again, our enemies took advantage of this information. This is the situation as it is.

I ask myself—and you may ask yourselves, too—how can such revelations come through such a channel or vessel, especially as this problem continued, since it was not fully overcome?

My personal acquaintance with Fred, because he was here for a longer time, and I and others had to care for him physically, is that we were all keenly aware of his weakness; but we also knew that he would struggle against it. We could see it.

The older a person becomes the more obvious his actions become, the more childlike he becomes, and the less he can hide these things, his real intentions and thoughts. I think you have realized this if you have dealt with elderly people. Especially with the last stages of his Parkinson's disease, it was very difficult to contain things.

What I watched and what I saw was that he would fight against it, but he would become weak again. Another thing that I see very clearly is that what Fred was lacking was a friend, a person to stand by his side and give him the right encouragement in the right moment. There was an honest struggle against this sin—I really believe this. If there was not, he couldn't have done anything in the Lord's cause.

He was not a willing, abandoned hypocrite who constantly lived in sin and said something else—that was not the case. But he was very weak. I wish to make very clear that we respect him—or I personally respect him, and I love him in spite of this—and I also believe that God used him as much as He could.

At the same time, I believe it is also necessary to see wherein his weakness is our weakness. When we read in the book, *God's Sabbath Rest*, how God deals with sin, we would also tend to think that God is a loving God only when all the consequences are taken away. Can we see that God is also a loving God when He allows the consequences? Can we see the love of God in the rod that He allows to happen?

I certainly believe that we have to learn two things:

1. The weakness of humanity, and
2. The blessings in the rod [consequences] that God allows to happen.

These are the lessons taught in this history, and that is the reason why I believe God allowed it to become public.

While I am talking with you, I am aware that some of you did not know of this before. For some of you, what I tell you is new. But it is not new as such, because it was made public already in 1985 in North America. So, I feel justified in sharing this matter with you from this standpoint. Our enemies would be busy to tell you anyway, somehow.

We have to learn a lesson, and this is the deeper reason why I speak with you about these things. As with David, from whom we have to learn, we have to learn from Fred as well—and we have to draw the right conclusions from this.

**W**E WANT now to continue to look at the lesson of self-distrust. After we have considered David's case we need to look at other Bible characters. We have looked at David's case and we have seen how he learned the lesson of self-distrust and never was the king of Israel greater than in the moment of his deepest humiliation.

It is amazing that a person has to learn all his life, and at the end of his life, this can be said of him. But it shows us how difficult it is to go this way. Even though we may not think that we have too much self-confidence, it is still there.

God does not put away the material that He can use. In spite of the fact that we still have this self-confidence, He still works with us and that is an amazing thing. He even allows us to stumble and fall, so that we learn this lesson, this important lesson of self-distrust.

### **Moses' Lessons in Self-Distrust**

Nowhere is this seen better than in the life of Moses, who is a remarkable character with a remarkable career. Let us quickly turn to *Exodus* chapter 2, and we would like to look first at the Bible account here, and then we will come to the statements in the *Spirit of Prophecy*.

The birth of Moses is well known; how he was delivered from death. Pharaoh had commanded that all the male children should die, and by God's special providence Moses' course was changed from a candidate of death to a candidate to the throne. What a difference! That is a very remarkable career. That is what you would call "the American dream," from a dishwasher to a millionaire. But even greater than this: from a candidate of death, to a candidate for president. What a

change!



In one providential moment, the life of Moses changed from being condemned to death, to being a member of the royal family.

(Source: Stokes Wonder Book, 1918)



He wasn't aware as a child what happened, but being a royal child was now his whole surrounding, and that certainly must have made a deep impression on him.

We know that the mother of Moses gave him the best education she could, because she knew she had him for only a limited time, so she put her whole effort into him: not in terms of spoiling the child, but in terms of directing it towards God. And that was a very important element. So, religion was very firmly established in his mind and heart, even when he was a small child.

### **Very Religious, Yet Very Self-Confident**

But the fact that religion is in the heart of a person does not mean that automatically he is self-distrustful. A person can be very religious and yet very self confident. Not that religion as such is teaching us self-confidence; it is not, but often we overlook where self-confidence creeps in. And because we fail to recognize it, we combine religion with self-confidence.

The story goes on in verse 11:

#### **Exodus 2**

<sup>11</sup> And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.

<sup>12</sup> And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.

<sup>13</sup> And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, why do you smite your fellow?

<sup>14</sup> And he said, who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me, as you killed the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known.

<sup>15</sup> Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well.



By a rash act of self-confidence, Moses was forced to flee from Egypt, and sat down by a well in the land of Midian.

(Source: Beautiful Bible Stories, 1899)

So, from being a millionaire, back to a dishwasher. In other words, back to being under the sentence of death, which he was under as a baby. That shows that position is not very significant; it is character which counts. Whether we are a fugitive, whether we are at the king's court; that is not so important. What is important is what our character is, wherever we are, wherever we stand.

And now let's look at Moses from the viewpoint of the *Spirit of Prophecy*. I turn to the chapter "Moses" in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, and we would like to follow up his story, not right from the beginning, because we don't want to dwell on his birth and the training from his mother so much, even though certainly that had an influence on his later career.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 245:**

At the court of Pharaoh, Moses received the highest civil and military training. The monarch had determined to make his adopted grandson his successor on the throne, and the

youth was educated for his high station.

### Acts 7

<sup>22</sup> And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.



His ability as a military leader made him a favorite with the armies of Egypt, and he was generally regarded as a remarkable character. Satan had been defeated in his purpose. The very decree condemning the Hebrew children to death had been overruled by God for the training and education of the future leader of His people.

(Source: Beautiful Bible Stories, 1899)

What do you think when you read this paragraph in the light of what we have studied so far? When I read this, I thought,

“Didn’t God know what He was doing here?”

He brought Moses into an environment that would bring out self-confidence in this man. Read this again:

Moses received the highest civil and military training.

He was the adopted grandson, the successor to the throne, and he was educated for his high station. Not only did he have the favor of the king, and was specially surrounded by honors and all these kinds of things; he also had real abilities. This made him a favorite of the people, and of the armies.

The army, you know, is the top class; it was the top class also in Egypt. They were the ones who had the power, the control. So, when he was a favorite with them, what station

did he have among the Egyptians? He was generally regarded as a remarkable character. Everybody looked up to him. What would this tend towards? Almost inevitably to self-confidence.

It is not necessarily so, but very few can resist such an appeal of sight and circumstances. There are a very few who can resist these temptations and still remain self-distrustful: it is very, very rare. And definitely these things influenced Moses. Let us look again of that diagram that we had (in chapter 7):

### Which Factors Strengthen Trust in my own Strength?

- Praise (2 Samuel 14:25)
- Frequent recognition of my abilities
- Flattery (Proverbs 29:5)
- Success in the work (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 360)
- A high position
- The possession of strength
- The possession of power
- An easy life
- A luxurious life
- Familiarity with false habits
- The adoption of wrong habits
- A wrong reaction to disappointments

These factors are not sinful in themselves; neither can we avoid them all the time. They are there. But still we must be aware that these factors are a danger, and they lead to temptation. And for this reason they strengthen trust in my own strength.

- Here is praise. Did Moses receive praise? Certainly. The frequent recognition of his abilities; did he receive that? Very much so, not only because he was a remarkable character, not only because he had abilities, but also be-

cause of his high station.

- A person in a high station always gets a lot of flattery, because if you flatter him, you hope to get his influence on your side. That is the reason for flatteries. So he would have been subject to a lot of flattery.
- Did he have success in his work? Very much. He was very successful as a military leader, as a statesman.
- Did he have a high position? Yes, definitely.
- Did he have the possession of strength? Very much so. His personal strength, but also the strength as a military leader.
- Did he have possession of power? Very much.
- Did he have an easy life in Egypt? Much easier than his fellow Israelites, who had to labor and work hard.
- Did he have a luxurious life? Definitely. He was surrounded by everything that was necessary or becoming for a coming king.
- Did he become familiar with false habits? There were a lot of false habits at the court.
- Did he adopt wrong habits? Well, we are not so sure to what degree, but there were certainly some habits that he had to unlearn later on.
- And, a wrong reaction to disappointments? This we can also see in the case of Moses, and we will consider it in detail shortly.

Can you see that all this applies to Moses? We have had this diagram in another connection, namely with David; but the same thing applies to Moses.

Moses was the favorite, he was regarded as a remarkable character. Satan's purpose to kill all the Hebrew boys had been defeated. God used this very thing to further His kingdom. And this shows then that these circumstances in themselves were not wrong or sinful as such, but they were a powerful temptation, and we must admit that few, if any, can re-

sist such a temptation.

## Honored with the Instruction of Angels

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 245:**

The elders of Israel were taught by angels that the time for their deliverance was near, and that Moses was the man whom God would employ to accomplish this work. Angels instructed Moses also that Jehovah had chosen him to break the bondage of His people.

Have you ever had angels talk to you? I wonder how the angels revealed these things to him. It could have been through a dream; that is the most likely way of communication. It could have been also through angels appearing in the form of men, which happened in the time of Abraham. Maybe it occurred in a vision, like Sister White, if he would have had the Spirit of Prophecy in that time, but we are not told about it.

In any case, to be personally instructed by angels and to be aware of this, that is another success; it's another thing that speaks to the person,

“You are on the right track, you are honored, you are blessed.”

And this tends to the danger of being too trustful in myself, in my accomplishments, in what I do. Even success in the work of God can lead us into temptation. When the disciples were successful in the work of God, Jesus warned them (*Luke 10:20*),

“Be careful, don't be too happy that devils are cast out, but be more happy that your names are written in the book of life. Be happier that you are dependent on God.”

When we read this about Moses, we might wonder,

“Why did God give him an instruction about his purpose through angels? Why did He do this? It was not the time yet.”

God had a wonderful purpose to accomplish. At a later date, it was important for Moses to remember this visitation of angels, for encouragement when circumstances were not so favorable. God knows why He gives us His blessings, and even if He foresees that we will fall under the pressure of temptation, He still blesses us because He knows how it will help in the final outcome. He is simply wiser than we are.

If we would have Moses in our school, we probably would have done something different for him. But God had him in His school. His school is the best, simply the best; there is no question about it.

Still, there is a lesson in this whole thing, and this lesson we need to learn. The lesson is that we cannot depend on human flesh. Even if we get personal instructions from angels, we still have to be self-distrustful. Anyway, the angels revealed to Moses that he was to break the bondage of his people.

### **Why Give a Message that will be Misunderstood?**

Another factor that makes us wonder why God revealed this to him, is that he misinterpreted this very prophecy.

#### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 245:**

He, supposing that they were to obtain their freedom by force of arms, expected to lead the Hebrew host against the armies of Egypt.

That was definitely a wrong expectation. Knowing that a person will misunderstand the message, would you still give it to him? Sometimes we have to give the message to people and we know that they will at first misunderstand these messages, because that is what always happens. That is how people always think and how they tend to think. We try to explain everything right from the beginning, we try to exclude every possible misunderstanding. In this case for example, we might have said to Moses:

“Moses, you will be chosen to lead them out, but don’t ex-

pect it to be by force of arms; don't think that you go as a military leader, but expect to go as a shepherd, with nothing but a shepherd's rod."

That's what we would have told Moses. But God didn't do it that way. He just gave him the message, without further explanations.

Looking back in our history for a moment, didn't God know that we would misunderstand some of the messages? Didn't He know that we would take them in a wrong direction? Take things to extreme? Yes, He knew. But He let this all happen so that our weakness would become apparent, and that we would learn the lesson of self-distrust. God allowed this to happen with Moses too, because that was the only way to effectively teach him the lesson of self-distrust.

Words are sometimes not the most efficient way of teaching a lesson. Even with God who is the best Preacher in the world, words sometimes do not suffice. There needs to be an actual experience. God allows us to fall in to certain experiences so that we realize what dependent receivers we are.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 245:**

He, supposing that they were to obtain their freedom by force of arms, expected to lead the Hebrew host against the armies of Egypt, and having this in view, he guarded his affections, lest in his attachment to his foster mother or to Pharaoh he would not be free to do the will of God. By the laws of Egypt all who occupied the throne of the Pharaohs must become members of the priestly caste; and Moses, as the heir apparent, was to be initiated into the mysteries of the national religion.

To be initiated into those mysteries would be a big temptation, but for Moses it was not, because he was very, very firm. He had very firm principles, he knew what he believed, and he would not be induced into idol worship.



## We Are Only Channels

That was not the problem of this school; the problem of this school was that he again had here an opportunity to show his skills, and his skills were indeed wonderful.

This duty was committed to the priests. But while he was an ardent and untiring student, he could not be induced to participate in the worship of the gods. He was threatened with the loss of the crown, and warned that he would be disowned by the princess should he persist in his adherence to the Hebrew faith. But he was unshaken in his determination to render homage to none save the one God, the Maker of heaven and earth.

He reasoned with priests and worshipers, showing the folly of their superstitious veneration of senseless objects. None could refute his arguments or change his purpose, yet for the time his firmness was tolerated on account of his high position and the favor with which he was regarded by both the king and the people.

The priests were beaten quite often by his arguments, and other onlookers would even admire Moses for this. They could say,

“Well, if he can even argue with the priests, and he even can win a debate with them, that is a mighty leader.”

It would probably increase his esteem with fellow students in the school; it would increase his esteem with the people generally; it would tend to foster his pride. That is the problem of that school; not that he was induced to idol worship because he firmly refused that.

When we are facing a debate in the world and we are looking forward to this debate because we know we have the better arguments, and that in the end our arguments will win, we must be very careful that these things do not foster a sense of self-sufficiency, self-complacency, or self-confidence in us. We must be careful to see if in all this we are only dependent re-

ceivers from God. We are nothing but channels. If we are not channels then we are nothing. If we bring our own wisdom to the people, we destroy the work of God.

## **Self-Distrust and Self-Confidence can Co-exist**

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 245-246:**

#### **Hebrews 11**

<sup>24</sup> By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

<sup>25</sup> Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

<sup>26</sup> Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

Moses was fitted to take pre-eminence among the great of the earth, to shine in the courts of its most glorious kingdom, and to sway the scepter of its power. His intellectual greatness distinguishes him above the great men of all ages. As historian, poet, philosopher, general of armies, and legislator, he stands without a peer.

Yet with the world before him, he had the moral strength to refuse the flattering prospects of wealth and greatness and fame, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

Moses had been instructed in regard to the final reward to be given to the humble and obedient servants of God, and worldly gain sank to its proper insignificance in comparison. The magnificent palace of Pharaoh and the monarch's throne were held out as an inducement to Moses; but he knew that the sinful pleasures that make men forget God were in its lordly courts.

He looked beyond the gorgeous palace, beyond a monarch's crown, to the high honors that will be bestowed on the saints of the Most High in a kingdom untainted by sin. He saw by faith an imperishable crown that the King of heaven would place on the brow of the overcomer. This faith led him to turn away from the lordly ones of earth and join the humble, poor, despised nation that had chosen to obey God rather than to serve sin.

Here we see another Moses: we see a Moses of self-distrust; we see a Moses who did not have self-confidence. Both elements were in him.

There are very, very few who can withstand the test that was placed on David when he was on the throne and on Moses when he was sitting there. Of these few who can withstand it, there are even less who will go out of such an ordeal without any scar. Moses had some scars; he was influenced to some degree by that, even though he did not fully submit himself to it. So, there were two aspects in his life:

1. Self-distrust; which he consciously practiced, and
2. Self-confidence, which was not known to him.

If you would have met Moses at that time, you would not have met a haughty man, but you would have met a man who was quite sociable, friendly, humble, in spite of being among royalty. He wouldn't want you to address him with:

"Your Highness."

He would have said,

"No, no, I am your brother."

Wouldn't he? He would be a very down-to-earth person; a very ordinary fellow-citizen; one with whom you could relate. And yet there was pride in his heart.

When a person is not looking for titles, and high position, and surrounding himself with forms and glitter, which Moses definitely didn't do, that doesn't mean necessarily that he has humility in his heart, that he has the self-distrust, the sense of dependence on God which is necessary to accomplish the work. There is something in human nature that has to be revealed by a lot of tests and trials. So it was in the case of Moses.

## The Spirit of Self-Sufficiency

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 246:**

Moses remained at court until he was forty years of age. His thoughts often turned upon the abject condition of his people, and he visited his brethren in their servitude, and encouraged them with the assurance that God would work for their deliverance. Often, stung to resentment by the sight of injustice and oppression, he burned to avenge their wrongs. One day, while thus abroad, seeing an Egyptian smiting an Israelite, he sprang forward and slew the Egyptian.



(Source: Bibel in Bildern, 1860)

This was a very significant act. The Egyptians certainly regarded it that way, and Moses knew this. Therefore he looked around first so make sure that nobody saw him. It should have been very significant also in the sight of the Israelites, because by this he showed on which side his heart was, and it was also very significant in the sight of God because it re-

vealed the extent of self-sufficiency that was still there in Moses.

This little act had a tremendous influence. When I look back to my own life, sometimes little actions have had quite a large effect. A wrong action in one moment can make for much labor for years afterwards. This can tempt us to feel a little bit unjustly treated:

“Look, this was just one little thing, only one little thing.”

But even though this may have been only one act, which may not even have been out of a bad motive, but out of a good motive, still, there is a wrong spirit behind it. Unless that spirit is corrected, we cannot finish the work.

The spirit of self-sufficiency, of not having a full sense of dependence on God, and relying on Him completely, is behind the wrong thoughts that lead to wrong actions.

In the case of Moses, there was no intention to do bad, even though his actions cost the life of an Egyptian. Anyway, he was a soldier, and as a soldier he was to defend his people. Maybe it would have cost the life of the Hebrew, if it hadn't cost the life of the Egyptian, so he may have even saved a life by killing another life.

## **Taking the Work of God Into Our Own Hands**

But there was another thing in this and Sister White describes this in the coming paragraphs.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 246-247:**

Except the Israelite, there had been no witness to the deed, and Moses immediately buried the body in the sand. He had now shown himself ready to maintain the cause of his people, and he hoped to see them rise to recover their liberty.

#### **Acts 7**

<sup>25</sup> He supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not.

In a way it is good that they did not understand, because neither did he fully understand.

They were not yet prepared for freedom. On the following day Moses saw two Hebrews striving together, one of them evidently at fault. Moses reproved the offender, who at once retaliated upon the reprover, denying his right to interfere, and basely accusing him of crime: "Who made you a prince and a judge over us?" he said, "Do you intend to kill me, as you killed the Egyptian?"

The whole matter was quickly made known to the Egyptians, and, greatly exaggerated, soon reached the ears of Pharaoh. It was represented to the king that this act meant much; that Moses designed to lead his people against the Egyptians, to overthrow the government, and to seat himself upon the throne; and that there could be no security for the kingdom while he lived. It was at once determined by the monarch that he should die; but, becoming aware of his danger, he made his escape and fled toward Arabia.

The Lord directed his course, and he found a home with Jethro, the priest and prince of Midian, who was also a worshiper of God. After a time Moses married one of the daughters of Jethro; and here, in the service of his father-in-law, as keeper of his flocks, he remained forty years.

In slaying the Egyptian, Moses had fallen into the same error so often committed by his fathers, of taking into their own hands the work that God had promised to do.

This error is so often committed by myself too, and by Christians in our age, of taking into our own hands the work that God has promised to do. What does it mean when we take into our own hands the work that God has promised to do? It means self-sufficiency; it means that we do not have a real sense of dependence on God.

This act meant much. It did mean much, but not as the Egyptians thought. It meant much in that sense that it expressed the lack of feeling of dependence that Moses still had and the lack of ability to lead his people out. God had foreseen

this would happen. He knew what was in the heart of Moses, and He let it happen. He let it happen perfectly the way it did, in order to bring Moses in to another school, which was necessary before he could be the leader.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 247:**

It was not God's will to deliver His people by warfare, as Moses thought, but by His own mighty power.

We have studied the wars of Israel in the past. In the book *Behold Your God* we have a whole chapter on this, and we have also seen how it was not God's original purpose that Israel should ever fight with the sword. We looked at it from the point of view of using force: God is not using force. And that is quite valid and correct.

But that is not the only lesson. That is not the only reason why He did not want to give them the sword. What was the other reason? A sword in the hand always expresses self-sufficiency; it always expresses self-confidence. It's like being a sportsman, and having competition, with the exception that competition and sport are more harmless exercises than being a soldier. But it is the same principle.

It teaches a person to be self-sufficient and self-confident: confident in his own strength. It teaches a person to take into their own hands the work that God has promised to do. This was the real reason why God did not want to give them the sword in the beginning. To have a sword in the hand was declaring,

"Now, I have security! Now I have something, now I am safe, now I can defend myself."

God wanted to teach His people to depend on Him, to be so dependent on Him that they didn't need this.

## **An Example of a Healthy Self-Distrust**

This reminds me a little bit of Luther when he was in the

situation of being persecuted from all sides. Luther had a real sense of dependence on God when the war broke out around him. We look upon him as a hero, as a man who defied popes and kings, as a man who with confidence said:

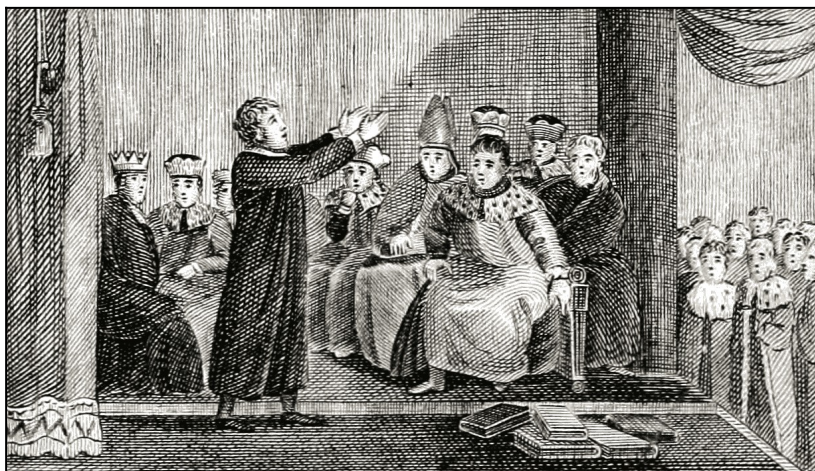
“Here I stand, God help me.”

However, he was a very timid person in a way. When you read the details about him more carefully you see he was not just standing there and saying,

“Here I am, here I stand.”

Before he made that stand, he first asked if he could think about this. Then he went back, and he was shaking, praying for the whole day, until he came back to this meeting again, and when he saw the august assembly he was quite awed by it, and in humility, and just looking on God, and depending on Him completely, he could say:

“Here I stand.”



Luther before the Diet of Worms: “Unless convinced by clear reasons taken from the Holy Scriptures, I neither can or will recant. Here I stand! I cannot do otherwise, so help me God. Amen!”

(Source: Religious Events, 1848)



Let's look at another event from the life of Luther:

**The Great Controversy, p. 188:**

And now Wittenberg itself, the very center of the Reformation, was fast falling under the power of fanaticism and lawlessness. This terrible condition had not resulted from the teachings of Luther; but throughout Germany his enemies were charging it upon him. In bitterness of soul he sometimes asked: "Can such, then, be the end of this great work of the Reformation?"—*Ibid.*, b. 9, ch. 7.

Again, as he wrestled with God in prayer, peace flowed into his heart. "The work is not mine, but Your own," he said; "You will not suffer it to be corrupted by superstition or fanaticism." But the thought of remaining longer from the conflict in such a crisis, became insupportable. He determined to return to Wittenberg.

Without delay he set out on his perilous journey. He was under the ban of the empire. Enemies were at liberty to take his life; friends were forbidden to aid or shelter him. The imperial government was adopting the most stringent measures against his adherents. But he saw that the work of the gospel was imperiled, and in the name of the Lord he went out fearlessly to battle for the truth.

In a letter to the elector, after stating his purpose to leave the Wartburg, Luther said: "Be it known to your highness that I am going to Wittenberg under a protection far higher than that of princes and electors. I think not of soliciting your highness's support, and far from desiring your protection, I would rather protect you myself. If I knew that your highness could or would protect me, I would not go to Wittenberg at all. There is no sword that can further this cause. God alone must do everything, without the help or concurrence of man. He who has the greatest faith is he who is most able to protect."—*Ibid.*, b. 9, ch. 8.

These words were not said in pride. He knew in what peril he was. They were said in deep humility. He realized that to depend on the sword was to lose his sense of dependence on God. This is what God wants to teach His people in all ages.

“Depend on me,” He says.

## **A New Classroom**

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 247:**

In slaying the Egyptian, Moses had fallen into the same error so often committed by his fathers, of taking into their own hands the work that God had promised to do.

Here is one of the underlying causes for the cessation of the work of the Reformation. Soon after the work began, the successors of the first reformers took into their own hands the work that God had promised to do. That is one of the reasons for the breaking out of the Thirty Years War that ravaged Europe and brought great calamity.

It was not God’s will to deliver His people by warfare, as Moses thought, but by His own mighty power that the glory might be ascribed to Him alone.

Yet even this rash act was overruled by God to accomplish His purposes. Moses was not prepared for his great work. He had yet to learn the same lesson of faith that Abraham and Jacob had been taught—not to rely upon human strength or wisdom, but upon the power of God for the fulfillment of His promises.

And there were other lessons that, amid the solitude of the mountains, Moses was to receive. In the school of self-denial and hardship he was to learn patience, to temper his passions. Before he could govern wisely, he must be trained to obey. His own heart must be fully in harmony with God before he could teach the knowledge of His will to Israel.

We need to test ourselves. We have to do a work similar to that of Moses. Do we have this in our heart?

**T**URNING back to the experience of Moses, we would like to understand better what contributed to his taking into his own hands the work that God had promised to do. That was his problem.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 274:**

In slaying the Egyptian, Moses had fallen into the same error so often committed by his fathers, of taking into their own hands the work that God had promised to do.

One of the main lessons God tried to teach His people was the lesson of self-distrust. Through the sacrificial system, through the experience of Adam, through the Tower of Babel, through the experience of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and others as well—everywhere we see the same lesson. Now, we want to see it through the story of Moses. The prominent question is,

“How could something that is done with such pure motives be such a mistake?”

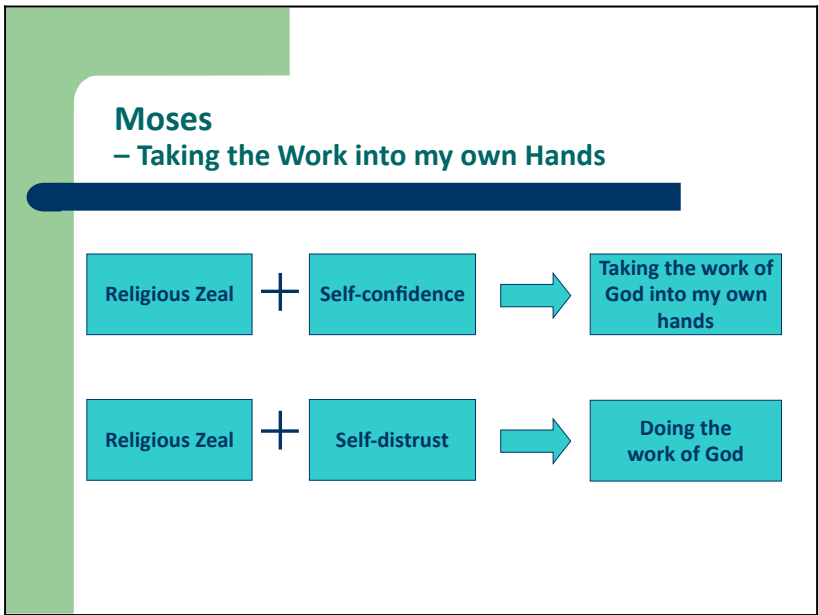
Moses had sided fully with the people of God. He would rather accept their poverty than the wealth of Egypt. He was not a politician who just wanted to get his own position; he wanted to help his people. Everything he did was for that purpose. Even with these good motives, as he entered upon the work, he fell into that error of taking things into his own hands. The question we would ask is,

“How can we know whether our actions are after God’s order or whether we take God’s work into our own hands?”

In both cases, we think that we are doing the work of God. Definitely Moses thought he was doing God’s work, there is

no question about it. That is different than David. When David sinned with Bathsheba, he knew it was wrong. When he sent his soldier to the front to die there he knew it was wrong. However, in the case of Moses, he honestly and seriously believed that what he did was the right thing. That is a greater problem, isn't it?

It is quite easy if we understand that what we do is wrong, then we know what to avoid. However if we don't know, then how do we avoid it? I tried to make a diagram that explains under what circumstances we take God's work into our own hands:



We have religious zeal, and when we combine this religious zeal with self-confidence, it will lead us to take the work of God into our own hands, inevitably. But if we have religious zeal and we have self-distrust, then we are doing the work of God. That is obvious, that is clear. The question may then be asked,

“How do we know whether there is self-confidence in our heart or self-distrust?”

We may think that we have sufficient self-distrust, but maybe it is not actually there. Well, we have to depend on our divine Leader, to lead us step-by-step. Very often our divine Leader leads us into such a way as we do not expect. If we are too blind to see it, then He actually will allow us to fall. Through the fall, we learn that we were wrong. This will help us.

### **Falling Can Be a Blessing**

There are some people (we have to think about this carefully) who have a lot of problems with a constant sense of self-distrust that is not healthy. They have this self-distrust to the extent that they do not entrust themselves to the guiding of the divine Head. They think they must avoid all mistakes, but in the very effort of trying to avoid mistakes, they make mistakes.

What attitude do we need in order to be in the school of Christ and to learn this self-distrust? What we need is to cast ourselves more completely on our divine Teacher, even to the point where we say,

“Well, if I am so stubborn that I do not see my mistakes, then Lord please let me fall, so that I see where I stand.”

Let us accept the very fact that we also fall at times, in order to be taught a lesson. When I talk of falling, it does not necessarily mean falling into sin. This we always want to avoid. There are other kinds of falls: we fall in shame, sickness, distress, persecution, maybe unnecessary persecution; we fall in embarrassment, and we fall in loss. When these experiences come, let us be thankful for them.

Sometimes, yes, we also fall in sin because we do not know what our weakness is. When we do, instead of being de-

pressed, let us first of all thank the Lord. He allows these things to happen, in order to show us something. Let us just rest in our divine Teacher. He will give us what we need.

When we study Moses, we don't do it so that from now on we will make no mistakes anymore. Every one of us will make mistakes. That sounds a little bit negative, I know. We would rather wish that from now on we will make no mistakes anymore. But human nature and history has shown me that this is not the case. Mistakes are a part of our school. As we accept this classroom we lose our tendency to constantly run away from the school of Christ.

Let me again summarize this point. A healthy self-distrust is expressed like this:

“Even if I fall, I have a divine Teacher who will lead me back to the path and who shows me through this my real condition.”

Let me state this again, so that you do not misunderstand me. I am not saying that we have to sin. But when a sin is in our heart, like the sin of self-confidence, it is just a matter of time till it is expressed in certain actions, which we also call sin. It is just a matter of time.

It would be nice if these things could be taken away before they are expressed. It saves us embarrassment, it saves us loss, it saves the cause of God a lot of embarrassment and loss. It would be nice. But if it cannot be revealed except by it coming out through actions, then let it come. Let us fall, so that we see where our true condition stands. This we have to accept and be thankful for.

This is the same as the study on the experience of David. When David experienced the consequences of his sin, when his sin became public, when all the shame and embarrassment was there, it was clear that God is not delighted in these things. He doesn't want to have to let us bear our conse-

quences, but let us see the glory of God in it. Let us see the wonderful school in it.

So likewise let us see the school of God in our own weakness. When Moses fell as he did, by taking the matter of God into his own hands, the whole matter was foreknown by God. It was foreseen. God knew exactly what would happen. And He allowed it to happen.

On the other hand, I do not want to promote a careless attitude, where we say,

“Well, we just float along and God will show us in the right time.”

We have to cooperate, and when we fall, then let us learn the lesson out of it.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 247:**

It was not God’s will to deliver His people by warfare.

And this was something Moses had to learn.

He had yet to learn the same lesson of faith that Abraham and Jacob had been taught—not to rely upon human strength or wisdom, but upon the power of God for the fulfillment of His promises.

And there were other lessons that, amid the solitude of the mountains, Moses was to receive. In the school of self-denial and hardship he was to learn patience, to temper his passions. Before he could govern wisely, he must be trained to obey.

I want to ask you again, if you were the teacher of Moses, would you have sent him angels to tell him that he was the one to deliver Israel? Knowing quite well the danger he would fall into? Knowing quite well how wrongly he would understand such a message? You wouldn’t, would you? Why did God do this? He did this in order to reveal Moses’ own weakness, in order to make him understand what still was necessary in order to be the leader.

Often God comes to us and brings us certain blessings knowing quite well that the way that we handle the blessings will lead to our fall. But He allows these things to happen, so that we learn from it. He knows what is in our hearts and He knows how to bring these things out, how to reveal it in order to help us.

## **Moses Needed Training**

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 247-248:**

Before he could govern wisely, he must be trained to obey.

He wasn't told this by the angels, because it would have been useless; it would have been absolutely useless. You could tell something to a person a thousand times, and he just doesn't get the message. That is our human nature. So what did he need? He needed a demonstration rather than a declaration. He needed to be trained to obey before he could govern wisely.

His own heart must be fully in harmony with God before he could teach the knowledge of His will to Israel. By his own experience he must be prepared to exercise a fatherly care over all who needed his help.

Man would have dispensed with that long period of toil and obscurity, deeming it a great loss of time. But Infinite Wisdom called him who was to become the leader of his people to spend forty years in the humble work of a shepherd. The habits of caretaking, of self-forgetfulness and tender solicitude for his flock, thus developed, would prepare him to become the compassionate, longsuffering shepherd of Israel. No advantage that human training or culture could bestow, could be a substitute for this experience.

Moses had been learning much that he must unlearn. The influences that had surrounded him in Egypt—the love of his foster mother, his own high position as the king's grandson, the dissipation on every hand, the refinement, the subtlety, and the mysticism of a false religion, the splendor of idolatrous worship, the solemn grandeur of architecture and



sculpture—all had left deep impressions upon his developing mind and had molded, to some extent, his habits and character.

In the past I saw these points all as different points. We could make a list here. What are they?

- his high position;
- the love of his foster mother;
- dissipation on every hand;
- refinement;
- the subtlety, and the mysticism of a false religion;
- the splendor of idolatrous worship, and
- the grandeur of architecture and sculpture.

Were these all different things? No, they all taught one lesson, and that was: self-sufficiency—self-confidence. That was the lesson in all this.

In what way did the love of his foster mother teach him self-confidence? It protected him; it gave him the position of a favored person in Egypt. The love itself was not wrong, but it created a surrounding that would help him to gain self-sufficiency. His high position as the king's grandson goes in the same direction.

The dissipation on every hand—what does dissipation mean? It means the same as throwing things away. Dissipation means, if I have a car today and I break it, well then I get a new one tomorrow. Why should I take care of the car, I can get a new one. If I have something today, and it breaks,

“Yeah, it's too bad...I'll get a new one tomorrow.”

“I have a thousand servants who can do it again, if something goes wrong. I don't need to specially watch and care for things.”

When people come from a poorer country and they have one item which they must have for their whole life, they will

really take care of it. Other people who can afford to buy it ten times—no matter—dissipation, letting it flow out. This is the word, isn't it? Like the money—it disappears through the fingers. It is because we do not value things. Unwise spending, misuse: we get the idea of the word. Maybe it is not exactly how I described it, but it is in this direction.

So the problem is that we think that we can depend upon infinite earthly resources. It is again dependence, a trust in material things rather than in the heavenly things.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 248:**

...the refinement, the subtlety, and the mysticism of a false religion,...

We know that all false religion tends to self-sufficiency, all false religion fosters pride and self-sufficiency.

...the splendor of idolatrous worship,...

Which again fosters pride.

... the solemn grandeur of architecture and sculpture,...

These are the same things, and point to reliance on human works, human greatness.

...all had left deep impressions upon his developing mind and had molded, to some extent, his habits and character.

Now we read about three things needed to be there in order to make a change:

Time, change of surroundings, and communion with God could remove these impressions.

We need all three. Leave time away, just change the surroundings and give him some communion with God. Would this be sufficient? No, he needed 40 years. Well, give him 40 years but leave him in the same surroundings, would this be sufficient? No. Well, then give him time, give him another surrounding, but no communion with God, would this bring a

change? No. All three things were necessary in order to bring about this tremendous, deep change.

When we are called to different surroundings, when God tells us,

“You need time and you need communion,”

—let us not murmur or think we can make do with only two of the three ingredients. It is like a recipe. When you lack one ingredient in the bread—how is it Aris?—it doesn’t work. You need all the ingredients: water, flour, salt, and raising agent. If you have one less, it will not be the bread that you desire to have. It is the same thing with the spiritual world, but often we think we can cut corners, and that is self-sufficiency.

- We don’t take the time, we don’t give ourselves the time.
- Or we think change of surroundings is not necessary because we have communion with God, and that will compensate for the lack of change of surroundings.
- Or we have changed the surroundings and we give ourselves time, but we think that we don’t need to commune with God so much, because the circumstances will teach us.

Again, it doesn’t work. Satan wants to tempt us in these things. We have to accept everything that God gives us.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 248:**

In all who have been chosen to accomplish a work for God the human element is seen. Yet they have not been men of stereotyped habits and character, who were satisfied to remain in that condition. They earnestly desired to obtain wisdom from God and to learn to work for Him. Says the apostle,

#### **James 1**

<sup>5</sup> If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him.

But God will not impart to men divine light while they are content to remain in darkness. In order to receive God's help, man must realize his weakness and deficiency; he must apply his own mind to the great change to be wrought in himself; he must be aroused to earnest and persevering prayer and effort. Wrong habits and customs must be shaken off; and it is only by determined endeavor to correct these errors and to conform to right principles that the victory can be gained.

Many never attain to the position that they might occupy, because they wait for God to do for them that which He has given them power to do for themselves. All who are fitted for usefulness must be trained by the severest mental and moral discipline, and God will assist them by uniting divine power with human effort.

We have very little concept of what we still have to go through in order to be prepared to do the Lord's work in the last battle. Looking back on the history of our movement, I must say this. It is good to go back and to think,

"What did we go through, where did we fail?"

"With what attitude did we fail, didn't we have a good motive here and there, and here and there?"

Of course, but that was not enough. Good motives are not enough, if self-confidence is mixed in this work, it will be marred.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 248:**

Shut in by the bulwarks of the mountains, Moses was alone with God.

It is interesting, "the bulwarks of the mountains;" here he had something else besides the grand architecture. Here was God's creation; these stones were rough, they were not made by hands, they were made by God. He learned how small he is compared with these things, and how small man's ability is.

I was once in New York among the sky scrapers there;

maybe you have also been in a big city one time where you have these huge things to your right and to your left. It is almost depressing to be among these things. Yet you cannot fail to be awed by them. But then when you are in the mountains, what are the sky scrapers against them? Absolutely nothing. They are small, like matches, because the mountains are really big. Moses would not have failed to see the difference. Here is God's work and here is man's work.

Not only this, he was alone with God. It was quietness here, not the noise of the music of the Gentiles around him. Just the wind and the noise of the insects and whatever there was. Likewise, he had time to commune with God, and he took this time.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 248-251:**

The magnificent temples of Egypt no longer impressed his mind with their superstition and falsehood. In the solemn grandeur of the everlasting hills he beheld the majesty of the Most High, and in contrast realized how powerless and insignificant were the gods of Egypt.

Really how powerless and insignificant *he was*—that is the real point.

Everywhere the Creator's name was written. Moses seemed to stand in His presence and to be over-shadowed by His power. Here his pride and self-sufficiency were swept away. In the stern simplicity of his wilderness life, the results of the ease and luxury of Egypt disappeared. Moses became patient, reverent, and humble, "very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (*Numbers 12:3*), yet strong in faith in the mighty God of Jacob.

As the years rolled on, and he wandered with his flocks in solitary places, pondering upon the oppressed condition of his people, he recounted the dealings of God with his fathers and the promises that were the heritage of the chosen nation, and his prayers for Israel ascended by day and by night. Heavenly angels shed their light around him. Here, under

the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he wrote the book of *Genesis*. The long years spent amid the desert solitudes were rich in blessing, not alone to Moses and his people, but to the world in all succeeding ages.

We have several books that he wrote in this time, which were *Genesis* and the book of *Job*. So he received the Spirit of Prophecy while he was there. But he gave up hope that he would be the deliverer, and evidently God did not repeat that message to him at that time. For a while, he reconciled himself to the belief that God would choose somebody else. That was the conclusion he drew. God did not remove this wrong conclusion for quite some time until He called him again.

## Reverence Teaches Self-Distrust

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 251:**

The time for Israel's deliverance had come. But God's purpose was to be accomplished in a manner to pour contempt on human pride. The deliverer was to go forth as a humble shepherd, with only a rod in his hand; but God would make that rod the symbol of His power.

Leading his flocks one day near Horeb, "the mountain of God," Moses saw a bush in flames, branches, foliage, and trunk, all burning, yet seeming not to be consumed. He drew near to view the wonderful sight, when a voice from out of the flame called him by name. With trembling lips he answered, "Here am I." He was warned not to approach irreverently:

### **Exodus 3**

<sup>5</sup> Put off your shoes from off your feet; for the place whereon you stand is holy ground.

<sup>6</sup> I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

We might ask ourselves,

"Why do we have to put off our shoes, when God is our friend?"



(Source: Bible Models, 1896)

But this exercise of putting off the shoes helps the human agent to see his dependence upon God. It helps him to get the right relationship between him and God. God doesn't do it for His own sake, but for our sake.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 251-252:**

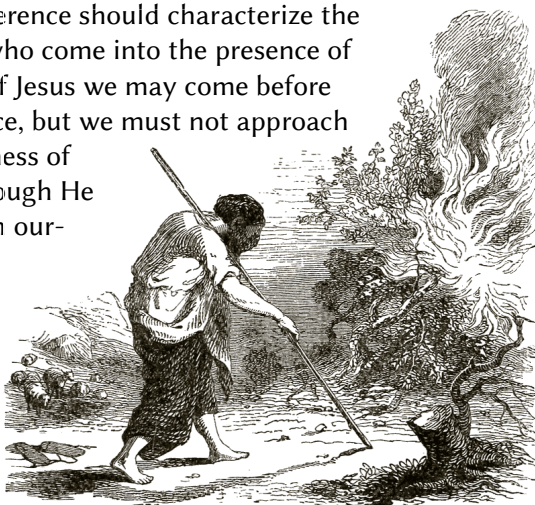
It was He who, as the Angel of the covenant, had revealed himself to the fathers in ages past.

**Exodus 3**

<sup>6</sup> And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

Humility and reverence should characterize the deportment of all who come into the presence of God. In the name of Jesus we may come before Him with confidence, but we must not approach Him with the boldness of presumption, as though He were on a level with ourselves.

There are those who address the great and all-powerful and holy God, who dwells in light unapproachable,



(Source: Youth's Bible Studies, 1854)

as they would address an equal, or even an inferior. There are those who conduct themselves in His house as they would not presume to do in the audience chamber of an earthly ruler. These should remember that they are in His sight whom seraphim adore, before whom angels veil their faces.

God is greatly to be revered; all who truly realize His presence will bow in humility before Him, and, like Jacob beholding the vision of God, they will cry out,

**Genesis 28**

<sup>17</sup> How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

What is contained in this lesson of being reverent before



God? What does God want to teach us? Again the same lesson: self-distrust and confidence in Him. God doesn't do it for His own sake—He does it for us.

As the table at home, where the children learn to eat together with the parents, is a school for the children, so is the worship room as well. It is a school in which we learn to have self-distrust and trust in God. This is not an easy thing, but we need to learn it step by step. When we have learned this as children then we shall know how it is when we are an adult. Such a self-distrust, such a spirit of reverence will help us to not take the work of God into our own hands as we are so much prone to do.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 252:**

As Moses waited in reverent awe before God the words continued:

**Exodus 3**

<sup>7</sup> I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;

<sup>8</sup> And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.

<sup>10</sup> Come now therefore, and I will send you unto Pharaoh, that you may bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

**The Objections of Moses**

Amazed and terrified at the command, Moses drew back, saying,

**Exodus 3**

<sup>11</sup> Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

What attitude speaks out of these words? The right or the wrong attitude? Definitely the right attitude.

“Who am I that I shall go?”

He clearly saw that he himself had no power. He revealed his self-distrust when he said this.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 252:**

The reply was,

**Exodus 3**

<sup>12</sup> Certainly I will be with you; and this shall be a token unto you, that I have sent you: When you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain.

Moses thought of the difficulties to be encountered, of the blindness, ignorance, and unbelief of his people, many of whom were almost destitute of a knowledge of God.

<sup>13</sup> Behold, [he said,] when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers has sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, what is His name? What shall I say unto them?

When Moses now objected again, thinking of the blindness, ignorance, and unbelief of the people—was this the right attitude of self-distrust? Was this an attitude of self-confidence? Well, I would say, that was the reality of the situation. It was a mighty obstacle. At this stage, Moses was still expressing self-distrust. He realized how big the hindrances were and he needed the assurance of God that he would overcome these hindrances.

Sometimes we quickly accept a work, thinking that we can do it—for example, tomorrow we will be invited to a church to present the message there.

“Oh wonderful, a good opportunity, now we can give them the truth.”

Joy is understandable, because we wish to share the Gospel. But what is often contained in that joy? Self-confidence.

“Oh yes, *we can do it; we can explain* something to them; *we can give it to them.*”

Moses was not so rash now. He was much more careful. He

was saying,

“Yes, but who am I? Who am I, that You call me?”

The next response he gave was,

“Yes, but look how difficult the task is.”

It is not wrong if we realize our weakness, the magnitude of the task, the prejudices, the difficulties of the situation. God answered him very clearly,

### **Exodus 3**

<sup>14</sup> I AM THAT I AM.

Then He gave more instructions to Moses what to do, and what to say. He also told him that Pharaoh would not listen. Then he told him how they should go out of the land and how they should require the gold and silver of the Egyptians. And now it goes on:

#### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 253:**

Moses saw before him difficulties that seemed insurmountable. What proof could he give his people that God had indeed sent him?

What do you say at this stage? At first it's understandable that he realizes the difficulties. It almost seems here that he is exalting the difficulties too much. There is a healthy assessment of a situation which we need to do sometimes. It is not wise to go into a thing blindly, because we must realize how much strength and how much grace we need. It is good, that we take some time before in earnest prayer.

That reminds me of the first camp meeting I had to give myself in 1985. I was feeling terribly unable to do this in many respects. First of all, I had never held a camp meeting. At least not in Germany and in the German language and without translator. In Kenya I think I had done it before. Secondly it was a delicate situation; you know the situation we were in in

1985. I realized this, and I saw my need of prayer.

This is what Moses definitely saw. But now he came to the point where he thought so much on the difficulties that his trust in God was not sufficient to meet it. That is where the problem came up. Self-distrust is good, but it was not coupled with full trust in God. He saw the difficulties that seemed insurmountable. What proof could be given to the people that God had indeed sent him? Well,

“Behold,” he said, “they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice.”

And then God gave him these two signs, the one with the rod, and the other with the hand that became like leprosy. He also said, if they don’t believe you, then take some water, pour it down and it will become blood. He had given him all kinds of assurances, and after having given him all this, Moses still objected.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 254:**

But the servant of God was still overwhelmed by the thought of the strange and wonderful work before him. In his distress and fear he now pleaded as an excuse a lack of ready speech:

**Exodus 4**

<sup>10</sup> O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since You have spoken unto your servant; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.

He had been so long away from the Egyptians...

Even this God still met by saying,

**Exodus 4**

<sup>11</sup> Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord?

To this was added another assurance of divine aid:

<sup>12</sup> Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth, and teach you what you shall say.

One objection after the other, and God always said,

“But I send you, but I’ll do this, here, I’ll remove this hindrance, I’ll remove that hindrance.”

At first, it was an expression of self-distrust, which he had learned in these 40 years, but now it became somewhat rebellious. It became obstinate. He did not trust himself to God. He finally said,

“Send whom you want.”

First of all Sister White says:

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 254:**

But Moses still entreated that a more competent person be selected.

In the Bible it simply says that Moses answered, “Send whom you want”—but not me.

These excuses at first proceeded from humility and diffidence; but after the Lord had promised to remove all difficulties, and to give him final success, then any further shrinking back and complaining of his unfitness showed distrust of God. It implied a fear that God was unable to qualify him for the great work to which He had called him, or that He had made a mistake in the selection of the man.

Moses was now directed to Aaron, his elder brother, who, having been in daily use of the language of the Egyptians, was able to speak it perfectly. He was told that Aaron was coming to meet him. The next words from the Lord were an unqualified command:

**Exodus 4**

<sup>15</sup> You shall speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with your mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do.

<sup>16</sup> And he shall be your spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to you instead of a mouth, and you shall be to him instead of God.

<sup>17</sup> And you shall take this rod in your hand, wherewith you shall do signs.

He could make no further resistance, for all ground for ex-

cuse was removed.

Moses took the rod of Aaron in his hands and did the signs. It was the rod of Aaron, but Moses was doing it. But Aaron was the one who was speaking. It was an interesting cooperation between the two.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 255:**

The divine command given to Moses found him self-distrustful, slow of speech, and timid. He was overwhelmed with a sense of his incapacity to be a mouthpiece for God to Israel. But having once accepted the work, he entered upon it with his whole heart, putting all his trust in the Lord. The greatness of his mission called into exercise the best powers of his mind. God blessed his ready obedience, and he became eloquent, hopeful, self-possessed, and well fitted for the greatest work ever given to man. This is an example of what God does to strengthen the character of those who trust Him fully and give themselves unreservedly to His commands.

Here, the experience of Moses shows us the importance of self-distrust. When we look at the life of Moses and see how he stood in all these trials, we see how this experience of the wilderness had fitted him for the necessary work.

I wish that our experience will be like that of Moses. We have also been 40 years in the wilderness now, haven't we? Maybe not quite yet—a little bit less. We still need some more time in order to do the greatest work ever committed to men, the revelation of His character. Amen.

## Moses Shows True Self-Distrust

**W**E COME back now to the history of Moses. What we are studying in the life of Moses is an application of the principles we have considered before. There are many other precious lessons in his life, and we cannot study his life enough in order to get all these lessons.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 255:**

The divine command given to Moses found him self-distrustful, slow of speech, and timid. He was overwhelmed with a sense of his incapacity to be a mouthpiece for God to Israel. But having once accepted the work, he entered upon it with his whole heart, putting all his trust in the Lord.

The greatness of his mission called into exercise the best powers of his mind. God blessed his ready obedience, and he became eloquent, hopeful, self-possessed, and well fitted for the greatest work ever given to man. This is an example of what God does to strengthen the character of those who trust Him fully and give themselves unreservedly to His commands.

What we see in Moses is exactly what we are studying here. It is self-distrust on the one hand, and trust in God on the other.

A man will gain power and efficiency as he accepts the responsibility that God places upon him, and with his whole soul seeks to qualify himself to bear them aright. However humble his position or limited his ability, that man will attain true greatness who, trusting to divine strength, seeks to perform his work with fidelity.

Had Moses relied upon his own strength and wisdom, and eagerly accepted the great charge, he would have evinced his entire unfitness for such a work. The fact that a man feels

his weakness is at least some evidence that he realizes the magnitude of the work appointed him, and that he will make God his counselor and his strength.

## Feeling Our Weakness

We see here a direct connection between the feeling of our weakness, the realization of the magnitude of the work, and making God our counselor. Our great problem is that we do not make God our counselor. In theory we do. Yes, I think nobody has a problem saying he needs God as a counselor.

But in practice, when it comes to the situations where we tend to make mistakes, it is all because we have not made God our counselor. We look back to our mistakes and we tend to say:

“Well these are little things; everybody makes mistakes, etc.”

But remember that every time we make a mistake it is because we did not make God our counselor. If that is a pattern that goes on, then there is something wrong, we should recognize the problem. Why don't we make God our counselor? It is because we don't feel our weakness; we don't really feel it, even though we may be terribly cast down, or whatever. When we don't feel our weakness, it's that we don't realize the magnitude of the work.

Let's look at what it means to make God the counselor, and what it does not mean. How do we refuse to make God our counselor?

One example would be if we have no belief in God's power. Then naturally, as a result of this, we will fear loss, impossibility, and defeat. We see only problems before us, and we move forward only as we can make sure that our steps will guarantee no failure, no impossibility, and no loss to ourselves.

This is not self-distrust; it is a lack of faith. Obviously it



comes from not really believing God's power. In such a case we don't need to make God the counselor because we know anyway that it won't work. Why should we ask God? We know it won't work; we have the wisdom. This is not real self-distrust, as you can see.

The next problem is: many people go forward and rush ahead, because they have no feeling of their weakness. In other words, I don't feel my weakness. What does it mean to feel my weakness? It does not mean just a theoretical knowledge, as if repeating the phrase, "I am weak," would make us so. A sense of our weakness does not come from just singing the song, "I am weak, but You are strong."

The feeling of weakness means a real sense, a real awareness of it in every situation. If this is not there, then I have no idea of the magnitude of the work of God. I enter upon it thinking I will master it, very confident. In such a case I do not seek counsel, either. This is because I have no need to seek counsel, because I have no sense of my weakness.

When I say "not seeking counsel" I should mention here that I don't mean it so black and white that a person is not seeking counsel at all. Very often we are seeking counsel, but not to the utmost depths, to the last detail, and in every situation. That is the problem. We are not thorough in seeking counsel.

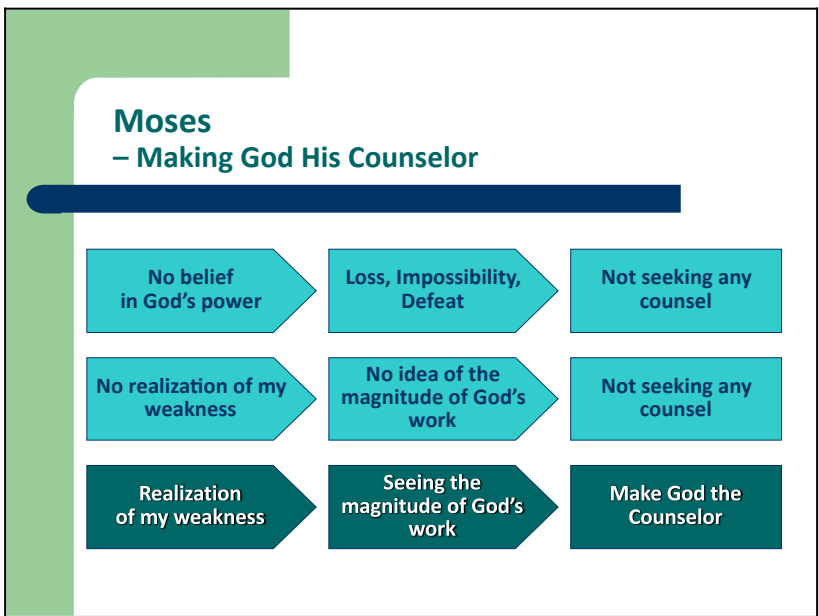
Moses, because he felt his weakness, saw the magnitude of God's work. It's not that he feared loss, impossibility, or defeat; because God can do everything. But he saw the tremendous work, which in himself, he could not do.

We are dependent receivers. God must be our counselor in everything. This is the privilege of every one of us: to make God the counselor to the last detail. Then God can use us as His sharp sickle, as an instrument in everything. Let us not be satisfied with less.

Moses needed forty years to feel his weakness; forty years in the wilderness! Constantly he was faced with a sense of his own weakness. God also sought to reinforce this lesson when He told Moses, at the burning bush,

“Put off your shoes, because you are weak, you are dirty, even your shoes are dirty.”

He understood the lesson. He saw the magnitude of the work, and he shrank back. But he did not refuse to go when God told him. He then made God his counselor, and went forward.



There could be several reasons for shrinking back:

1. We simply fear loss, impossibility, and defeat; or,
2. We see the magnitude of the work.

In the one case we will not seek counsel, and in the other case we will seek counsel. These two motives lead to entirely different results. Moses definitely felt his weakness, so he had

a realization of the magnitude of the work appointed to him. For this reason he made God his counselor and strength.

The rest of the story speaks of a little incident where Moses neglected to circumcise his son, because of his wife's feelings, and he felt God's displeasure because of this. But God used this incident to reinforce the lesson that only as Moses continued to work humbly before God, only as he continued to walk in His counsel, could he have God's protection.

It was not easy to go to Egypt. There was a good reason why he asked again and again, "and what if?" It was terribly dangerous for him to go there. God did not take away the sense of this danger, but rather strengthened it. Once the circumcision was accomplished, then the wrath of God was taken away and God's protection was assured. That shows that we can even go through fire, we can go in the midst of danger only when we walk in God's counsel. But we need to seek His counsel to the last detail.

### **Accepting the Treasure Despite Weakness in the Vessel**

Even though Moses was a very great man, as we know him to be after his experience in the wilderness, he still was a human. That means he was still weak. That wasn't taken away, and he was not perfect, even though his accomplishments were very, very great.

The closer we are to a person, as a friend, the more we are aware of their weakness. When we look at each other from a distance, we think, well he is a man strong in faith. But once we are daily with him and see him in everyday life and how he deals with certain situations, we see:

"Hmm, he is also weak."

From a distance, we tend not to see this because in our mind we form a certain picture of people. Then when we see this weakness we tend to look a little bit down upon the per-

son. We now estimate him according to his weakness, and we also estimate what he says and what he does according to his weakness.

This may not be so problematic and so wrong in most cases. But when God wants to use this person to help us and to bless us then it becomes problematic. We tend to judge the truth that God wants to give us through that person, in the light of the that person's weakness. That is, we judge the treasure by the vessel. We have to be very strong and very spiritually minded not to confuse the treasure with the vessel.

We have studied this in the past, and yes, we understand it. But to thoroughly apply it when it comes near to us is another matter.

What would you do, if you lived next to Moses? What would you do if you were the brother or sister of Moses? How would you feel about him, seeing his weaknesses? Seeing that he was tired in the morning, that he was exhausted, that sometimes he tended maybe to be too stern, or too soft because of the situations he was facing?

But feeling his weakness he would go to God and he would receive strength again, and he would not make mistakes in his administration. Yet in himself, he would be weak, you see? In himself, he would have made many mistakes, even during the forty years. However, because he constantly made God his counselor, he did not make these mistakes anymore. He walked in the ways of God, and yet, in his humanity, he was very weak. Miriam and Aaron noticed this.

Add to this the fact that we do not always have a sense of this weakness in ourselves. So we begin to compare ourselves with our brother or sister. We look at him, or at her, and we say,

“Hmm, he or she doesn't do right here, look at this weakness.”

I see the weakness, and as soon as I see the weakness, I form a judgment. Then the question comes up,

“Why doesn’t he listen to me?”

or

“Why doesn’t she listen to me? Because I know it!”

Then the demon of jealousy enters into the heart of man. When this is the case, Satan gets control. This is what happened with Aaron and Miriam. We want to turn to this story. The reason why we want to study this is two-fold:

1. We want to see the weakness of humanity.
2. We also want to see the danger of judging this weakness of humanity in terms of the treasure that comes through it, or in applying this weakness to the treasure that comes through that vessel.

When we realize the weakness of a person, we tend to look with suspicion on everything that comes through that person. This becomes even more evident in the latter history of Moses, which I will come back to later. We have to be very, very careful and on guard. Suddenly many statements that were made are looked upon in a different light. In this we have to be careful not to reject the treasure, not to reject the message that God gave.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 382:**

At Hazeroth, the next encampment after leaving Taberah, a still more bitter trial awaited Moses. Aaron and Miriam had occupied a position of high honor and leadership in Israel. Both were endowed with the prophetic gift, and both had been divinely associated with Moses in the deliverance of the Hebrews. “I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam” (*Micah* 6:4), are the words of the Lord by the prophet Micah.

Miriam’s force of character had been early displayed when as a child she watched beside the Nile the little basket in which was hidden the infant Moses. Her self-control and

tact God had made instrumental in preserving the deliverer of His people. Richly endowed with the gifts of poetry and music, Miriam had led the women of Israel in song and dance on the shore of the Red Sea. In the affections of the people and the honor of Heaven she stood second only to Moses and Aaron.



Miriam leads the women in song.  
(Source: Bible Brilliants, 1889)

But the same evil that had first brought discord in heaven sprang up in the heart of this woman of Israel, and she did not fail to find a sympathizer in her dissatisfaction.

## Jealousy a Great Evil

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 382:**

In the appointment of the seventy elders Miriam and Aaron had not been consulted, and their jealousy was excited against Moses.

This is a very common occurrence: “We are not consulted.” What does this bring up in the heart when we are not consulted? It brings up jealousy.

“Why didn’t you inform me, why didn’t you tell me, etc.?”

We have to guard against this. Especially when we are not made privy to a certain conversation or a certain situation. Maybe we don’t need to be.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 382:**

At the time of Jethro’s visit, while the Israelites were on the way to Sinai, the ready acceptance by Moses of the counsel of his father-in-law had aroused in Aaron and Miriam a fear that his influence with the great leader exceeded theirs. In the organization of the council of the elders they felt that their position and authority had been ignored. Miriam and Aaron had never known the weight of care and responsibility which had rested upon Moses; yet because they had been chosen to aid him they regarded themselves as sharing equally with him the burden of leadership, and they regarded the appointment of further assistants as uncalled for.

What do you see here? Exactly what Moses did not have, namely this sense of self-confidence, or the lack of a feeling of their weakness. What do we read here?

[They] had never known the weight of care and responsibility.

They never knew the magnitude of the work. That was because they never realized their weakness. They now believed that further assistants were uncalled for. In other words, there was no seeking for counsel:

“I don’t need counsel, it’s not necessary.”

When we are not looking for counsel with God, then neither do we seek counsel with others, and when God gives us people on our side with whom we can counsel, we see no

need for it, because we don't have a sense of our weakness, or feeling of our weakness.

They regarded the appointment of further assistants as uncalled for.

But, they brought their dissatisfaction out in different lines, as we shall soon see.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 383:**

Moses felt the importance of the great work committed to him as no other man had ever felt it.

We see here again the attitude and the spirit of Moses.

He realized his own weakness, and he made God his counselor.

It's almost the same wording as we read before.

Aaron esteemed himself more highly, and trusted less in God.

That is always the result when we esteem ourselves more highly; we trust less in God.

He had failed when entrusted with responsibility, giving evidence of the weakness of his character by his base compliance in the matter of the idolatrous worship at Sinai. But Miriam and Aaron, blinded by jealousy and ambition, lost sight of this. Aaron had been highly honored by God in the appointment of his family to the sacred office of the priesthood; yet even this now added to the desire for self-exaltation.

**Numbers 12**

<sup>2</sup> And they said, Has the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses?

Wouldn't the honor given to a man stimulate him to have an even greater desire for self-exaltation? As parents, we are usually careful not to give praise to our children, because it may foster the desire of self-exaltation in them. But the honor that God gives, leads us to a sense of our own weakness, pro-



vided we will receive it as Moses did. When Moses received that honor, he saw his weakness, the magnitude of the work, and had no desire for self-exaltation.

The opposite was the case with Aaron. A desire for self-exaltation came up when he received the honor. When people are honored to become missionaries, there is always a danger that this honor is used or is taken as a stimulus for self-exaltation. It is a weakness of human nature. It doesn't mean that they are bad people necessarily. Aaron wasn't a bad person; he simply was weak. But he was weak and he did not admit this. He did not sense it.

### **Numbers 12**

<sup>2</sup> And they said, Has the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses?  
Has He not spoken also by us?

What a “humble” expression!

“Look, equal rights here! As He speaks to you, He speaks to us as well.”

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 383:**

Regarding themselves as equally favored by God, they felt that they were entitled to the same position and authority.

They wouldn't say this directly, but it was implied in their whole attitude.

Yielding to the spirit of dissatisfaction, Miriam found cause of complaint in events that God had especially overruled. The marriage of Moses had been displeasing to her. That he should choose a woman of another nation, instead of taking a wife from among the Hebrews, was an offense to her family and national pride. Zipporah was treated with ill-disguised contempt.

Here it expressed itself. One thing we should realize is that when sin comes up in the heart of a man, he seldom expresses it in a direct way. It very often comes out in another way. In this case Zipporah was the cause for these things.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 383-384:**

Though called a “Cushite woman” (*Numbers* 12:1, RV), the wife of Moses was a Midianite, and thus a descendant of Abraham. In personal appearance she differed from the Hebrews in being of a somewhat darker complexion. Though not an Israelite, Zipporah was a worshiper of the true God. She was of a timid, retiring disposition, gentle and affectionate, and greatly distressed at the sight of suffering; and it was for this reason that Moses, when on the way to Egypt, had consented to her return to Midian. He desired to spare her the pain of witnessing the judgments that were to fall upon the Egyptians.

When Zipporah rejoined her husband in the wilderness, she saw that his burdens were wearing away his strength, and she made known her fears to Jethro, who suggested measures for his relief.

This woman was somewhat weak, wasn’t she? Not exactly the woman who would be courageous and go forward. She was very timid. She was honest. However, such timidity will also lead a person to make mistakes, obviously. When she refused to have her child circumcised that was a part of it.

“How can you do such a thing to a little baby?”

She felt,

“We can’t do this.”

Her softness hindered her to do it. She needed to be rebuked here too. In the case of fearing for her husband, and doing something for him through her father, she was not wrong. In fact God blessed the whole thing. He can use even the weakness of people at times to accomplish something. That shows us how careful we must be when we judge people from their outward appearance. He can use men as they are.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 384:**

Here was the chief reason for Miriam’s antipathy to Zipporah.

Not admitted, but so it was.

Smarting under the supposed neglect shown to herself and Aaron, she regarded the wife of Moses as the cause, concluding that her influence had prevented him from taking them into his counsels as formerly.

What did Aaron and Miriam obviously do? They compared Zipporah with themselves, and that was a very unfavorable comparison. Zipporah was weak and timid, where they were resolute and strong. They were leader types of people. She was absolutely no leader type of person. She would not dare to speak up in an assembly but would keep quiet.

However, it was still not right for them to compare themselves with her. We have to be very careful not to compare ourselves with different personalities, whether they be stronger than we are, or whether they be weaker than we are. We have to look at the treasure that God is giving through these people. Especially, we should not talk against those things that are especially led by God. We should be on guard against such things as jealousy. Jealousy was the real issue here, and nothing else.

#### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 384:**

Had Aaron stood up firmly for the right, he might have checked the evil; but instead of showing Miriam the sinfulness of her conduct, he sympathized with her, listened to her words of complaint, and thus came to share her jealousy.

Evidently, Aaron was not at first jealous, but by listening, it found a place in his heart.

### **The Meek are Guided by God**

Their accusations were borne by Moses in uncomplaining silence.

This is now a very clear example of how we should react: in uncomplaining silence.

It was the experience gained during the years of toil and waiting in Midian—the spirit of humility and long-suffering there developed—that prepared Moses to meet with patience the unbelief and murmuring of the people and the pride and envy of those who should have been his unswerving helpers. Moses “was very meek, above all the men who were upon the face of the earth,” and this is why he was granted divine wisdom and guidance above all others. Says the Scripture,

**Psalms 25**

<sup>9</sup> The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way.



Aaron and Miriam murmur against Moses.

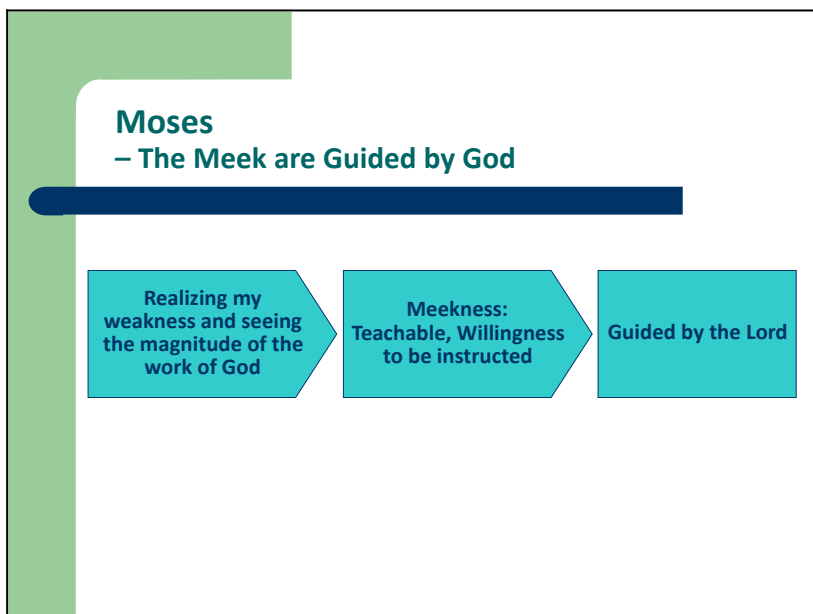
(Source: The Bible and Its Story, 1909)

In our last diagram, we said that when we have a feeling of our own weakness, we see the magnitude of the work and then we make God the counselor. Do you understand the connection? Why do we make God the counselor when we feel our weakness? What is the process exactly that makes us make God the counselor? This is described here. When we feel our own weakness and see the magnitude of the work of God, then we have this attitude of meekness in us. This meekness is defined as a willingness to be instructed, to be teachable.

This is the important question: Are we willing to be instructed? Are we teachable? We may have our weaknesses, we may have made mistakes, but if we are not willing to be instructed, if we are not teachable, we will continue to make mistakes, and will not look for counsel. When we are guided by the Lord, then we will seek counsel. A sense of our weakness makes us willing to be instructed. It makes us teachable.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 384:**

Moses “was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth,” and this is why he was granted divine wisdom and guidance above all others.



There are even degrees in this. The more teachable we are, the more willing to be guided, the more we are guided. Moses was guided more than everybody else. He had a closer relationship to God than everybody else had. He was almost living in His presence. He knew exactly what step to take. He wouldn't ask other people,

“How can I know the will of God?”

He would know it, because he was in close communion with his Father. And why? Because he was willing to be taught. That is the key.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 384:**

Says the Scripture,

**Psalm 25**

<sup>9</sup> The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way.

The meek are guided by the Lord because they are teachable, willing to be instructed. They have a sincere desire to know and to do the will of God. The Saviour's promise is,

**John 7**

<sup>17</sup> If any man will do His will, he shall know the doctrine.

And He declares by the apostle James,

**James 1**

<sup>5</sup> If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him.

But His promise is only to those who are willing to follow the Lord wholly. God does not force the will of any; hence He cannot lead those who are too proud to be taught, who are bent upon having their own way.

Those who are too proud to be taught do not always look proud. When you speak with them they may have a very humble demeanor, but there is a pride in the heart, which means they are unwilling to be taught completely.

...who are bent upon having their own way. Of the double-minded man—he who seeks to follow his own will, while professing to do the will of God—it is written,

**James 1**

<sup>7</sup> Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.

God had chosen Moses, and had put His Spirit upon him; and Miriam and Aaron, by their murmurings, were guilty of disloyalty, not only to their appointed leader, but to God himself. The seditious whisperers were summoned to the tabernacle, and brought face to face with Moses.

## **Numbers 12**

<sup>5</sup> And Jehovah came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle and called Aaron and Miriam.

Their claim to the prophetic gift was not denied; God might have spoken to them in visions and dreams. But to Moses, whom the Lord himself declared “faithful in all my house,” a nearer communion had been granted. With him God spoke mouth to mouth.

We are not reading this just to marvel at it. We are reading it because we can have such a communion too. That is something we shall look for, we shall seek for.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 384:**

With him God spoke mouth to mouth.

## **Numbers 12**

<sup>8</sup> Wherefore then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

<sup>9</sup> And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and He departed.

The cloud disappeared from the tabernacle in token of God’s displeasure, and Miriam was smitten.

<sup>10</sup> [She] became leprous, white as snow.

Aaron was spared, but he was severely rebuked in Miriam’s punishment. Now, their pride humbled into the dust, Aaron confessed their sin, and entreated that his sister might not be left to perish by the loathsome and deadly scourge.

It is interesting how this humbling of the pride into the dust had led Aaron to confess his sin. He reacted like David did. David’s pride was also humbled to the dust; then he confessed his sin. Also Moses prayed for Miriam, and:

In answer to the prayers of Moses, the leprosy was cleansed. Miriam was, however, shut out of the camp for seven days.

The consequence needed to be carried through; not as an





Miriam becomes leprous.

(Source: Bibel Bilder, 1815)



arbitrary thing, but in order to give an extra lesson that was necessary. We shall see this again later. This shutting of Miriam out of the camp was now not to her disadvantage but to her advantage. It was not a curse, but a blessing, and as such it had to be looked upon.

Those who look upon the consequences of sin that fall on us as a curse do not understand the goodness of God. Neither does this accomplish anything for them, unfortunately, until they have learned to look at the blessings of these things.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 384-385:**

Not until she was banished from the encampment did the symbol of God's favor again rest upon the tabernacle. In respect for her high position, and in grief at the blow that had fallen upon her, the whole company abode in Hazeroth, awaiting her return.

This manifestation of the Lord's displeasure was designed to be a warning to all Israel, to check the growing spirit of discontent and insubordination. If Miriam's envy and dissatisfaction had not been signally rebuked, it would have resulted in great evil.

Envy is one of the most satanic traits that can exist in the human heart, and it is one of the most baleful in its effects. Says the wise man,

**Proverbs 27**

<sup>4</sup> Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?

It was envy that first caused discord in heaven, and its indulgence has wrought untold evil among men.

**James 3**

<sup>16</sup> Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

You can say that every problem in the church stems from this in one way or the other. It is strife for position. It is envy for what the other gets, which I don't get. Think for example of the Greek and the Jerusalem widows in the early church. It was envy: "They get something which I don't get," and imme-

diately this thing comes up. It is destroying the church, this thing. Who can stand before it?

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 385:**

It should not be regarded as a light thing to speak evil of others or to make ourselves judges of their motives or actions.

We are sometimes very quick to look at things and we say,

“This happened because of this, this, and this.”

We have previously studied the weakness of God’s messengers, past and present. Because we did this, there is a danger to judge everything, every word, every deed, every motive, in a certain light. God forbids us to do this. It is not to...

...be regarded as a light thing to speak evil of others or to make ourselves judges of their motives or actions.

**James 4**

<sup>11</sup> He that speaks evil of his brother, and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law, and judges the law: but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge.

There is but one judge:

**1 Corinthians 4**

<sup>5</sup> [He] who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.

And whoever takes it upon himself to judge and condemn his fellow men is usurping the prerogative of the Creator.

Gossiping, for example, is nothing but judging, putting myself in the place of God.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 386:**

The Bible specially teaches us to beware of lightly bringing accusation against those whom God has called to act as His ambassadors. The apostle Peter, describing a class who are abandoned sinners, says,

**2 Peter 2**

<sup>10</sup> Presumptuous are they, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries.

<sup>11</sup> Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring no railing accusation against them before the Lord.

And Paul, in his instruction for those who are placed over the church, says,

**1 Timothy 5**

<sup>19</sup> Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.

He who has placed upon men the heavy responsibility of leaders and teachers of His people will hold the people accountable for the manner in which they treat His servants. We are to honor those whom God has honored. The judgment visited upon Miriam shall be a rebuke to all who yield to jealousy, and murmur against those upon whom God lays the burden of His work.

Looking at Moses' reaction is also very interesting in this context. This we will do in the next study as we continue to look upon his character.



## Uncomplaining Silence

**W**E HAVE seen how Moses bore these accusations with uncomplaining silence, and we want to investigate a little bit further the reaction of Moses.

We have already studied this history from the viewpoint of Aaron and Miriam. We saw that it is important not to judge motives and actions, and not to take accusations lightly. This condemns all gossiping and rumors.

But we also want to see the story from the viewpoint of Moses. He was the meekest man. We have done so partly by seeing that because he was so meek, he had a close connection with God, and he could be guided. God could guide him in every respect.

But what do you think about his being absolutely quiet to the accusations? We would tend to think,

“If I am quiet when the people say wrong things, don’t I then strengthen them in that?”

And then we conclude,

“Not for my sake, but for their sake I have to say something to this matter.”

Sister White sometimes defended herself, when she was accused. She did this, not to explain or excuse her weaknesses, but simply to set the record straight. Also her husband was very often accused of all kinds of things which were absolutely wrong, and which had no ground whatsoever. Then sometimes there was an explanation given.

There is one story where James White had these bottles. He

sold these bottles, and he was told that he was so greedy that he would sell these things. The rumor went around and around. When the story finally reached him, the motives he had, and those of the story, were entirely different. His child was actually the one who collected the bottles, because he wanted to do his part. So James White sold the bottles to help his child.

So, how shall we react when false rumors are circulated? Uncomplaining silence is warranted when it is only my honor that is at stake. On the other hand, we must not be silent when God's honor is at stake. It's not always easy to distinguish, I know. These things are mixed sometimes, or seem to be mixed, but we have to make this difference. We have to very, very closely analyze the situation, and ask,

“Am I defending my own honor?”

Some cases are very clear. For example, when somebody blasphemes God and I rebuke him for this, I'm not doing it in self-defense. Obviously, in those cases, God's honor that is at stake. We must not be silent. Silence in that case would be cowardice.

The opposite of this would be when my honor is at stake, that I defend myself, that I explain the situation, or that I even accept the accusations, or at least partially, in order to relieve myself of the pressure that is put against me. It's like being tortured, and when people are tortured they admit sometimes to what they have not done in order to get relief from the torture. This torture could also be mental. It can be so terrible to be constantly accused, that we say,

“Okay, yes, I did it, so that you stop your rumors,”

—and hoping by this to get things silenced...but they are not silenced. All this is not the uncomplaining silence of Moses.

Uncomplaining silence means there is no need to defend

myself, God defends me. We find this in the life of Jesus as well. When Jesus as a child was accused of things he had not done, he bore these things also in uncomplaining silence. In *The Desire of Ages* we read, that even as a child he had to learn the bitter lesson of not complaining and being silent when accused wrongly.

**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.

It is not easy for the human nature. We want to set the record straight, when such things go round and round. But we need to learn that this rests safely in the hand of God. When it is resting in the hand of God, it may be that He wants us to say something. The time for us to speak may come, and in this context we also must see the explanations that Sister White gave. She was not complaining. She bore accusations in uncomplaining silence, but sometimes she had to speak up, for the sake and the honor of God's cause, because she and her husband were the messengers of the Lord: through them the message came to the people; and so it was God's honor that was at stake.

But it was done without complaining, and it was done calmly, and in the assurance that God was their defender. That is the difference to those who take matters into their own hands. They can't bear things with uncomplaining silence, they have to defend themselves very quickly, they have to make an explanation.

**Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 349:**

I then saw a company pressing through the crowd with their eyes intently fixed upon the heavenly crown. As they earnestly urged their way through the disorderly crowd, an-

gels attended them, and made room for them to advance. As they neared the heavenly crown, the light emanating from it shone upon them and around them, dispelling their darkness, and growing clearer and brighter, until they seemed to be transformed, and resembled the angels. They cast not one lingering look upon the earthly crown.

Those who were in pursuit of the earthly, mocked them, and threw black balls after them. These did them no injury while their eyes were fixed upon the heavenly crown, but those who turned their attention to the black balls were stained with them.

There is a tremendous danger when black balls are thrown, that we look away from the crown. To look at the crown, what does this mean? It means that we rest our case completely in God's hands, so completely that we don't have any desire anymore to defend ourselves. Paul expressed it in this way,

### **Colossians 3**

<sup>3</sup> My life is hid with Christ in God.

When it's hid, it is out of sight, it can't be touched anymore, it can't be hurt. Let the people try to destroy our influence, they can't find us, because we are hid away. We are safely tucked away in Christ. If this is our attitude, then God can use us also to speak at times, and to speak frankly because His honor is at stake.

Now let's look back in our situation, and see how often we did not bear things in uncomplaining silence. This is because we yet have to learn the lesson of meekness. Meekness is to have self completely hidden in Christ, so it is not there anymore, it's not visible, it can't be touched. It's absolutely out of reach of the people. We continue our work as though nothing happened. That is the attitude we need.

Again, we must not be silent, and we don't need to wait for a special instruction to say something when God's honor is at



stake. We should be immediately ready to then take a stand, a clear stand, like Joshua:

### Joshua 24

<sup>15</sup> And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

This we have to do when God's honor is at stake. The opposite would be to escape,

"Oh, I have nothing to do with it, I'm not responsible."

Or alternately we might run away in cowardice, or even accept these accusations and play the hypocrite together with the sinner.



I'm reminded here of Peter's weakness one time, when Paul had to rebuke him sharply because he accepted the distinction that was made by some false brethren between the Jews and

Gentiles. He did not nobly stand for God's honor when it was required to do so, and Paul did. So Paul rebuked him, and Peter accepted it. *Galatians 2:1-16*.

There is a time to be quiet, and there is a time to speak. We must know the difference. This we will know, when we have the meekness of Moses, for sure.

## **The Fall of Moses**

We want now to consider another of Moses' experiences. We could study many more things, like Korah's rebellion, etc., but we skip all these and leave them for your own homework. We desire to understand now also the weak side of Moses.

As I said before, even though Moses was the meekest man on earth, even though he was a very great man, he was not yet perfect. He was not yet ready for translation. The last maturity, or perfection, came during his last years.

This came about in a sad way, by a fall into sin. This took place right at the end of his ministry, when it was least expected. He almost made it, was almost there, but then he fell. This again is a lesson in the weakness of humanity. It's again a lesson to us to be very, very distrusting of ourselves and to never think, even though we have gone a long way, that we have attained the goal, and that we will never fall.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 417:**

The leaders went to the door of the tabernacle and fell upon their faces. Again "the glory of the Lord appeared," and Moses was directed,

#### **Numbers 20**

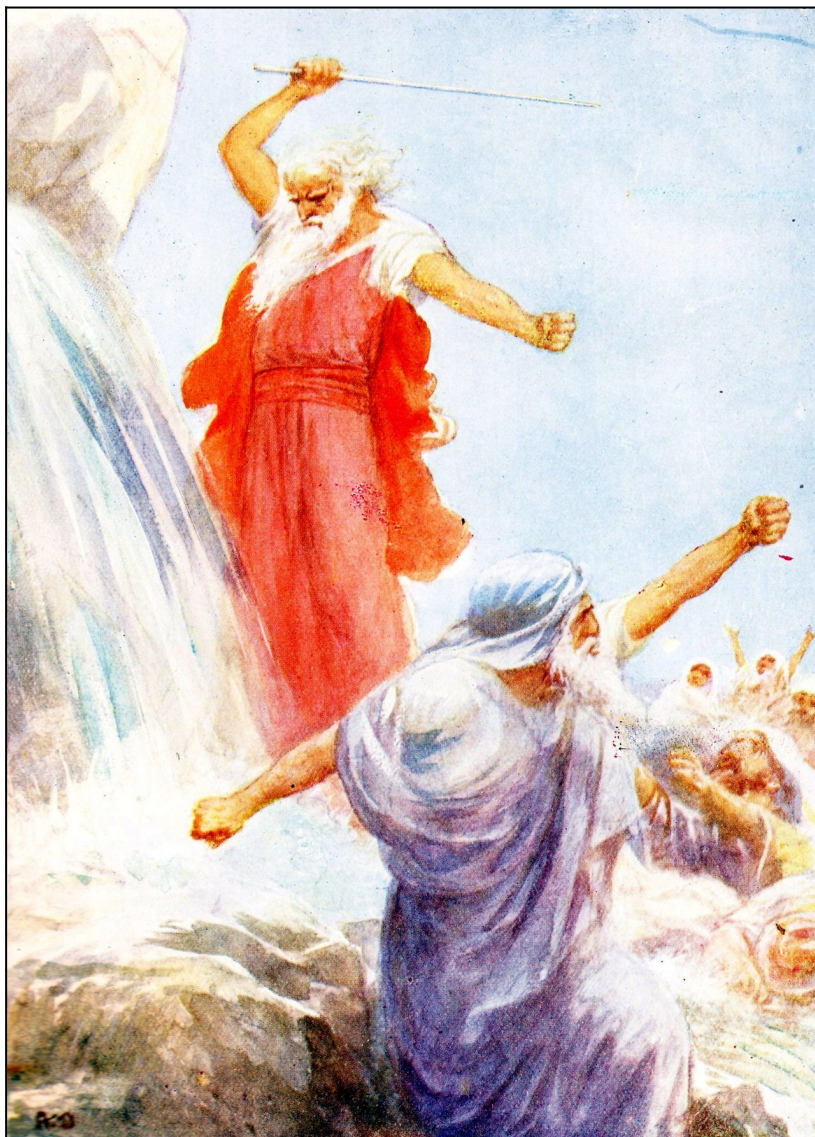
<sup>8</sup> Take the rod, and gather the assembly together, you and Aaron your brother, and speak unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth water, and you shall bring forth to them water out of the rock.

The two brothers went on before the multitude, Moses with the rod of God in his hand. They were now aged men. Long had they borne with the rebellion and obstinacy of Is-

rael; but now, at last, even the patience of Moses gave way.

<sup>10</sup> Hear now, you rebels, [he cried;] must we fetch you water out of this rock?

And instead of speaking to the rock, as God had commanded him, he smote it twice with the rod.



(Source: His Word in Pictures (website))

Before, Moses bore these things with uncomplaining silence, but can you see uncomplaining silence here? Yet it seemed to be for the honor of God. It's very difficult to lay the finger sometimes on the situation, and it requires a very spiritual perception to understand that this was indeed self-defense, but the Spirit of Prophecy makes it very clear:

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 417:**

The water gushed forth in abundance to satisfy the host. But a great wrong had been done. Moses had spoken from irritated feeling; his words were an expression of human passion rather than of holy indignation because God had been dishonored. "Hear now, you rebels," he said. This accusation was true, but even truth is not to be spoken in passion or impatience.

When God had bidden Moses to charge upon Israel their rebellion, the words had been painful to him, and hard for them to bear, yet God had sustained him in delivering the message. But when he took it upon himself to accuse them, he grieved the Spirit of God and wrought only harm to the people. His lack of patience and self-control was evident.

When I look back at the experience of Moses, I would tend to excuse him for these things, but here his sin is called what it actually was: lack of patience and self-control.

Thus the people were given occasion to question whether his past course had been under the direction of God, and to excuse their own sins.

That is always the danger when we have to see the sins of others because they become obvious and apparent. We tend to draw two conclusions:

1. To question their whole course, and
2. To excuse our own sins.

We then take the treasure (the truth they have taught) together with the vessel (their weak humanity) and reject both. And when we have rejected both, we even justify ourselves,

by pointing to their sin. Of this danger we have to be very much aware. That is one of the lessons of this story.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 417:**

Moses, as well as they, had offended God. His course, they said, had from the first been open to criticism and censure.

Now, his whole course became open to criticism and censure.

They had now found the pretext which they desired for rejecting all the reproofs that God had sent them through His servant.

Moses manifested distrust of God.

We are talking of two sins here, and we have to consider them separately, and not mix them up together, or weigh them against each other. That is what our human nature often tends to do. We say,

“We have made a mistake, okay, but you have made a mistake too.”

I was once in discussion with a brother a few years ago, and whenever I tried to tell him something he said,

“But you...but you...but you...”

And then I found myself trying to explain why I did what I did. As soon as I did, I noticed the attention was drawn away again from his mistake. Then I turned it back again and I tried to help him, that was my motive. Immediately again,

“But you...”

It was a very hard conversation. After a while I had to interrupt it because I noticed that we were not making any headway. This “But you...” argument was conclusive for him. There was a constant weighing of the sins of another with his own sins. He would not deny his own sins, he would say,

“We are all sinners, yes.”

That was his main motto, “We are all sinners.” But he would palliate it, he would soften it down, he would make it easier by looking at the sins of others. This self-justification is one of the greatest evils, which we have to overcome.

Let us state the case honestly. We have the people, and their sins are their sins, full stop. We have Moses; his sin is his sin, full stop. The sin of Moses does not make the sins of the people lighter in any degree. The sins of the people do not make Moses’ sin lighter in any degree. Yet how often do we think this, how often do we excuse Moses’ sins with the sins of the people? Moses did not excuse his sin, but how many people do this. For example, he could have said,

“Well, you don’t know what pressure you put me under, and that is the reason why I sinned.”

This is not a truthful statement.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 417:**

*Moses manifested distrust of God* [full stop]. “Shall we bring water?”

Now we come to the point of self-confidence. We have learned that Moses was the meekest man on earth. We have learned that Moses was full of self-distrust, and yet even in him there was still a strain of self-confidence.

“Shall we bring you water?”

That is self-confidence. Even though his self-confidence was much, much smaller than ours, I’m sure of this,—than mine at least, I must say,—he had a much deeper experience than I ever had, but which I aspire to have. Yet, this man said,

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 417:**

“Shall we bring you water?” he questioned, as if the Lord would not do what He promised. “You believed me not,” the Lord declared to the two brothers, “to sanctify me in the

eyes of the children of Israel.” At the time when the water failed, their own faith in the fulfillment of God’s promise had been shaken by the murmuring and rebellion of the people.

The first generation had been condemned to perish in the wilderness because of their unbelief, yet the same spirit appeared in their children. Would these also fail of receiving the promise? Wearied and disheartened, Moses and Aaron had made no effort to stem the current of popular feeling.

Had they themselves manifested unwavering faith in God, they might have set the matter before the people in such a light as would have enabled them to bear this test. By prompt, decisive exercise of the authority vested in them as magistrates, they might have quelled the murmuring. It was their duty to put forth every effort in their power to bring about a better state of things before asking God to do the work for them.

Well, didn’t they do this? Didn’t they do everything, didn’t they act promptly, didn’t they exercise authority? Didn’t they put forth every effort in their power to bring about a better state of things? It seems that they did. They acted promptly and quickly. It seems that they did what was right. They went before God, which we always must do; we must pray first. Then they went before the people.

But the spirit with which they did this ruined the lesson. It was not in the defense of God’s honor and glory, it was more in the defense of their own, that they spoke.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 417-418:**

Had the murmuring at Kadesh been promptly checked, what a train of evil might have been prevented!

By his rash act Moses took away the force of the lesson that God purposed to teach. The rock, being a symbol of Christ, had been once smitten, as Christ was to be once offered. The second time it was needful only to speak to the rock, as we have only to ask for blessings in the name of Jesus. By the second smiting of the rock the significance of

this beautiful figure of Christ was destroyed.

More than this, Moses and Aaron had assumed power that belongs only to God.

Here self-confidence comes out. To assume power is an act of self-confidence. If I was absolutely complete in my sense of dependence I would never assume power. To assume means to illegally or wrongfully lay hold of a power that does not belong to me, or claim a power that does not belong to me, which I should not take. It's like assuming the position of someone else because I think that I can do it better than he. That is self-confidence.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 418:**

More than this, Moses and Aaron had assumed power that belongs to God. The necessity for divine interposition made the occasion one of great solemnity.

“Divine interposition,” that is, God gave water in spite of their beating the rock. That is an amazing story, that God did this. If you were God, what would you have done?

I would not have done anything. I would have let them beat against the rock as much as they wished, and thus embarrass them to the full, and that would have been quite a bit of fun, wouldn't it? But that is legalism; it is the spirit of legalism which does not understand the love of God and why He allows consequences to happen. When God allows consequences to happen, He does so with sadness. It is hard for Him. That is the right spirit, and that alone.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 418:**

More than this, Moses and Aaron had assumed power that belongs only to God. The necessity for divine interposition made the occasion one of great solemnity, and the leaders of Israel should have improved it to impress the people with reverence for God and to strengthen their faith in His power and goodness.

When they angrily cried, “Must we fetch you water out of



this rock?" they put themselves in God's place, as though the power lay with themselves...

That is not self-distrust.

...men possessing human frailties and passions. Wearied with the continual murmuring and rebellion of the people, Moses had lost sight of his Almighty Helper, and without the divine strength he had been left to mar his record by an exhibition of human weakness.

It's like looking away from the crown, looking at the black balls, trying to defend myself, clean off the dirt. By doing this, I make my clothes dirtier and dirtier.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 418:**

Moses had lost sight of his Almighty Helper, and without the divine strength he had been left to mar his record by an exhibition of human weakness. The man who might have stood pure, firm, and unselfish to the close of his work had been overcome at last. God had been dishonored before the congregation of Israel, when He should have been magnified and exalted.

God did not on this occasion pronounce judgments upon those whose wicked course had so provoked Moses and Aaron. All the reproof fell upon the leaders.

That is unjust! The people also deserved punishment! That could have been their attitude, couldn't it? But here we see that Moses and Aaron through the long years, not only of Moses' wilderness experience in the forty years before, but now the forty years with the people, had learned something. This test, even though Moses failed the test, was a lesson to Moses which brought the last maturity to him. It was very precious to him.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 418-419:**

All the reproof fell upon the leaders. Those who stood as God's representatives had not honored Him. Moses and Aaron had felt themselves aggrieved, losing sight of the fact

that the murmuring of the people was not against them but against God. It was by looking to themselves, appealing to their own sympathies, that they unconsciously fell into sin, and failed to set before the people their great guilt before God.

Bitter and deeply humiliating was the judgment immediately pronounced.

### **Numbers 20**

<sup>12</sup> The Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron, Because you believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.

With rebellious Israel they must die before the crossing of the Jordan. Had Moses and Aaron been cherishing self-esteem or indulging a passionate spirit in the face of divine warning and reproof, their guilt would have been far greater. But they were not chargeable with willful or deliberate sin; they had been overcome by a sudden temptation, and their contrition was immediate and heartfelt.

The Lord accepted their repentance, though because of the harm their sin might do among the people, He could not remit its punishment.

## **The Plan of Salvation is Full of Love**

Again, when we read this, “He could not remit its punishment,” we could make long faces and say,

“Why does it have to be like this? Can’t the consequences be taken away?”

Or we can say,

“Wonderful! God allowed this because He had a purpose of love to accomplish. Wonderful, because Moses bore this punishment patiently, without complaining, and in silence, he thereby could be a blessing to others.”

He himself wouldn’t need that punishment, because he had learned his lesson, definitely. He was ready to soon be resur-

rected and come into heavenly Canaan, in contrast to the other people who were not ready. He was definitely ready for it, but the punishment he must bear, for the sake of the people. He himself saw this very clearly because he said,

### **Deuteronomy 1**

<sup>37</sup> Also the Lord was angry with me *for your sakes*, saying, You also shall not go in there.

### **Deuteronomy 3**

<sup>26</sup> But the Lord was wroth with me *for your sakes*, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice you; speak no more unto me of this matter.

### **Deuteronomy 4**

<sup>21</sup> Furthermore the Lord was angry with me *for your sakes*, and swore that I should not go over Jordan, and that I should not go in unto that good land, which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance:

<sup>22</sup> But I must die in this land, I must not go over Jordan: but you shall go over, and possess that good land.

Moses bore this willingly. Could we accept it in the same way, if such a thing happened to us? If we have to bear the consequences of our sin for the sake of other people? We can bear it if we have that attitude of love that Moses had.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 419:**

Moses did not conceal his sentence, but told the people that since he had failed to ascribe glory to God, he could not lead them into the Promised Land. He bade them mark the severe punishment visited upon him, and then consider how God must regard their murmurings in charging upon a mere man the judgments which they had by their sins brought upon themselves. He told them how he had pleaded with God for a remission of the sentence, and had been refused.

### **Deuteronomy 3**

<sup>26</sup> The Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, [he said,] and would not hear me.

How do you read this statement? You can read it in two

ways:

“The Lord has not a very good character, and because you are so wicked, we have incurred the anger of God.”

Or he could have said,

“The Lord’s love is so great for you that He allowed me to bear this. I can be a fellow sufferer with Christ’s sufferings.”

There are two ways in which you can read this statement. In what spirit would Moses have said this? In the first or in the second spirit? Certainly in the second spirit because he was a mature Christian. And so we must read it.

“The Lord was wroth with me for your sakes.”

Wroth in this case means love.

“The Lord allowed this to happen, the Lord’s love was exercised for your sakes.”

What did Jesus say?

### **John 10**

<sup>17</sup> Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life [for you].

Or,

“He loves me even more because I lay down my life for you.”

The whole plan of salvation is full of love!

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 419:**

On every occasion of difficulty or trial the Israelites had been ready to charge Moses with having led them from Egypt, as though God had had no agency in the matter. Throughout their journeyings, as they had complained of the difficulties in the way, and murmured against their leaders, Moses had told them, “Your murmurings are against God. It is not I, but God, who has wrought in your deliverance.” But

his hasty words before the rock, “shall we bring water?” were a virtual admission of their charge, and would thus confirm them in their unbelief and justify their murmurings.

The Lord would remove this impression forever from their minds, by forbidding Moses to enter the Promised Land. Here was unmistakable evidence that their leader was not Moses, but the mighty Angel of whom the Lord had said,

**Exodus 23**

<sup>20</sup> Behold, I send an Angel before you, to keep you in the way, and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.

<sup>21</sup> Beware of Him, and obey His voice:...for my name is in Him.

God turned something good out of this, and that is the important point.

## **No Sin is a Light One**

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 420:**

“The Lord was wroth with me for your sakes,” said Moses. The eyes of all Israel were upon Moses, and his sin cast a reflection upon God, who had chosen him as the leader of His people.

The same was with David, as you remember.

The transgression was known to the whole congregation; and had it been passed by lightly, the impression would have been given that unbelief and impatience under great provocation might be excused in those in responsible positions. But when it was declared that because of that one sin Moses and Aaron were not to enter Canaan, the people knew that God is no respecter of persons, and that He will surely punish the transgressor.

The history of Israel was to be placed on record for the instruction and warning of coming generations. Men of all future time must see the God of heaven as an impartial ruler, in no case justifying sin. But few realize the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

Self-distrust means to realize the exceeding sinfulness of

sin. It means not to take these things lightly. Even though it might be considered a light sin, only for a moment he lost his patience, but we have to see how heavy this weighs in God's eyes.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 420:**

Men flatter themselves that God is too good to punish the transgressor. But in the light of Bible history it is evident that God's goodness and His love engage Him to deal with sin as an evil fatal to the peace and happiness of the universe.

When I look back, I must say that whenever I lose my patience, even to some degree only, and I say something which I should not have said, I feel a terrible burden, and I don't know why, but it's hard to become happy again because I think of the influence that I have had on others. There is good reason for this, because God cannot justify sin in any degree. If He allowed Moses to be punished as he was, then certainly He shows by this how He views sin.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 420:**

Men flatter themselves that God is too good to punish the transgressor. But in the light of Bible history it is evident that God's goodness and His love engage Him to deal with sin as an evil fatal to the peace and happiness of the universe.

Not even the integrity and faithfulness of Moses could avert the retribution of his fault.

Again, there is a human tendency to weigh our good deeds and our evil deeds, and we say,

"But look at the good deeds I have done!"

This type of argument counts nothing with God.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 420-421:**

God had forgiven the people greater transgressions, but He could not deal with sin in the leaders as in those who were

led. He had honored Moses above every other man upon the earth. He had revealed to him His glory, and through him He had communicated His statutes to Israel. The fact that Moses had enjoyed so great light and knowledge made his sin more grievous. Past faithfulness will not atone for one wrong act. The greater the light and privileges granted to man, the greater is his responsibility, the more aggravated his failure, and the heavier his punishment.

Moses was not guilty of a great crime, as men would view the matter; his sin was one of common occurrence. The psalmist says that:

**Psalms 106**

<sup>33</sup> He spoke unadvisedly with his lips.

To human judgment this may seem a light thing; but if God dealt so severely with this sin in His most faithful and honored servant, He will not excuse it in others. The spirit of self-exaltation, the disposition to censure our brethren, is displeasing to God. Those who indulge in these evils cast doubt upon the work of God, and give the skeptical an excuse for their unbelief. The more important one's position, and the greater his influence, the greater is the necessity that he should cultivate patience and humility.

If the children of God, especially those who stand in positions of responsibility, can be led to take to themselves the glory that is due to God, Satan exults. He has gained a victory. It was thus that he fell. Thus he is most successful in tempting others to ruin. It is to place us on our guard against his devices that God has given in His word so many lessons teaching the danger of self-exaltation.

There is not an impulse of our nature, not a faculty of the mind or an inclination of the heart, but needs to be, moment by moment, under the control of the Spirit of God. There is not a blessing which God bestows upon man, nor a trial which He permits to befall him, but Satan both can and will seize upon it to tempt, to harass and destroy the soul, if we give him the least advantage. Therefore however great one's spiritual light, however much he may enjoy of the divine favor and blessing, he should ever walk humbly before the

Lord, pleading in faith that God will direct every thought and control every impulse.

That this is said about Moses, who is the humblest man on the earth, is quite amazing.

All who profess godliness are under the most sacred obligation to guard the spirit, and to exercise self-control under the greatest provocation. The burdens placed upon Moses were very great; few men will ever be so severely tried as he was; yet this was not allowed to excuse his sin. God has made ample provision for His people; and if they rely upon His strength, they will never become the sport of circumstances.

The strongest temptation cannot excuse sin. However great the pressure brought to bear upon the soul, transgression is our own act. It is not in the power of earth or hell to compel anyone to do evil. Satan attacks us at our weak points, but we need not be overcome. However severe or unexpected the assault, God has provided help for us, and in His strength we may conquer.

This chapter is very interesting, and confirms our study very, very strongly. It shows how much, as a people of God, we need self-distrust. The people of Israel were to draw this lesson out of that experience. Did they? Later we will study the experience of Isaiah, and we will see a similar experience in his life, but let me come to one more point.

## **God Speaks**

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 469-470:**

The great Ruler of nations had declared that Moses was not to lead the congregation of Israel into the goodly land, and the earnest pleading of God's servant could not secure a reversing of His sentence. He knew that he must die. Yet he had not for a moment faltered in his care for Israel. He had faithfully sought to prepare the congregation to enter upon the promised inheritance.

At the divine command Moses and Joshua repaired to the



tabernacle, while the pillar of cloud came and stood over the door. Here the people were solemnly committed to the charge of Joshua. The work of Moses as leader of Israel was ended. Still he forgot himself in his interest for his people. In the presence of the assembled multitude Moses, in the name of God, addressed to his successor these words of holy cheer:

### **Deuteronomy 31**

<sup>23</sup> Be strong and of a good courage: for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land which I swore unto them: and I will be with you.

He then turned to the elders and officers of the people, giving them a solemn charge to obey faithfully the instructions he had communicated to them from God.

As the people gazed upon the aged man, so soon to be taken from them, they recalled, with a new and deeper appreciation, his parental tenderness, his wise counsels, and his untiring labors. How often, when their sins had invited the just judgments of God, the prayers of Moses had prevailed with Him to spare them! Their grief was heightened by remorse. They bitterly remembered that their own perversity had provoked Moses to the sin for which he must die.

The removal of their beloved leader would be a far stronger rebuke to Israel than any which they could have received had his life and mission been continued. God would lead them to feel that they were not to make the life of their future leader as trying as they had made that of Moses. God speaks to His people in blessings bestowed; and when these are not appreciated, He speaks to them in blessings removed, that they may be led to see their sins, and return to Him with all the heart.

Moses was a blessing to them, and God spoke to the people by the very fact that He gave them a man like Moses. But they did not appreciate these blessings. So God spoke to His people by blessings removed.

This principle confirms again very clearly, that the consequences of sin are not always taken completely away. Because God speaks: by blessings given and by blessings removed. If

He would take away all the consequences of sin, then He would not speak anymore.



God speaks, and that is a great comfort. This I wish we could draw out of these stories.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 470-471:**

That very day there came to Moses the command,

**Deuteronomy 32**

<sup>49</sup> Get up...unto Mount Nebo,...and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession:

<sup>50</sup> And die in the mount where you go up, and be gathered unto your people.

Moses had often left the camp, in obedience to the divine summons, to commune with God; but he was now to depart on a new and mysterious errand. He must go forth to resign his life into the hands of his Creator. Moses knew that he was to die alone; no earthly friend would be permitted to minister to him in his last hours. There was a mystery and awfulness about the scene before him, from which his heart

shrank. The severest trial was his separation from the people of his care and love—the people with whom his interest and his life had so long been united. But he had learned to trust in God, and with unquestioning faith he committed himself and his people to His love and mercy.



Moses ascends Mount Nebo, to see the promised land, and to die.

(Source: *The Bible in Picture and Story*, 1889)



**W**HAT is self-distrust, and how do we receive it? How does God teach His people self-distrust? What creates healthy self-distrust? How can we gain this Christian virtue, which is so necessary?

Sister White says it is the first lesson that everybody who works in the cause of God must learn.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 250:**

The first thing to be learned by all who would become workers together with God is the lesson of self-distrust; then they are prepared to have imparted to them the character of Christ. This is not to be gained through education in the most scientific schools. It is the fruit of wisdom that is obtained from the divine Teacher alone.

Think of examples like Moses whom we studied, but also Jacob, the Jewish noble man, Peter, Isaiah, Job. We can't study them all, but at least we will get an insight. What did they need? What factors contributed to each of them having healthy self-distrust?

The first thing that I need is a revelation of my weakness. We saw this very clearly in the case of Moses. He had no idea of his weakness when he was in Egypt and was surrounded by all the privileges and the fantastic training as the future leader of Israel. He first had to make a very bad mistake in killing the Egyptian before he realized how weak he was, and how unable to make plans himself. Then during the forty years he continued to learn that lesson until he received his final test when God met him at the burning bush.

But seeing his own weakness was only one thing. He also needed a better concept of the magnitude of the work of God. That then would be the second point. The first is a revelation

of my own weakness, and the second, a revelation of the magnitude of the work of God. The revelation of my weakness opens my vision, opens my eyes to the magnitude of the work of God.

Moses thought that they would be delivered by warfare, and by simple military training and discipline and exercise. But in this he was very mistaken. The work was much grander. While he was in the wilderness he received a revelation of the magnitude of the work. Even though he was in the wilderness through his own mistake, God used this new environment to teach him. While he was there, and he received the visions which he wrote down in the books of *Job* and *Genesis*, he gained an appreciation of the great work of God. He saw the power and the process of creation and he saw that which we will shortly study in the book of *Job*.

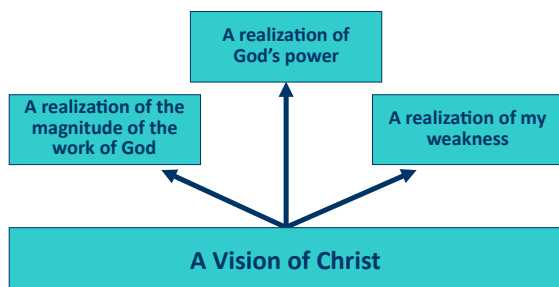
There is a third factor necessary to gain a healthy self-distrust, and that is a vision of Christ. Let us list these points again:

1. A revelation of my own weakness,
2. A revelation of the magnitude of the work of God, and
3. A vision of Christ.

Leave one of these things out, and it doesn't work properly. A vision of Christ would not be complete. It would not really be a vision of Christ fully if it does not create a sense of my own weakness. It will always lead to this.

These three elements support each other. A vision of Christ is necessary so as not to despair when I see my weakness. It is absolutely necessary to obey in spite of the fact that I see the magnitude of the work. On the other hand, if I do not see my weakness and have no concept of the magnitude of the work, again, I will be too self-confident. This we want to see now in examples other than Moses, whom we have studied in the past.

## What Creates Healthy Self- Distrust?



Examples: Moses, Jacob, the Jewish nobleman, Peter, Isaiah, Job, etc.

### The Example of Job

The first person that we want to look at is Job. Let's summarize the whole book briefly. In the beginning, the background of the story is told and it begins in heaven. There Satan made the claim that is impossible to obey the law. And God said,

"It is possible to obey the law."

God has given to mankind a law that can be obeyed, but Satan said,

"No, impossible."

Then God said,

"But have you seen, here is an example, Job, my servant."

"No!" said Satan, "he is not obeying you from his free heart, but only because he receives certain privileges. He has the privilege, for example, of health, happy children, and of money. He doesn't need to care, because he has enough money, you know. These neighbors who sin more than he

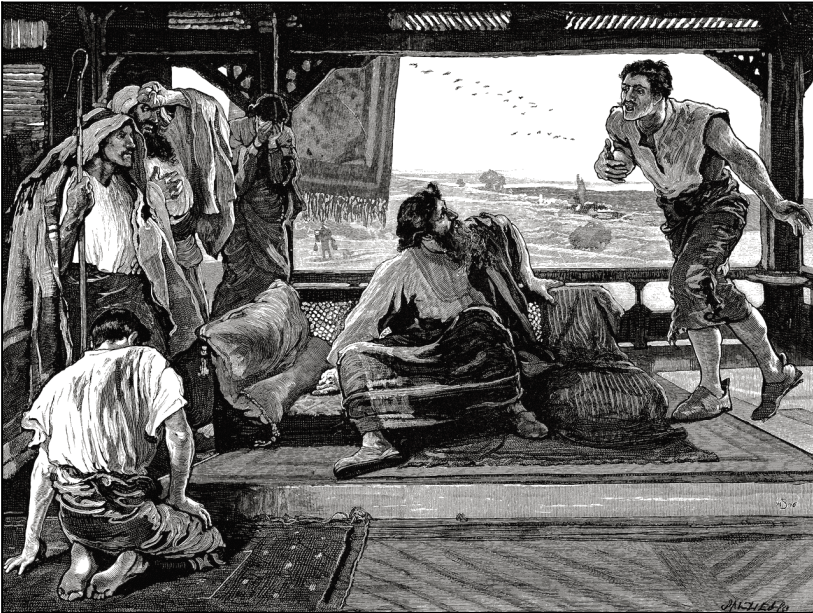


does don't have all these good things. No wonder that he is as he is."

Then God said to Satan,

"Okay, let's face it. He will be obedient also when these things are taken away. You can take them away if you wish."

Satan immediately grasped the opportunity and took away his material possessions.



The messengers tell Job of the loss of his earthly goods.

(Source: Dalziels Bible Gallery, 1881)

But Job did not sin; he did not rebel against God. He simply said,

### **Job 1**

<sup>21</sup> The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

He absolutely acknowledged the privilege of God to do whatever He pleased, and he still trusted in Him. Then God



spoke with Satan and said,

“Have you seen this, how it works?”

Satan said,

“No, no, no, you have not really tested him. Take his health, and then he will sin.”

So God allowed Satan to afflict Job with ill health. Job, however, was still faithful and trusted in God.



“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” *Job 13:15*

(Source: Beautiful Pearls, 1897)

The second phase is much longer, because something came in between while Job was suffering terribly. He was suffering of certain sicknesses, and of the sadness of having lost his children and his possessions. He was really a miserable creature as far as physical well-being and health was concerned. While he was suffering, his three friends came. Their concept was very, very firm and very strong:

“You are a sinner.”

Then began a discussion between them and Job. This takes most of the book until chapter 34. Then comes a new figure. We will study that in a minute.

I called this “The Art of Counseling,” because these were counselors, these friends of Job. They meant to help him; that was their intent, their attitude. The argument was,

“Your fate is a punishment for your sin, you must repent of your sin to stop this punishment.”

“You see, sin always brings punishment. This is a law, and that is an explanation of your situation. Your situation is merely punishment.”



Eliphaz speaking to Job: "Remember, I pray you, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?" *Job 4:7*

(Source: Bible Models, 1896)

This was the concept held by the people in the time of Job. This was the concept held also by the people in the time of Christ. For that reason the disciples asked Jesus,

### **John 9**

<sup>2</sup> Who has sinned, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

This concept is lodged very firmly in the human mind. You could also headline this whole thing, “The Philosophy of Suffering.” In other words, we need an explanation of why people suffer. You can talk with any almost person in the world today and you will always end up with one topic. That is:

“Why do innocent people suffer in this world? Why all this?”

It’s a hot topic. You can always find communication about that topic. So, there was a clear explanation from these three friends, religionists, or religious specialists, who supposedly understood religious laws very clearly,

“Your fate is a punishment of your sin.”

Job lived in that time; he lived in this surrounding; he grew up in that belief. But his experience contradicted that belief because he could not see any sin in his life. He was perplexed, to say the least. On the one hand was this belief, which he shared to some extent. On the other hand was his experience, which contradicted that belief. So he began to argue,

“I don’t know why I am sick. I don’t know why I lost everything, but it is not because of my sin, this is what I know.”

They were discussing to and fro about this topic until there was a stalemate. The friends didn’t know what other arguments to put forth because Job was too stubborn in their eyes. Neither did Job convince them, because they were too stubborn. So there was quietness for the moment, and now was the time for Elihu, the younger one, to speak.

He could hardly contain himself for the whole time, he wanted to jump in. When they were quiet, he came to the forefront and first of all he rebuked the three friends saying,

“You did not have the right arguments.”

Then he rebuked Job.



“You do not have the right argument either. Both sides are wrong. I am right.”



Elihu speaks to Job

(Source: The Bible in Picture and Story, 1889)

His philosophy about suffering was this:

“It is not punishment, which you suffer, because God does not arbitrarily punish people. It is a disciplinary measure of God. He wants to discipline you. He wants to help you through this suffering. He wants to make you better. He

wants to purify you. That's the purpose. But He would not do this if you had no sin."

In other words,

"You have sin in your life, and this suffering helps you get rid of it. It burns the sin out of you."

Well, I don't know if Job would have answered something. Probably he tried, but Elihu was a very fluent talker and as soon as Job wanted to start, he said,

"Wait, wait for a moment, let me finish."

He talked, and talked and talked over four chapters, from *Job* chapter 32 to chapter 36, without end. He was very wise in his own eyes, this Elihu. Then he was interrupted by somebody other than Job, somebody whom no one else can answer, and that is God himself.

## God's Answer

What did God say? His first statement was,

### **Job 38**

<sup>2</sup> Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

That made everybody quiet, everybody: the three friends, Elihu and Job. No one had anything to say anymore after that statement. We know the background story of Job, we are told this in the first chapter, and for that reason we know something that they did not know. They gave counsel without having knowledge.

I am not a chess player, therefore I don't know exactly how this works, but a chess player once described it like this:

"It's like just seeing two figures in a chess game and there are still 20 figures on the board, but you just see two. By seeing only two figures you make a judgment of the whole game, and say how it will end, and who will win."

They gave counsel without knowledge. They saw only a little fraction of reality, and yet they stood up and gave an explanation. Now, the question about Job's suffering was a real question and it required an answer.

"Why this suffering? What is the cause? What is going on here?"

It was a very difficult question, too. The answers given by everyone were a real effort, a real struggle of the mind, to grasp the truth of the matter. They were three philosophers who put their best mind into this matter. They were not primitive at all. Yet they did not have the correct answer. So God says,

"Who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?"



This statement applied to all three parties: the friends of Job, Job himself, and Elihu as well. Then God gave a revelation of himself to Job.

## Job 38

<sup>1</sup> The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind.

That was immediately after Elihu spoke.

<sup>2</sup> Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

God now spoke to Job himself, especially to Job, because the revelation that now follows is given to Job. He leads him through certain manifestations of nature and asks him certain questions, which show something of the omniscience of God. Job certainly theoretically knew of God's omniscience, but he never fully realized it.



The Lord answers Job from the whirlwind.

(Source: *The History of Our Lord*, 1865)

It's one thing to know theoretically that God is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. It's one thing to know this, theoretically, but to realize it in a moment of need is another

matter altogether. That requires a lot of revelations. It requires an extraordinary revelation, which Job now received.

We can look at other examples of this. In the case of the Jewish noble man, he suddenly realized that he stood in the presence of Him who could read thoughts.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 198:**

Like a flash of light, the Saviour's words to the nobleman laid bare his heart. He saw that his motives in seeking Jesus were selfish. His vacillating faith appeared to him in its true character. In deep distress he realized that his doubt might cost the life of his son. He knew that he was in the presence of One who could read the thoughts, and to whom all things were possible.

What a revelation! Suddenly he knew that his inward heart was like an open book, which Jesus could read perfectly well, every detail of it. What a revelation in this moment!

Or think of another example: Peter, who also realized in the presence of Jesus, that here he was standing before Him, who even knew where the fish were at each moment, who could evidently see through the sea, and could see where the fish were and could know exactly where to throw out the net. That is omniscience.

Such a revelation just overwhelms the human element. This was the type of revelation that Job received in that moment.

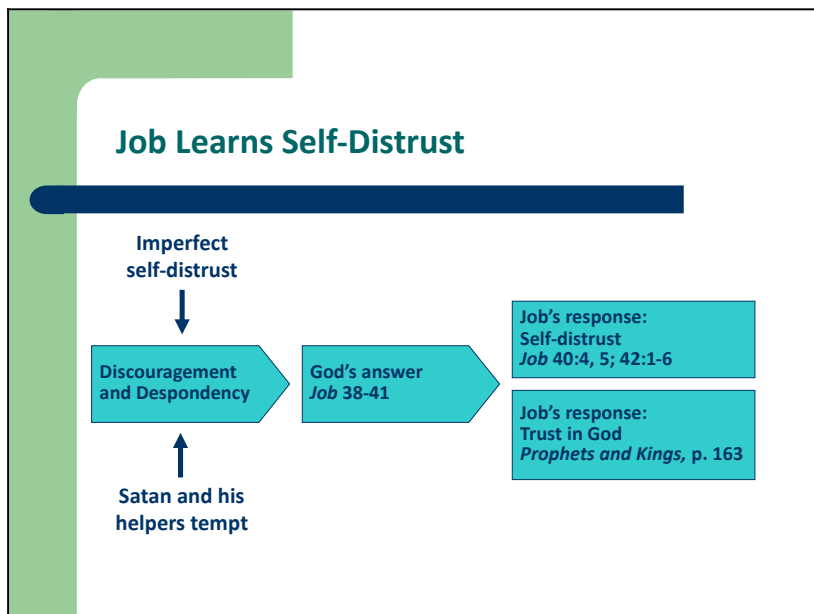
## **Job Learns Self-Distrust**

Let's turn to chapter 40 for a moment. Here we have a very brief response of Job. Let us first look at a diagram about how Job learned self-distrust.

First of all, we must realize that Job had imperfect self-distrust at the beginning. In spite of the fact that he was walking in the ways of the Lord, his self-distrust was not yet complete. He also spoke "counsel without knowledge," not only Elihu. Job's situation was not as bad as that of his friends, because



he was under much harder circumstances. Satan tempted him, and his friends tempted him. Job was very discouraged and despondent: really cast down. Then God answered him. As a result of the answer, Job received self-distrust.



We now read this:

### Job 40

<sup>3</sup> Then Job answered the Lord and said,

<sup>4</sup> Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth.

<sup>5</sup> Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; yes, twice, but I will proceed no further.

He realized that everything that he could say was nothing. He did not know anything. After that revelation, God was now everything and he was nothing. After this short response, God continues to talk with him. When God is finished, then, again, Job speaks:

### Job 42

<sup>1</sup> Then Job answered the Lord and said:

<sup>2</sup> I know that You can do everything.

When he said this he meant it. It was not just theoretical knowledge; for him it was very practical knowledge.

<sup>2</sup> I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of yours can be withheld from You.

<sup>3</sup> You asked, Who is this one who hides counsel without knowledge?

Who is this one? Job said,

“This is me.”

It is true that the response was first given to Elihu, so Job could have said,

“Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge? That was Elihu.”

He could have said,

“This was my friends.”

But he applies it to himself.

<sup>3</sup> ...therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

<sup>4</sup> Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, I will question you, and you shall answer me.

<sup>5</sup> I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You.

<sup>6</sup> Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

That is self-distrust. This he gained by a vision of Christ. When he saw this tremendous power of Christ, he abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes.

How often do we think that our counsel is absolutely important and necessary? We also have to say something. We must say this. If we don't say this to the person then he can't be helped. It may be that our counsel is not bad in itself. It

may be that is quite wise because it comes from our experience. But what is this in the sight of God's presence? It's nothing, absolutely nothing, regardless of how good our counsel is, regardless of how wise it is. It's nothing in the presence of God.



Job answering the Lord: "Now my eye sees You; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." *Job 42:5-6*

(Source: Bibel Bilder, 1815)

## **Job 42**

<sup>3</sup> Who is this who hides counsel, without knowledge?

This was said to the wisest men of Job's time. Even to the wise Job, it was said. How much more would this be said of us? Looking back now, I think I am sometimes like a child. I am like Elihu; I want to burst out, I want to say something.

"Something needs to be said here, and maybe I should tell him what my experience was so that now he can get help."

But what is this in the presence of God? It is counsel without knowledge. That does not mean that we have to be quiet, but our counsel, compared with the Word of God, is without knowledge. This is what the friends of Job needed to realize.

In fact God was very angry with them, as it says here:

### **Job 42**

<sup>7</sup> And so it was, after the Lord had spoken these words to Job, that the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.

<sup>8</sup> Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you according to your folly; because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.

<sup>9</sup> So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the Lord commanded them; for the Lord had accepted Job.

<sup>10</sup> And the Lord restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.

<sup>11</sup> Then all his brothers, all his sisters, and all those who had been his acquaintances before, came to him and ate food with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversity that the Lord had brought upon him. Each one gave him a piece of silver and each a ring of gold.

Then it goes on to say how the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his early days.

Can we see how much we need that vision of Christ in order to be wise counselors? We need this lesson of self-distrust that Job received. But that is only part of the story; the other part of the story is that through this revelation, he received trust in God. We have a very interesting statement in this connection:

### **Prophets and Kings, p. 163:**

From the depths of discouragement and despondency...

We saw that he was full of discouragement and despon-

dency,

...Job rose to the heights of implicit trust in the mercy and the saving power of God. Triumphantly he declared:

**Job 13**

<sup>15</sup> Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him...

<sup>16</sup> He also shall be my salvation.

**Job 19**

<sup>25</sup> I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

<sup>26</sup> And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

<sup>27</sup> Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.

Sister White applies some of the statements given by Job before his victory to after. I find this quite interesting because what he said before was in a faith that was more theoretical, but once he had seen God with his own eyes, it was a very practical faith.

**Job 13**

<sup>15</sup> Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.

That is the height of implicit trust. Think about this. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." If I would do you any harm, by words or by actions, would you still trust me? If I would level hard accusations against you, would you still trust me? I guess nobody would. I would want to see the person who still trusts when he is not treated nicely by another person.

It sometimes happens so that children still trust their parents even though the parents at times beat them. That happens. They still trust them. Children have a tremendous amount of ability to overcome such disappointments. I don't want to encourage you by this to be negligent or in any way hard or cruel to your children. But you sometimes find it there, because the childish faith is different. It works differently. The mind works differently. But when an adult is disap-

pointed he usually loses his trust.

Our relationship to God: how close is it? How do we react when God seemingly does not answer our prayers? When He treats us as we think we have not deserved? Job definitely did not think that he deserved to be treated as he was. Yet, he said after he had received a vision of God,

“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”

He did not make his trust in God dependent on good treatment. He said,

“I trust Him unconditionally. Absolutely unconditionally.”

Can we do this? We can if we have a vision of Christ. The study of God’s character is wonderful and powerful, yet there is a danger in it. The danger is this: we tend to look at God’s character,—that He is not a destroyer,—as something that means we can trust God only if He is very soft with us. As soon as we see a little bit of hardship coming upon us, then we can’t trust Him anymore. This is a great error. We have to see that God is the same loving God even though sight and circumstances say something else.

“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”

This trust is not blind trust in the sense that we trust Him in spite of the fact that He is a cruel God. No; I trust Him that He is a good God, even though He slay me. Even though all sight and circumstances tell me the opposite, I still trust Him. That is the height of implicit trust to which God wants to lead you and me.

### **Job 13**

<sup>16</sup> He also shall be my salvation...

### **Job 19**

<sup>25</sup> For I know that my redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

<sup>26</sup> And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

<sup>27</sup> Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another...

With this statement, Job meant:

“I shall personally see Him, not through the medium of another person. I will touch Him myself. I will see Him myself. I will not just hear from Him, I will see Him.”

Exactly what he said in faith here, later happened when he said,

### **Job 42**

<sup>5</sup> I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You.

It was fulfilled to him when God gave this revelation to him. We normally tend to apply this only to the resurrection, but it was applied when Job saw God.

### **Prophets and Kings, p. 164:**

#### **Job 38**

<sup>1</sup> The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind,

–and revealed to His servant the might of His power.

When Job caught a glimpse of his Creator, he abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes. Then the Lord was able to bless him abundantly and to make his last years the best of his life.

Such a situation as came upon Job can come upon others as well. The answer is a revelation of God. That leads to a true self-distrust and to true trust in God, which is healthy self-distrust. So what Job learned we can learn as well.



## Job 42

(Source: Bibel in Bildern, 1860)

<sup>10</sup> And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.

<sup>11</sup> Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold.

<sup>12</sup> So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses.

<sup>13</sup> He had also seven sons and three daughters.

<sup>14</sup> And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Keren-happuch.

<sup>15</sup> And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.

<sup>16</sup> After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations.

<sup>17</sup> So Job died, being old and full of days.



**W**E HAVE mainly studied the character of Job as a lesson in self-distrust in our last study. After our study was over some questions came up. Some statements were given, which are of a very interesting nature, and that leads us to go back again to Job. We want to understand better the situation of Job, both before and after he had his vision of God and of the power of God.

## **Job's Self-Defense**

Some statements were raised concerning the defense of Job himself:

### **Job 6**

<sup>30</sup> Is there iniquity in my tongue? cannot my taste discern perverse things?

### **Job 13**

<sup>15</sup> ...I will maintain my own ways before Him.

### **Job 23**

<sup>11</sup> My foot has held His steps, His way have I kept, and not declined.

### **Job 27**

<sup>6</sup> My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.

These statements sound very much like self-confidence, but they are less self-confident than they seem. You know it is one thing to say,

“I am a hero; I will sing songs even when I go through the fire, even if they would torture me I will still sing songs.”

That is one thing. It's another thing to actually do it when

we are in the situation. You see these are two different things. Likewise it's one thing to say,

“I maintain my righteousness,”

–when everything is going very smoothly, but when we are pressed on every side, then to say this with a pure, honest heart is another matter. When people around us condemn us, and sight and circumstances tell us that something must be wrong with us, to say it then is much harder.

I want to stress the fact that Job was living in a time in which it was commonplace to think that when a person is sick, it is somehow the result of a wrongdoing; when a person would lose their children and their possessions, people would think that there must be something wrong with them, because God otherwise would protect them.

Don't people think the same today also? For example, when a car was stolen from us in Ukraine, immediately some voices from the world field jumped up,

“There must be something wrong.”

Or when one of us gets sick, immediately the thought comes up,

“Ah, who knows what he or she has done wrong?”

That comes up and there is something wrong in it. When I ask myself,

“Why is this happening to me?”

–that is quite a valid question, and I don't want to discourage introspection. But if I point with the finger to my brother and my sister, I am following the world's way of thinking.

Not only do we look upon calamity as a result of some kind of wrongdoing, we even tend to look at the measure of the calamity, and measure the wrongdoing with it. We assume

that the more somebody suffers, the more wrong he must have done. If somebody doesn't suffer so much, then he must be quite a good guy. That is the thinking of the human mind, and this has been the philosophy of many generations of religionists.

Since Job lived among this thinking, to maintain his righteousness under these circumstances, was a quite valid and courageous stand.

“But my experience tells me that there is nothing wrong.”

If you look at his statements from this point of view, you will not see so much self-sufficiency. Instead, you will rather see courage in it, and a determination not to succumb to the pressure which he was under. Sister White describes it like this:

**Testimonies for the Church, vol. 3, p. 509:**

Some shortsighted, short-experienced friends cannot, with their narrow vision, appreciate the feelings of one who has been in close harmony with the soul of Christ in connection with the salvation of others. His motives are misunderstood and his actions misconstrued by those who would be his friends, until, like Job, he sends forth the earnest prayer: “Save me from my friends.”

God takes the case of Job in hand himself. His patience has been severely taxed; but when God speaks, all his pettish feelings are changed. The self-justification, which he felt was necessary to withstand the condemnation of his friends, is not necessary toward God. He never misjudges; He never errs. Says the Lord to Job, “Gird up now your loins like a man;” and Job no sooner hears the divine voice than his soul is bowed down with a sense of his sinfulness, and he says before God, “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

How can we differentiate between that self-justification which is necessary towards “accusers of brethren” and a self-justification which is very sinful? I'm not saying that the way

Job reacted was one hundred percent right, but we will consider that shortly. In the meantime, let's think about this for a moment. Job needed to maintain his innocence before his people, which he did.

Can we differentiate between such a righteous defense, and an unrighteous defense? Very often there are people who need to be severely rebuked because of an obvious sin. That is necessary; Paul did this at times. The servants of God needed to do this. Sin needs to be called by its right name. And yet the sinner will often justify themselves, as though they have never sinned. They play the hypocrite, and make themselves appear like great sufferers. They even get a lot of sympathy from fellow believers, because they pretend to be victims. Those who sympathize with them say,

“Look at this poor person, how badly they are treated, etc.”

What is the difference between that and Job? It is sometimes not easy to see it, especially for the inexperienced and those who are not spiritually minded. But there are some indications that could help us.

In the case of Job, he made it very clear to his friends that if he were in their situation he would treat them differently. He said,

“If you were in my situation, I would be friendly to you, I would encourage you, I would sympathize with you.”

If a person has another spirit, if he is wicked in his heart, what would he do if he were in a reverse situation? He would be a severe persecutor. He would make it even worse. The way that he thinks that he is treated wrongly, he would treat others wrongly and even worse. By this you see that his spirit is not right. Can you see this point? Did I make this explanation clear?

Let's suppose a person is innocently accused of doing some-

thing and he defends himself. He says,

“That is not what I did.”

Then his spirit will be a good one because he is innocent, and he will not have a spirit of revenge and retaliation. In the case where he would face another sinner, he would treat him very kindly, not as he himself was treated.

On the other hand, if a person is rightly accused of a sin because he is a sinner, he will be much more retaliative. When he would be in the position of accusing somebody else he would make it much harder for them than he even himself was treated.

Is this clear now? What is the spirit of the one who receives a rebuke? The spirit of Job was a good one. Still God had to come to him and say to him,

“Be careful, that you don’t think too much of yourself.”

While it was necessary to withstand his friends because they did not read the heart because they gave counsel without knowledge, it was absolutely necessary that he humble himself before God. This is what he did.

Again, this is the difference between those who are innocent and those who are not innocent. Those who are not innocent will never humble themselves before God. They will be very proud and they will stumble from one mistake to another. It is because they don’t humble themselves before God. That is the important point.

Let us come back to Job, and ask ourselves, what could Job have done in that situation? He did not know all the facts; he was accused of something he did not do. Yet he was not to be self-sufficient, self-sure, and self-confident. How could he have taken that situation in which he was, if he had this full spirit of self-distrust already? What would it have looked like?

In the past, in our studies of Job, we have tended to view him as absolutely perfect and impeccable. We must admit that he was not perfect. He had the status of perfection maybe to the degree that he had a conscious sinlessness: he was not aware of any sin in his life; he was not bearing any sin in his life of which he was aware. But there was still a need of further cleansing of self-confidence from his life. If he had possessed this cleansing already, what would he have done, how would he have reacted? Would he have said to his friends,

“Yes, you are right?”

Had he said this, he would have been wrong; he would have strengthened the wrong course. If he would have said,

“No, you are not right,”

—then it would have been self-defense. He was in a dilemma, wasn’t he?

## **The Conduct of Paul**

Let us turn to a statement in the New Testament that makes this matter clear. Paul, in exactly the same situation as Job, was also accused of things he had never done by some jealous brethren who were striving for position. This occurred not only in Corinth but also in Jerusalem. How did Paul treat these things? He gives an insight into his thoughts in:

### **1 Corinthians 4**

<sup>1</sup> Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

<sup>2</sup> Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

<sup>3</sup> But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court.

<sup>4</sup> In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.

<sup>5</sup> Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord

comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

That is very clear, isn't it? You can never go wrong if you have this attitude, because that is what God did. He came personally and judged. He made very clear where everybody stood, and that is when Job said,

"I abhor myself."

I am sure that is exactly what Paul would have said. In fact when he came before God, he felt himself a sinner, again and again. He realized his weakness when he came before God, and he would say,

"I am the least of all apostles; I am unworthy, etc."

That was his attitude. But when it came to the false accusation of the false brethren who were striving for position, he would give them no hope that they would gain anything by their false accusations. We must do this also. I think the example of Paul helps us.

The next quotation is a very interesting statement because it throws even more light on how he reacted, and how he should have reacted.

### **The Great Controversy, p. 470:**

The Scriptures plainly show that the work of sanctification is progressive. When in conversion the sinner finds peace with God through the blood of the atonement, the Christian life has but just begun. Now he is to "go on unto perfection;" to grow up "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Says the apostle Paul:

#### **Philippians 3**

<sup>13</sup> This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

<sup>14</sup> I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

And Peter sets before us the steps by which Bible sanctification is to be attained:

**2 Peter 1**

<sup>5</sup> Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

<sup>6</sup> And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

<sup>7</sup> And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

<sup>10</sup> ...if you do these things, you shall never fall.

Those who experience the sanctification of the Bible will manifest a spirit of humility.

Which is the spirit of self-distrust.

Like Moses, they have had a view of the awful majesty of holiness, and they see their own unworthiness in contrast with the purity and exalted perfection of the Infinite One.

Paul had such a vision at the gate of Damascus. He saw the majesty of holiness, and he was nothing. John the Baptist also saw the majesty of holiness and he was nothing himself.

## The Example of Daniel

**The Great Controversy, p. 470:**

The prophet Daniel was an example of true sanctification. His long life was filled up with noble service for his Master. He was a man “greatly beloved” of Heaven (*Daniel* 10:11). Yet instead of claiming to be pure and holy, this honored prophet identified himself with the really sinful of Israel as he pleaded before God in behalf of his people:

**Daniel 9**

<sup>18</sup> We do not present our supplications before You for our righteousness, but for your great mercies.

<sup>15</sup> We have sinned, we have done wickedly.

He declares:

<sup>20</sup> I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people.

And when at a later time the Son of God appeared, to give him instruction, Daniel says:



### **Daniel 10**

<sup>8</sup> My comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.

That was the attitude of that noble prophet Daniel, of whom there is no sin recorded in the Bible, and his attitude was,

“I don’t consider myself as holy, as sinless.”

But he constantly had this self-distrust before God, through which he could identify completely with his people.

## **True and False Holiness**

### **The Great Controversy, p. 471:**

When Job heard the voice of the Lord out of the whirlwind, he exclaimed:

#### **Job 42**

<sup>6</sup> I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

We have to gain such an experience. I can see very clearly that we cannot properly do our job unless we gain such an experience as that of Job, Daniel and others.

It was when Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord, and heard the cherubim crying, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts,” that he cried out,

#### **Isaiah 6**

<sup>5</sup> Woe is me for I am undone.

Paul, after he was caught up into the third heaven and heard things which it was not possible for a man to utter, speaks of himself as “less than the least of all saints.” 2 *Corinthians* 12:2-4, margin; *Ephesians* 3:8. It was the beloved John, who leaned on Jesus’ breast and beheld His glory, that fell as one dead before the feet of the angel. *Revelation* 1:17.

There can be no self-exaltation, no boastful claim to freedom from sin on the part of those who walk in the shadow of Calvary’s cross. They feel that it was their sin which caused the agony that broke the heart of the Son of God, and this thought will lead them to self-abasement. Those who live nearest to Jesus discern most clearly the frailty and

sinfulness of humanity, and their only hope is in the merit of a crucified and risen Saviour.

The sanctification now gaining prominence in the religious world carries with it a spirit of self-exaltation and a disregard for the law of God, which mark it as foreign to the religion of the Bible.

It's quite important that we study this theme. Sister White looks into the future and she describes modern revivals. I would like to read a little bit more about this, because in the time when Sister White wrote this book, before it was published in 1911, at the turn of the century, there were in North America the so-called holiness movements, which taught instantaneous sanctification. They grew up from the Methodist church as I understand, but they had their roots in other churches, and part of the outflow of these became the Pentecostal movement, which today is, as you know, a very big movement in North America.

These things began during that time when Sister White wrote these things. I never looked at it like this, that these false revivals carry the spirit of self-exaltation.

- On the one hand, one looks at his own holiness.
- On the other hand there is a disregard for the law, a looking down upon the law.

I do not know how this will work out still in the future. I also want to understand the history a little bit better, how it came about. At another time I can tell you more. But definitely we are learning something here, as a people of God, which will be severely tested by the so-called Christian world. Through the truths we are studying, we will have to obtain an experience that stands in sharp contrast to that which is popular in the evangelical world today.

**L**ET us now consider Isaiah. We want to understand better in what way Isaiah learned self-distrust.

### **The Condition of Isaiah**

Isaiah was in a very similar situation to Job: he was also in discouragement and despondency. We want to ask the question, “Why?” What was the situation of Isaiah?

#### **Prophets and Kings, p. 303-305:**

The long reign of Uzziah [also known as Azariah] in the land of Judah and Benjamin was characterized by a prosperity greater than that of any other ruler since the death of Solomon nearly two centuries before. For many years the king ruled with discretion.

In other words, he was a good ruler.

Under the blessing of Heaven his armies regained some of the territory that had been lost in former years. Cities were rebuilt and fortified, and the position of the nation among the surrounding peoples was greatly strengthened. Commerce revived, and the riches of the nations flowed into Jerusalem. Uzziah’s name “spread far abroad; for he was marvelously helped, till he was strong.” *2 Chronicles* 26:15.

What have we learned? What happens very often when we have success? Not always, but what happens very often? We become self-confident, and that leads to mistakes. The next step is that we make mistakes.

This outward prosperity, however, was not accompanied by a corresponding revival of spiritual power. The temple services were continued as in former years, and multitudes assembled to worship the living God; but pride and formality gradually took the place of humility and sincerity. Of Uzziah

himself it is written:

## **2 Chronicles 26**

<sup>16</sup> When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God.

The sin that resulted so disastrously to Uzziah was one of presumption. In violation of a plain command of Jehovah, that none but the descendants of Aaron should officiate as priests; the king entered the sanctuary “to burn incense upon the altar.” Azariah the high priest and his associates remonstrated, and pleaded with him to turn from his purpose.

<sup>18</sup> You have trespassed, [they urged;] neither shall it be for your honor.

Uzziah was filled with wrath that he, the king, should be thus rebuked. But he was not permitted to profane the sanctuary against the united protest of those in authority. While standing there, in wrathful rebellion, he was suddenly smitten with a divine judgment. Leprosy appeared on his forehead. In dismay he fled, never again to enter the temple courts.

Unto the day of his death, some years later, Uzziah remained a leper—a living example of the folly of departing from a plain “Thus says the Lord.” Neither his exalted position nor his long life of service could be pleaded as an excuse for the presumptuous sin by which he marred the closing years of his reign, and brought upon himself the judgment of Heaven.

God is no respecter of persons.

## **Numbers 15**

<sup>30</sup> The soul that does aught presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproaches the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

The judgment that befell Uzziah seemed to have a restraining influence on his son. Jotham bore heavy responsibilities during the later years of his father’s reign and succeeded to the throne after Uzziah’s death. Of Jotham it is written:

## **2 Kings 15**

<sup>34</sup> He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord: he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done.

<sup>35</sup> Howbeit the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burned incense still in the high places.

That means that they still worshiped idols, because the high places were where they had the idols.

**Prophets and Kings, p. 305-306:**

The reign of Uzziah was drawing to a close, and Jotham was already bearing many of the burdens of state, when Isaiah, of the royal line, was called, while yet a young man, to the prophetic mission.

The times in which Isaiah was to labour were fraught with peculiar peril to the people of God. The prophet was to witness the invasion of Judah by the combined armies of northern Israel and of Syria; he was to behold the Assyrian hosts encamped before the chief cities of the kingdom. During his lifetime, Samaria was to fall, and the ten tribes of Israel were to be scattered among the nations. Judah was again and again to be invaded by the Assyrian armies, and Jerusalem was to suffer a siege that would have resulted in her downfall had not God miraculously interposed. Already grave perils were threatening the peace of the southern kingdom. The divine protection was being removed, and the Assyrian forces were about to overspread the land of Judah.

But the dangers from without, overwhelming though they seemed, were not so serious as the dangers from within. It was the perversity of his people that brought to the Lord's servant the greatest perplexity and the deepest depression. By their apostasy and rebellion those who should have been standing as light bearers among the nations were inviting the judgments of God. Many of the evils which were hastening the swift destruction of the northern kingdom, and which had recently been denounced in unmistakable terms by Hosea and Amos, were fast corrupting the kingdom of Judah.

Can you see how the situation of Isaiah was very similar? We see him in that situation where he was greatly perplexed and deeply depressed. Why was Isaiah greatly perplexed and deeply depressed? What was the reason? It was the condition

of the people. It was the perversity of his people that brought to the Lord's servant the greatest perplexity and the deepest depression.



(Source: Bible Cuts, 1526)

I want to ask you, what does this condition speak of? Do you see here self-distrust, or do you see self-confidence? It's a bit of a hard question, isn't it? Well, let me turn to another statement and then it maybe will get bit clearer. Let's turn to a statement that tells us about Isaiah's experience.

**The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1138-1139:**

As the prophet Isaiah beheld the glory of the Lord, he was amazed, and, overwhelmed with a sense of his own weakness and unworthiness, he cried,

**Isaiah 6**

<sup>5</sup> Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.

Isaiah had denounced the sins of others;...

He was a prophet, it was his office, wasn't it?

...but now he sees himself exposed to the same condemna-

tion he had pronounced upon them. He had been satisfied with a cold, lifeless ceremony in his worship of God. He had not known this until the vision was given him of the Lord. How little now appeared his wisdom and talents as he looked upon the sacredness and majesty of the sanctuary! How unworthy he was! How unfitted for sacred service! His view of himself might be expressed in the language of the apostle Paul,

**Romans 7**

<sup>24</sup> O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Let me ask the question again. When Isaiah was perplexed and depressed, what do you see in it, self-distrust or self-confidence? First of all, Isaiah definitely needed to learn self-distrust; otherwise this vision wouldn't have given him what it gave him. The problem starts with beholding the weakness of others. Let me read this again:

“Isaiah had denounced the sins of others.”

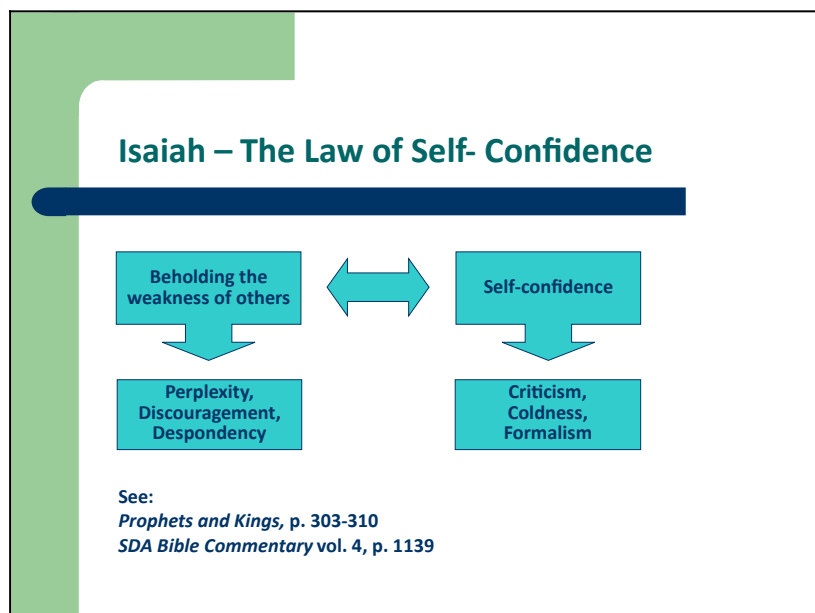
When I denounce the sins of others, but do this in a lifeless way, as it says here,

“...he sees himself exposed to the same condemnation...He had been satisfied with a cold, lifeless ceremony in his worship of God.”

When you denounce others, and at the same time are satisfied with a cold, lifeless ceremony in the worship of God, what is this? This is nothing but being judgmental. He beheld the weakness of others, and this led him to be perplexed, discouraged, and despairing.

But beholding the weakness of others, has another effect also: it leads to self-confidence because I compare myself with others; I see their mistakes and I see that I don't have their mistakes. If I dwell on this, if my mind constantly studies the mistakes of other people, naturally I will get better and better

because they get lower and lower. In Isaiah, self-confidence led to a critical cold and formalistic worship: critical towards others, cold towards others, and formalistic, which means lifeless.



So this was his condition. I don't say that he was completely a Pharisee: an unteachable, hardened Pharisee. That was not his condition. But the general condition of his people was formalistic. They all still came to the worship in Jerusalem, everybody, but they lacked the life. Isaiah was a child of his time, even though he was chosen by God to condemn their sins.

## How Isaiah Learned Self-Distrust

How did he learn self-distrust? He learned it after he received a glimpse of the glory of God. This we want to read together now:

### Isaiah 6

<sup>1</sup> In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on



a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

Isaiah was standing in the temple and meditating about the impossibility of bringing about a reform in Israel. He was absolutely depressed and he was even tempted to leave the work. He saw himself unable, weak, but he did not see the ability and the power of God to do the job. So, he wanted to leave. He actually was on the verge of leaving his office.

As he was meditating there in the temple, suddenly he was carried away in this vision. As it says,

<sup>1</sup> I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

That means His glory filled the temple.

<sup>2</sup> Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

<sup>3</sup> And one cried to another and said: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!

<sup>4</sup> And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

<sup>5</sup> So I said: Woe is me, for I am undone! because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

Now he sees himself in a very different way than before.

<sup>6</sup> Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar.

<sup>7</sup> And he touched my mouth with it, and said: Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.

Now he had a very different outlook; now he had self-distrust. It was necessary that he had this vision of Christ. Remember, what is necessary in order to have a healthy self-distrust? Three elements:

1. A realization of our weakness;
2. A revelation of the magnitude of the work; and
3. A vision of Christ.

He had a sense of his weakness, true, but what was lacking was a vision of Christ. As he got this, he really went forward.



Isaiah's lips are touched with a coal from God's altar.

(Source: Charming Bible Stories, 1894)

Let's read this:

### **Isaiah 6**

<sup>8</sup> Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I! Send me.

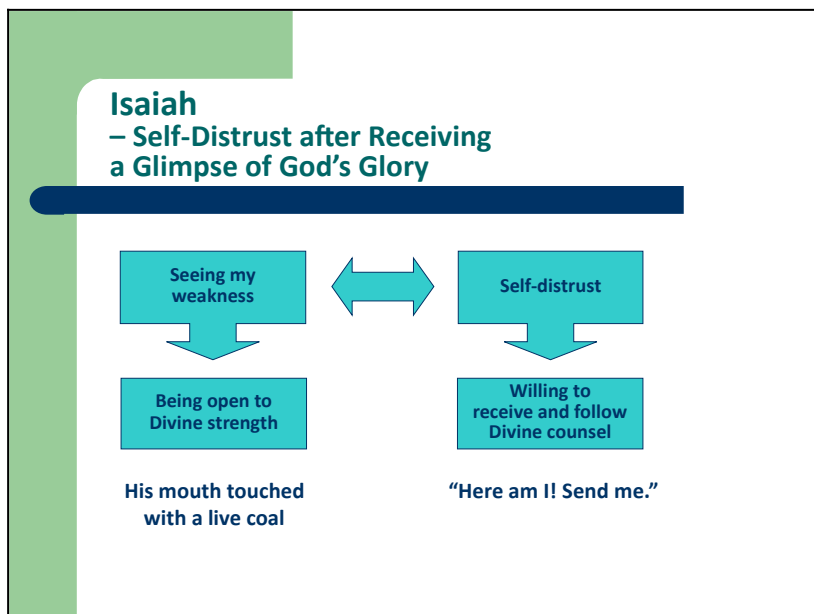
He was now absolutely willing to follow the Lord. Let's look at it in a diagram. Isaiah received self-distrust after receiving a glimpse of God's glory. Instead of seeing and beholding the weakness of others, he now saw his own weakness. His concentration was not anymore to study the weakness of others.

Suddenly he saw himself as a sinner. This means he was now open for divine strength.

As long as we don't see our weakness, our heart is simply not open for divine strength. Now the angel could come with a live coal, touch his mouth, and purge him. It would not have been possible as long as Isaiah did not feel his weakness in the way he did after he saw the glory of the Lord.

Seeing my own weakness has another effect. It means that I have true self-distrust. True self-distrust means that I am willing to receive and follow divine counsel as we have seen in our past studies. That means that Isaiah could say,

“Here am I; send me.”



This was not said in self-confidence, nor in boastful self-assurance, like the Israelites when they proclaimed,

#### **Exodus 24**

<sup>7</sup> All the Lord has said, we will do.

No, not because I am strong. He saw his weakness, but because of his self-distrust he was willing to follow the counsel of God explicitly. When God would send him, he would go. We sing this in the song, “I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go.” Exactly. That was his message; that was the language of his soul:

**Isaiah 6**

<sup>8</sup> Here am I; send me.

This resolve was tested because afterwards God said,

“Well then, go, you will preach to them but they won’t hear. You will tell them, but they won’t understand, and so you will preach, and preach, and preach, and you will accomplish nothing. Go.”

Would you go? It was not a matter of him getting success in his own strength; he didn’t care about this. His self-distrust was so great that he would say,

“I’ll do what the Lord tells me, I’ll go wherever You want me to go; whether this is in the mountaintop, or in the valley. I’ll go, here am I; send me.”

He would stick to this, even after God told him,

“You will preach to them and they won’t listen, and they won’t understand. They are hard-hearted. They are stiff necked.”

He only had one question though. He said,

**Isaiah 6**

<sup>11</sup> How long?

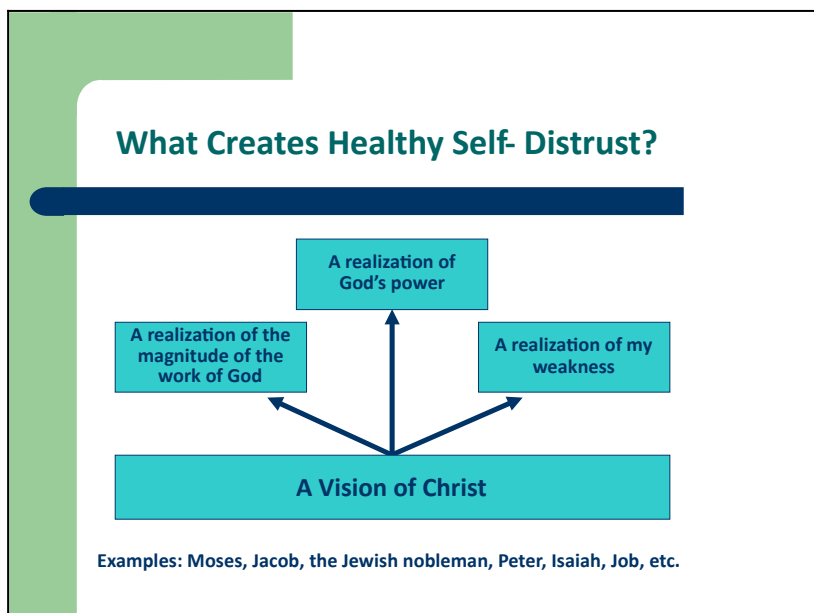
God said,

“It will be a long time until everything is pretty much lost, and only a remnant will remain. Your work will not be in vain. But it will be only for a remnant. Go.”

And he went. Like Moses, once he put his hand to the plow, he would not look back. So, we need to have three things:

1. A realization of our weakness (self-distrust);
2. A realization of the magnitude of the work of God; and
3. A realization of the all-sufficient power of God.

These things all spring from a vision of Christ, which is what Isaiah had. When we have this vision, we shall do the work as he did it.



## Peter and the Miraculous Catch of Fish

Let us turn to a consideration of Peter now:

### Luke 5

<sup>1</sup> So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret,

<sup>2</sup> And saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets.

<sup>3</sup> Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down

and taught the multitudes from the boat.

<sup>4</sup> When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.

<sup>5</sup> But Simon answered and said to Him, Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at your word I will let down the net.

<sup>6</sup> And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking.

<sup>7</sup> So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

<sup>8</sup> When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!



Peter receives a vision of Christ's power.

(Source: Historia de el Nuevo Testamento, 1722)

Can you see this is almost the same language as that of Isaiah?

### **Isaiah 6**

<sup>5</sup> I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a

people of unclean lips.

That is the language also of Job:

### **Job 42**

<sup>6</sup> I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

### **Luke 5**

<sup>9</sup> For he, and all who were with him, were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken:

<sup>10</sup> And so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.

This is again a parallel to Isaiah.

“From now on you go and preach, and from now on you will catch men.”

### **Luke 5**

<sup>11</sup> So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.

What made Peter suddenly feel like this? If he was here among us, he would say,

“Up to this point I knew the Lord only by hearsay; but now I have seen Him myself. Up to now, yes, I have witnessed the miracles, but only from a distance, now I experienced a miracle myself.”

In this moment the Holy Spirit had somehow in connection with the work of Christ given him a revelation of the ability of Christ. It’s wonderfully described in the book, *The Desire of Ages*, how Peter had, in that moment, gained a tremendous sense of Christ’s ability. He needed it for his work. because very often he would go out and fish and seemingly there would be nothing.

That is the fate of every worker for Christ. But then if he would follow Christ, he would know that it would never be in vain, because Christ knows exactly where the fish are.

“Go and be fishers of men.”

## The Jewish Nobleman

Likewise in the case of the Jewish nobleman when he wanted his son healed; when he got such a glimpse of the power of God, he suddenly had a faith that nothing could quench. He knew that he was standing in the presence of One who could heal his son, and would heal his son. He just needed a word from Him. When Jesus said,



(Source: Miracles of Our Lord, 1848)

“Go, your son is healed,”

—he needed nothing further. He did not need to hurry home; he absolutely knew it, because he had received the vision of Christ.

I wish that we had such a vision too, in order to be able to do the same work as these people. In fact, we need it.

- Without it we shall not see our weakness.
- Without it, we shall not see the magnitude of the work and will have no healthy self-distrust, which is absolutely essential.

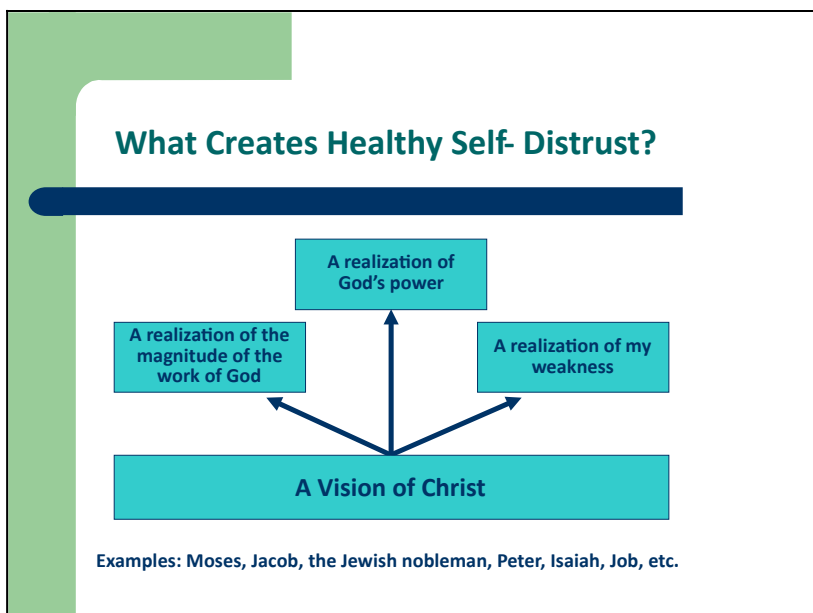
It’s the first lesson we need to learn as workers with Christ. Amen.



**W**E WANT to continue with our lessons on healthy self-distrust. Maybe you remember the diagram we showed yesterday about the question, “What Creates Healthy Self-Distrust?” There were three elements which we named:

1. A realization of our own weakness
2. A realization of the greatness of God’s work
3. A realization of God’s power.

Having a vision of Christ is fundamental, it is the cause for everything else. To have a vision of Christ is the important point of creating healthy self-distrust; without it we cannot have healthy self-distrust. We might have unhealthy self-distrust, but not healthy self-distrust.



A vision of Christ, then, produces a realization of my weak-

ness; a vision of Christ produces a realization of the magnitude of the work of God, and it produces a realization of God's power.

## The Vision of Moses

Let us apply this to Moses for a moment, because we have studied his life in detail. When God called him at the burning bush, we see in Moses a realization of his own weakness. We see that he was aware of the magnitude of the work of God. We also see that he had a realization of God's power which, admittedly, still had to grow; but he had this realization. Where did he get it from? Where was the source? Why did he have a realization of his own weakness?

We tend to think it was merely because he failed badly in Egypt, because he killed the Egyptian and had to flee because he spoiled God's plan. That is only a part of the truth. It is true, as we have seen, our failure brings us to this realization at first; but to have a deep sense of the weakness of ourselves, we need to see the glory of God.

This is what Moses saw in the wilderness. He saw it in the nature that surrounded him, in the mountains. He also saw it in the visions that God gave him. We know this because, by inspiration, he received *Genesis*, which is the record of creation. He must have been awed when he saw this vision of creation. Could you imagine this? God showing you how He created the world? That's tremendous! Then, likewise, in the wilderness he was inspired to write the book of *Job*, which, as we saw in Chapter 16, contains a very important revelation of the power of God.

All this gave him a more vivid sense of his own weakness and inability; it created a deeper distrust of himself. At the same time, he saw the magnitude of the work of God, which led him to think he could never do the work. As a result, when God called him, he was slow of speech, timid, and full

of self-distrust. But God showed him His power in the miracle of the Rod and the healing of leprosy.



Moses sees the power of God when his Rod is turned into a Serpent.

(Source: The Bible and Its Story, 1909)

When God showed him His power, Moses had no excuse anymore. What he refused to fully see was the power of God in contrast to his own weakness, and the magnitude of the work. However, we know that he eventually saw this, too, because he took the plow into his hand and he never looked back.

Moses is a very good example to show that a vision of Christ is fundamental.

## **The Vision of Jacob**

We also see this in Jacob, when Jacob had a vision of Christ. When did he have one? Yes, when he saw the ladder; but more so when he fought with the Angel. What did he see there? At first when he fought, he saw nothing. Why did he fight against this Angel? Because there was still too much self-confidence in him. He thought he could do the work; he thought he could win this battle.

It is true that in cooperation with God it is our duty to do everything that lies in our power—but how easily we lose sight of the fact that we are very limited, that we can do nothing. How quickly we take up this fight against God!

When you look at Jacob's behavior, you see nothing unreasonable in this, do you? He took every precaution so the armies of his brother wouldn't destroy him. He was very careful to split his own company so that if one was attacked the others could flee. He also saw that natural boundaries were there, like the river Jabbok. He did everything to give protection. Then he was praying, and then an enemy came.

If an enemy would come, what would you do? Naturally, you would fight; you would protect your family. It's very reasonable what he did, isn't it, when you look at it from that point of view. Yet, in fighting against this supposed enemy, he was fighting against God. How often do we do this? Let's think about it—how great is the danger of us fighting against



Christ when we think we are just cooperating with Him?

The revelation was given to Jacob in the moment when this stranger,—this mysterious stranger who proved to be so absolutely strong and powerful that Jacob could do nothing against him,—simply pointed to Jacob's thigh, and immediately Jacob became a cripple.



(Source: Biblia, 1751)

He did not become a cripple because of the stranger pointing to his thigh; he became a cripple because he was fighting

so madly against this person. The stranger pointed out to him exactly what would happen, where it would happen, and when it would happen.

In this experience, Jacob had a vision of Christ; in this moment he saw the omnipotence of this Antagonist. This vision of Christ helped him to now realize his own weakness; now he saw it for the first time. He also saw something of the magnitude of the work, and he had the realization of God's power. In that moment, when he had this vision of Christ, then he was weak. When he was weak, he was strong—because that's how it works:

## **2 Corinthians 12**

<sup>10</sup> When I am weak, then I am strong.

## **Other Examples**

The Jewish nobleman is another example. In the moment when he realized that Jesus could read his thoughts, he felt the sense of being in the presence of One to whom nothing was impossible. That sense showed him his own weakness and now he could pray as he had never prayed before,

## **John 4**

<sup>49</sup> Sir, come down ere my child die.

Now he could also grasp the healing power of Christ. When Christ said,

<sup>50</sup> Go your way, your son lives,

—he possessed the promise, and he knew that he possessed it. He could thank the Lord for it.

Likewise was it with Peter, when he was catching the fish, which we shall look at shortly in a little more detail. Isaiah we have studied, and Job we have studied—everybody received a vision of Christ.

We need such a vision of Christ in order to have this

healthy self-distrust. It is absolutely essential. When we were in nature yesterday, didn't we pray for such a vision? Did you pray? I definitely have this desire to receive such a vision, and nature is the great theater of creation, where we see the handiworks of God and His almighty power.

## **Peter's Experience Reconsidered**

Let us now turn a little bit more to Peter, in *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 25, "The Call by the Sea." I would like to read the whole chapter with you, but we don't have the time because we still have other things to consider. I must leave that for you, but some paragraphs we need to read together.

The chapter begins by describing the disciples' attitude when they were on the lake. Their problem was that Jesus had just been rejected by the leaders in Jerusalem. It so happened that two events met:

1. The imprisonment of John the Baptist, and
2. The hearing before the Sanhedrin.

The hearing before the Sanhedrin was a public event. The leaders in Jerusalem tried to make a public example of Jesus—to put Him down, to intimidate Him and His followers. It signaled the rejection by the Jewish establishment, by the Jewish leaders, and that was disappointing to them. If the future Messiah would be rejected by the leaders, what would become of His mission? Was He really the leader? That was put into question through such an action.

Jesus was not rejected by the people at that point of time; that happened later. He was popular, but the leaders were envious and they rejected Him.

At the same time, the imprisonment of John the Baptist also seemed to show that something was going wrong in this movement. It was not going as smoothly as they expected. Was it really the movement of God?

So here they were again, catching some fish—or trying to catch some fish—but they were not very successful. Even their own profession failed them; their spirits sunk even lower. It was a gloomy night.

The next morning Jesus was giving some sermons. The sermons of Christ were interesting, and so they listened; but there was not too much excitement in their hearts this day because the disappointment of the previous night was simply too great. Then, when the discourse of Jesus was ended, He spoke to Peter and said,

### **Luke 5**

<sup>4</sup> Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

Peter was not in the mood to do this right now, especially since it was daytime and that was not the time to catch fish. He didn't want to face another disappointment; but he overcame his feelings because he loved Jesus and he wanted to obey Him, even though his faith was not very strong.

However, after casting and drawing in the net, it was absolutely full, and he was totally ashamed about his attitude—not only in questioning the command of Jesus, but of his attitude throughout the whole night. He now saw himself for what he really was: an unbeliever. He saw his own weakness, and he saw the strength of Jesus. He saw that to Jesus, nothing was impossible. This story provides an example of someone receiving a clear vision of Christ.

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 246:**

Night was the only favorable time for fishing with nets in the clear waters of the lake. After toiling all night without success, it seemed hopeless to cast the net by day; but Jesus had given the command, and love for their Master moved the disciples to obey. Simon and his brother together let down the net. As they attempted to draw it in, so great was the quantity of fish enclosed that it began to break. They



were obliged to summon James and John to their aid. When the catch was secured, both the boats were so heavily laden that they were in danger of sinking.

But Peter was unmindful now of boats or lading. This miracle, above any other he had ever witnessed, was to him a manifestation of divine power. In Jesus he saw One who held all nature under His control.



(Source: *The Life of Our Lord*, 1830)

Can you see how ashamed he was, in being filled with doubt? He had questioned,

“Could this be the Messiah? Could this be the right mission?”

When John was put in prison and when the leaders rejected Jesus,

“Could this be right?”

Peter was absolutely ashamed because he now saw Someone whom all nature obeyed, even the fish of the sea.

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 246:**

In Jesus he saw One who held all nature under His control. The presence of divinity revealed his own unholiness.

Here we see that the vision of Christ now brought forth certain fruits, certain results, which led to healthy self-distrust.

In Jesus he now saw the One who had held all nature under control, the presence of divinity revealed his own unholiness. Love for his Master, shame for his own unbelief, gratitude for the condescension of Christ, above all, the sense of his uncleanness in the presence of infinite purity, overwhelmed him.

Here we have infinite purity; and now Peter saw his own uncleanness, he had a sense of his own uncleanness.

While his companions were securing the contents of the net, Peter fell at the Saviour's feet, exclaiming, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

This is the language of somebody who is full of self-distrust.

### **The Man of Romans 7**

I find it interesting that in *Romans 7* we have a very similar statement. What does it say?

#### **Romans 7**

<sup>24</sup> O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

When you read this statement you see self-distrust in it. But we have learned that *Romans 7* does not apply to us, haven't we? We feel ashamed in applying this to ourselves; maybe we had to bear this shame one time before, in the very beginning of our Christian experience. Yes, we once had to admit that this was our condition; but now that we are born again the thought is,

"No, this statement doesn't apply to us anymore."

In this way we tend to not see our real weakness. It is true that *Romans 7* speaks of the person who is not born again—I don't want to challenge that truth—but even though it speaks of the person who is not born again, it also tells of the weakness of humanity. It shows what we are, apart from Christ; it makes very clear what condition of terrible wretchedness we find ourselves in when we lose sight of the crown.

However, when we are born again, yes we are saved, but our experience has to be maintained. It has to be maintained by constantly having Christ before us, in constantly being connected with Him. It is not something which makes us superhuman, so that we don't need to fear our own weakness anymore, but this is almost the kind of thinking that has developed in our minds.

Let's look at a summary of *Romans 7*, in verse 25—I always wondered about this text, but I understand it now much more clearly. Let's begin with verse 24.

### **Romans 7**

<sup>24</sup> O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Here we expect *Romans 7* to end and to have no further comment—we have a very miserable and desperate outcry and we have the answer,

“I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

In other words, there is deliverance from the “body of death.” But now, why this addition?

<sup>25</sup> So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

That's somehow disturbing, isn't it? This very sentence has put some doubts into the minds of people as to whether or not *Romans 7* is really the unconverted man. I think it is very appropriate for Paul to add this verse, and the longer I think

about it the more I see how appropriate it is. Read the statement very carefully:

<sup>25</sup> So then,...I myself...

What does that mean? That is my natural condition without the grace of Christ; that is my weakness, when I don't look on the crown. When I depart from Christ, "I myself," am still in that wretched condition, but by faith and by the grace of Christ, I am not. Let's read this again:

<sup>25</sup> So then,...I myself...

That means,

"I, in my own power; I, in my own strength."

We must read it in the whole context.

"I, in myself; I, in my own strength; I, in my own power serve the law of God with my mind, but I serve the law of sin in my flesh."

That means,

"Yes, I want to do the right thing, but I don't do it. I am a miserable person because the good I want, but the bad I do."

He puts *Romans 7* in a nutshell here, in this one sentence.

"I myself; I, in my own strength."

We must not lose the sense of it; Paul had the sense. We must not think for a moment that once we are born again we don't need to care about this anymore, that we don't need to even think that we are weak. We *are* weak; and it is only by the grace of God that we have strength.

## Final Analysis of Peter's Experience

Let us come back to Peter, and here we have this statement:

## **Luke 5**

<sup>8</sup> Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

Now let's read about this event.

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 246:**

It was the same presence of divine holiness that had caused the prophet Daniel to fall as one dead before the angel of God. He said,

#### **Daniel 10**

<sup>8</sup> My comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.

So when Isaiah beheld the glory of the Lord, he exclaimed,

#### **Isaiah 6**

<sup>5</sup> Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

Humanity, with its weakness and sin, was brought in contrast with the perfection of divinity, and he felt altogether deficient and unholy. Thus it has been with all who have been granted a view of God's greatness and majesty.

What caused him to see his weakness and his sins? It was seeing, first of all, the perfection and divinity of Christ; and then seeing the contrast between that and his weak humanity. Then he felt altogether deficient and unholy.

Thus it has been with all who have been granted a view of God's greatness and majesty.

Peter exclaimed, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man;" yet he clung to the feet of Jesus, feeling that he could not be parted from Him. The Saviour answered,

#### **Luke 5**

<sup>10</sup> Fear not; from henceforth you shall catch men.

It was after Isaiah had beheld the holiness of God and his own unworthiness that he was entrusted with the divine message. It was after Peter had been led to self-renunciation and dependence upon divine power that he received the call to his work for Christ.

When we do not have a sense of our own weakness, we do not make full use of the grace that God offers us; we neglect a part of it because we think we already have it. We think,

“No, we don’t need everything.”

For example,

“I don’t need the Sabbath school lesson—that is maybe for the weak ones who do not know what to study, but I don’t need it.”

Or,

“I don’t need to re-study the campmeeting.”

Or,

“I don’t need to study the campmeeting at all. I don’t need to be in every study because I know it already, anyway.”

This will be our attitude when we don’t have a sense of our own weakness. But when we really have a sense of our own weakness, we will not want to miss one word. And our missionaries, when they are sent out, will be welcomed when the people have a sense of their own weakness. Let us pray that we receive such a vision of Christ, that we have that sense of our weakness.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 246-249:**

Until this time none of the disciples had fully united as co-laborers with Jesus. They had witnessed many of His miracles, and had listened to His teaching; but they had not entirely forsaken their former employment. The imprisonment of John the Baptist had been to them all a bitter disappointment. If such were to be the outcome of John’s mission, they could have little hope for their Master, with all the religious leaders combined against Him. Under the circumstances it was a relief to them to return for a short time to their fishing. But now Jesus called them to forsake their former life, and unite their interests with His.

They were in danger of making their profession their own world. Can you see it here? They could flee to their fishing boats when the work of God was not appearing to be so successful anymore; anytime they were disappointed they could flee to that. But Peter and his companions were called away from their own world. Jesus knew the danger; He would not leave them there. He would say,

“Come and follow me now, completely; leave your own world.”

**The Desire of Ages, p. 249:**

Peter had accepted the call. Upon reaching the shore, Jesus bade the three other disciples, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Immediately they left all, and followed Him.

It was the right moment for Jesus to call them because they had this sense of their own unworthiness, and a sense of the power and glory of God. At that moment, it was a good time for them to leave their own world. It’s much harder when we have no vision of Christ, because then our own world is our only vision—it’s our only security.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 249:**

Before asking them to leave their nets and fishing boats, Jesus had given them the assurance that God would supply their needs. The use of Peter’s boat for the work of the gospel had been richly repaid. He who is “rich unto all that call upon Him,” has said,

**Luke 6**

<sup>38</sup> Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over.

In this measure He had rewarded the disciple’s service. And every sacrifice that is made in His ministry will be recompensed according to “the exceeding riches of His grace.” *Ephesians* 3:20; 2:7.

During that sad night on the lake, when they were separated from Christ, the disciples were pressed hard by unbe-

lief, and weary with fruitless toil. But His presence kindled their faith, and brought them joy and success. So it is with us; apart from Christ, our work is fruitless, and it is easy to distrust and murmur. But when He is near, and we labor under His direction, we rejoice in the evidence of His power. It is Satan's work to discourage the soul; it is Christ's work to inspire with faith and hope.

This exclamation, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" does not mean that there is to be discouragement or lack of faith. Quite the opposite! A distrust of self, if it is healthy, will be in correspondence with faith in Jesus. We will rejoice in the evidence of His power.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 249:**

The deeper lesson which the miracle conveyed for the disciples is a lesson for us also,—that He whose word could gather the fishes from the sea could also impress human hearts, and draw them by the cords of His love, so that His servants might become "fishers of men."

They were humble and unlearned men, those fishers of Galilee; but Christ, the light of the world, was abundantly able to qualify them for the position for which He had chosen them.

## **Jesus' Method of Education**

Now we read something about education. The kind of education that Jesus was giving was not just theoretical education where He made them sit down and He preached something to them,—this was certainly a part, the Sermon on the Mount was such a thing—but it was more by associating them with Him. You remember how the disciples of John came to Jesus and asked him,

"Tell us something for our master, because we need some message from you."

That was basically what they said, even though the exact words were,



## **Luke 7**

<sup>19</sup> Are you the One whom we should wait for, or shall we wait for another?

Jesus said nothing much; He simply asked them to watch and stay with Him for the whole day. This staying with Him really rubbed off; it inspired them, it gave them strength. This strength they conveyed to John the Baptist, and he immediately accepted it like a dry sponge; he took these things in, and he was ready to die for the cause of God.

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 249-250:**

But He passed by the wise men of His time, because they were so self-confident...

Here, this is our great enemy, self-confidence.

...that they could not sympathize with suffering humanity, and become colaborers with the Man of Nazareth. In their bigotry they scorned to be taught by Christ. The Lord Jesus seeks the cooperation of those who will become unobstructed channels for the communication of His grace.

The first thing to be learned by all who would become workers together with God is the lesson of self-distrust;...

That is our motto text here for the campmeeting

...then they are prepared to have imparted to them the character of Christ. This is not to be gained through education in the most scientific schools. It is the fruit of wisdom that is obtained from the divine Teacher alone.

Association with Him, making experiences in His presence, this is what we need. For this reason, when you are sent out (and you may not have much experience yet, but experience is not the only criteria) what you need is this willingness to be taught. Then you will flee to Christ when you come into a difficult situation, and this will fill you with divine wisdom. Through communion with Him—through actual contact with Him in that battle—you will become wise, and that is where God will fill you with His strength.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 250:**

Jesus chose unlearned fishermen...

And why? Because they were humble, they were teachable, like Moses, like Isaiah, like Job.

...because they had not been schooled in the traditions and erroneous customs of their time. They were men of native ability, and they were humble and teachable,—men whom He could educate for His work. In the common walks of life there is many a man patiently treading the round of daily toil, unconscious that he possesses powers which, if called into action, would raise him to an equality with the world's most honored men. The touch of a skillful hand is needed to arouse those dormant faculties. It was such men that Jesus called to be His colaborers;...

Many are unconscious that they possess powers. They think they cannot accomplish much, but there is a lot in their hearts which just needs to be called into action; but it needs to be under divine guidance, under divine wisdom, in order not to make them proud. Sister White here says that a “skillful hand” can find out these talents—“skillful,” means those who have a vision of Christ.

...and He gave them the advantage of association with himself. Never had the world's great men such a teacher. When the disciples came forth from the Saviour's training, they were no longer ignorant and uncultured. They had become like Him in mind and character, and men took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.

It is not the highest work of education to communicate knowledge merely, but to impart that vitalizing energy which is received through the contact of mind with mind, and soul with soul.

You know the little things here and there—when we walk together, when we go for a walk, when we sit together at the table, when we have our little worships together, when we cook together, when we work together in the bee-keeping



"When the disciples came forth from the Saviour's training, they were no longer ignorant and uncultured. They had become like Him in mind and character, and men took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." (DA 250) (Source: L'Imitation de Jesus-Christ, 1869)

business, in cleaning up, etc.,—we have to communicate, and that is contact of mind with mind, and soul with soul. That's how we become friends. This is also how we can become friends with Jesus, when we have Him with us in all these activities.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 250:**

It is only life that can beget life. What privilege, then, was theirs who for three years were in daily contact with that divine life from which has flowed every life-giving impulse that has blessed the world! Above all his companions, John the beloved disciple yielded himself to the power of that wondrous life. He says,

**1 John 1**

<sup>2</sup> The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.

Job had the same experience. When he saw a vision of God, he had that experience which John and the other disciples had.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 250-251:**

In the apostles of our Lord there was nothing to bring glory to themselves. It was evident that the success of their labors was due only to God. The lives of these men, the characters they developed, and the mighty work that God wrought through them, are a testimony to what He will do for all who are teachable and obedient.

He who loves Christ the most will do the greatest amount of good. There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God. If men will endure the necessary discipline, without complaining or fainting by the way, God will teach them hour by hour, and day by day. He longs to reveal His grace. If His people will remove the obstructions,...

And what is the obstruction? How would He name it? Self-confidence.

...He will pour forth the waters of salvation in abundant streams through the human channels. If men in humble life were encouraged to do all the good they could do, if restraining hands were not laid upon them to repress their zeal, there would be a hundred workers for Christ where now there is one.

Only one, but soon there will be a hundred, I'm sure, very soon. Now there are some promises given to us:

The weak, vacillating character becomes changed to one of strength and steadfastness. Continual devotion establishes so close a relation between Christ and His disciple that the Christian becomes like Him in mind and character. Through a connection with Christ he will have clearer and broader views.

He will be balanced, as we read next.

His discernment will be more penetrative, his judgment better balanced.

You know, in church work that is what we really need—a quick discernment. What is the situation? What is the problem? Where does it lie? We need to be penetrative; we must see what the real issue is, not just what people say. The real issue is often deeper. The judgment needs to be better balanced. How often is it that with unbalanced judgment we destroy God's work? These characteristics are absolute essentials for church work.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 251:**

He who longs to be of service to Christ is so quickened by the life-giving power of the Sun of Righteousness that he is enabled to bear much fruit to the glory of God.

Men of the highest education in the arts and sciences have learned precious lessons from Christians in humble life who were designated by the world as unlearned. But these obscure disciples had obtained an education in the highest of all schools. They had sat at the feet of Him who spoke as

“never man spoke.”

Is this our experience? Certainly, when we hear the word of God, and when we hear Him speaking personally to our heart, then this is our experience. I wish that we become those workers—there will be hundreds where there is now only one.

## Talking Too Quickly

As we continue to look at Peter, (let’s pass his life in review before our minds,) we see that this was not the only time Jesus met him at the lake. The lake and Peter seemed to have some very interesting associations. Another time,<sup>4</sup> when he was asked for the temple tax for his Master, he said,

“Yes, yes, my Master pays the temple tax.”

And by doing this, he put Jesus in an embarrassing situation. Then Jesus told him,

“Go and catch a fish and then take the money out of its mouth.”

This miracle again revealed to Peter the tremendous power of Christ, His omnipotence, and again he was ashamed of his own conduct. But his self-sufficiency, or his self-confidence, came back again and again. It was manifested in his tendency to speak too quickly. He would not stop and think, but he would blurt it out, he would say things immediately.

Some people formulate their thoughts by talking; that is how their mind works. The thought is not clear in their head, but while they talk it becomes clear. The listener has to carry it through—though he must be very patient at times—before it gets clear. This is how Peter’s mind worked.

This was a sign of self-confidence, because he should have been quieter, he should have waited until Christ made a command. He should have kept himself more in the background

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<sup>4</sup> *Matthew 17:24-27.*



with Him. But Jesus was very patient with him. He did not give up on him; He saw the tremendous potential that was in Peter.

Then the time when he walked on the lake. How did it come about? Peter was, again, immediately speaking—and by speaking, thinking—and he said,

“Lord, if you want I will come and walk to you.”

To the surprise of everybody, Jesus said,



(Source: *Historiae Celebriores*, 1708)

“Come, and walk.”

So he walked, even though Jesus knew that he would sink very soon. But this was a part of the school; he needed that experience. When Peter sank he again saw his own weakness, self-distrust came back to him, and now a very humble Peter went back with Jesus into the boat. It was a very, very important lesson for his work.

That was not the end of the story, because very soon he was self-confident again. After the Lord’s Supper he felt that he needed to fight for his Master;<sup>5</sup> he drew his sword and began to fight, not waiting for his Master to say,

“Come on, it’s time to fight.”

No, he knew what to do. Again he was humbled when Jesus said,

“Put the sword away, I don’t need it; I can call my angels.”

But he accepted it. However, the greatest problem came when he denied his Lord; that is when he was humbled to the core. Jesus saved him out of this, as well. Then He met him again at the lake, and again He told him to be a fisher of men. Again, He repeated the miracle of the net. In this way, Jesus taught him step by step this lesson of self-distrust, which we also need to learn.

Looking at these lessons from the life of Peter, we see that the vision of Christ,—seeing Christ with my own eyes,—is that which lays at the foundation of everything else. It makes my heart open to receive wisdom from Christ, because I see my own weakness, and am ready to accept the wisdom of Christ. This has something to do with self-distrust as well. The wisdom of Christ will show me how much I need to distrust myself. Then I will cry out,

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<sup>5</sup> *John* 18:10-11.



## Galatians 2

<sup>20</sup> ...not I, but Christ.

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 249:**

Self-distrust...is the fruit of wisdom that is obtained from the divine Teacher alone.

I would have thought the other way around. The wisdom of Christ is the fruit of self-distrust. But it says here,

Self-distrust...is the fruit of the wisdom that is obtained from the divine Teacher alone.

### How do we get Self-Distrust?

Seeing Christ  
with our own  
eyes

Wisdom from  
Christ

Self-distrust

Not I  
but Christ

Self-distrust "...is the fruit of wisdom that is obtained from the divine Teacher alone." *The Desire of Ages*, p. 249

"It is not the highest work of education to communicate knowledge merely, but to impart that vitalizing energy which is received through the contact of mind with mind, and soul with soul." *The Desire of Ages*, p. 250

In the school of Christ, if we have to learn one thing, it is the lesson of self-distrust. So important is this matter that if we have learned this, then we have passed the test, then we are students. If I have gone through a certain school, and at the end of the school there stands true self-distrust, then I have graduated. That's something, isn't it? How important that subject is. Of course, we must say, "healthy" self-distrust.

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 250:**

It is not the highest work of education to communicate knowledge merely, but to impart that vitalizing energy that is received through the contact of mind with mind, and soul with soul.

As the history of Peter has passed in review before our eyes, and we have seen how he learned the lesson of self-distrust, we have seen very clearly how he learned the truth of that statement, “contact of mind with mind.” Don’t think that his lessons were over right after he was called again by the lake, when Jesus asked him three times,

#### **John 21**

<sup>15</sup> Do you love me more than these?

<sup>16</sup> Do you love me?

<sup>17</sup> Do you love me?

Each time Peter answered, but at the end he was somewhat sad that Jesus would ask the same question over and over again. But each time Jesus asked the question, He also called upon Peter to feed the lambs. He called him again to that work which He had called him to at the lake at first. Then when Peter entered into this service, he never forgot that he had denied his Lord. Self-distrust ever accompanied him. He had graduated from that school.

That does not mean that he could not fall, for he did fall. But he was so ready to be corrected, that when Paul told him that he should not play the hypocrite together with the Jews, but should bravely stand for the gospel, Peter immediately did it.

Remember also how bravely he stood before the assembly of the apostles<sup>6</sup> when he said,

“The Lord has answered this question already, because He has given me that and that lesson.”

That was not natural for him to do because he was more in-

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<sup>6</sup> Acts 15:7-11.

clined to make compromises with the Judaizers, but no, his self-distrust kept him. It kept him pure and true to the cause of God, and even made him a champion together with Paul for the ministry to the heathen.

Eventually Peter came to Rome as well as Paul, and there was executed at about the same time that Paul was, under the severe persecution of Nero. You know the story, how Nero circulated a rumor that the Christians had burned Rome, after a fire had swept through it.

When Peter was crucified, he was not beheaded like Paul because he was not a Roman citizen. And he considered it too great an honor to be crucified like Christ, so he asked for a favor, that he could be crucified in a different manner, namely, with his feet up, which certainly was not more pleasant. But it was an expression of his self-distrust. He ever had before him that denial of his Lord. And it kept him safe.

And there is one thing in heaven that will keep us safe. That is the marks in the body of Christ, which He will carry forever. These marks are shameful to us because we have put them there. It's what we have done. It's not His suffering which we see so much; it's more the fact that we can never trust in ourselves; that we are always and will always remain dependant receivers, regardless of what honor God ascribes to us.

With these thoughts I want to conclude this, even though we could study much more, and I'm sure you can study this into greater depth. I'm sure that in two days we could begin again to go over this subject, because there is so much to be learned in this field.



(Source: The Pictorial Bible and Church-History Stories, 1871)

Since his reinstatement after his denial of Christ, Peter had unflinchingly braved danger and had shown a noble courage in preaching a crucified, risen, and ascended Saviour. As he lay in his cell he called to mind the words that Christ had spoken to him: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, When you were young, you girded yourself, and walked where you would: but when you shall be old, you shall stretch forth your hands, and another shall gird you, and carry you where you would not." *John* 21:18. Thus Jesus had made known to the disciple the very manner of his death, and even foretold the stretching of his hands upon the cross.

Peter, as a Jew and a foreigner, was condemned to be scourged and crucified. In prospect of this fearful death, the apostle remembered his great sin in denying Jesus in the hour of His trial. Once so unready to acknowledge the cross, he now counted it a joy to yield up his life for the gospel, feeling only that, for him who had denied his Lord, to die in the same manner as his Master died was too great an honor.

Peter had sincerely repented of that sin and had been forgiven by Christ, as is shown by the high commission given him to feed the sheep and lambs of the flock. But he could never forgive himself. Not even the thought of the agonies of the last terrible scene could lessen the bitterness of his sorrow and repentance. As a last favor he entreated his executioners that he might be nailed to the cross with his head downward. The request was granted, and in this manner died the great apostle Peter. (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 537-538)

**W**E HAVE had some studies here before the camp meeting started and I want to share with you some of these things. One was a study about fear, and I will take up this subject now. The question we asked was,

“What is true fear? Is fear good or not?”

We have had this study because we noticed that fear is more common among God’s people than we previously thought, and that fear is more often the reason of problems in other areas than we thought before.

- When we act in a way that is not according to the gospel,
- When we don’t press forward in faith,
- When we don’t have true fellowship with one another,
- When we cannot have true confessions,
- When we have problems in churches,

—very often these things are there because of fear. The Bible says there is no fear in love:

## **1 John 4**

<sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love.

Jesus very severely rebuked fear:

## **Mark 4**

<sup>40</sup> And He said unto them, Why are you so fearful? how is it that you have no faith?

We call it here, for the moment, the greatest sin of God’s people, because, of all things that cause troubles in the

church, fear is one of the main reasons. We could say now after our studies, “self-confidence” is the greatest, but fear and self-confidence have a close relationship with one another.

## There is no Fear in Love

Fear – the Great Sin of God’s People  
(*Matthew 8:26*)

First of all let’s turn to *Matthew 8*. What did Jesus say here? He rebuked His disciples.

### **Matthew 8**

<sup>26</sup> He said, Why are you fearful, O you of little faith? Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

We would think that in that storm it would be more than understandable that the disciples had fear. Have you ever been in a situation where the powers of nature seemed about to destroy you? Have you been in a hurricane once, for example? Some of you have had this experience, being in the midst of such a storm, or being there when an earthquake takes place, and suddenly the earth around you shakes very severely, and everything in the house shakes. That is a time when we normally do fear, isn’t it? Or when we are in a ship

and the waves are very high, or in an airplane and suddenly there's a very severe turbulence.

Most of us have come here by airplane, and we know what it means when there is turbulence and it goes up and down and doesn't seem to stop, and it gets worse and worse. Such situations are unpleasant. How do you feel? Isn't it natural to fear then? Don't you get wet hands when such a thing happens? But Jesus rebuked His disciples. He said,

“O you of little faith.”

That means there must be some deficiency. I was reminded also of the Wesley brothers when they went with a ship over the Atlantic, and there was a great storm, but they saw the Moravians without fear. That made them think,

“There is something wrong with us. It is not normal to fear.  
There is something lacking.”

The Bible tells us that what is lacking is love.

## **Why do Humans Fear?**

So, why do humans fear? Let's summarize this a little bit. What are the situations that make us fear?

The first time man feared was in the Garden of Eden. Before this, fear was unknown to man. You may say that there were no reasons for fear before sin entered. True. But as soon as they fell into sin, fear came upon them. The Bible says they were afraid. But to be afraid and to fear is the same thing. So Adam said to God,

### **Genesis 3**

<sup>10</sup> I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked. And I hid myself.

In the German translation it even says, “and I feared, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” What did he fear? A revelation of his weakness, of being discovered. He feared ques-

tions; he feared being investigated. He imagined that God would now expose his weakness and punish him for it. He had all kinds of concepts in his mind about what God would do, and these led him to fear. They led him to run away from God. That was the first time such a thing happened, and how often has this been repeated.

Sister White describes that usually when God came in the evening, (the Bible says, “when God came in the cool of the day” which was the evening,) that was a time of great joy. Adam would have waited for that time every evening. But suddenly there was fear. It’s like looking forward to your husband coming home from work; it’s a happy time. If there is suddenly fear, what is the reason for it? A bad conscience; you have to hide something. That must be so. So it was with Adam and Eve.

Now we come to another incident when Jesus cleansed the temple. You find that the people fled from Him, and Sister White asks the question,

**The Desire of Ages, p. 162:**

And why did the priests flee from the temple? Why did they not stand their ground?

The reason for her question is brought out in the next sentences:

He who commanded them to go was a carpenter’s son, a poor Galilean, without earthly rank or power. Why did they not resist Him? Why did they leave the gain so ill acquired, and flee at the command of One whose outward appearance was so humble?

For the same reason: they feared to be discovered. They had evil intentions in their hearts. Their conscience was torturing them in the presence of Christ. Maybe “bad conscience” is not the right description; rather the sense of their sinfulness, the knowledge of the sin in them; this led them to fear.



## Why do Humans Fear?

- Adam and Eve feared God
  - Fear came to humans for the first time. (*Genesis* 3:10)
  - The coming of Christ was usually a joy. (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 57)
  - Why did the priests flee from Christ? (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 162)
  - A bad conscience. The knowledge of sin leads to fear.

Everybody fears when he has a vision of Christ at first. Isaiah feared, and Peter had a sense of fear, too. It commands respect and fear in a sense because of the sin that is in us. But in spite of the fact that there is still self-confidence living in us, if we have no bad intentions, like Isaiah and Peter, then it will not lead us to run away from Him, even though we fear. Instead, we will flee to Him in spite of our fear.

In the cleansing of the temple both cases are seen. There were some people who did not run out, but who came to Him. It is not likely that they were fearless, because even His disciples trembled when Jesus spoke in the way that He did, but they did not run away. This is something we do not need to do. We do not need to let fear control us.

### What do Humans Fear?

The first question was “Why do humans fear?” Now we come to: “What do humans fear?” The judgment, first of all. Do you fear the judgment? When Paul was preaching before

Felix and Agrippa, he was describing the judgment in such a lively way that these two powerful men trembled. They made Paul stop preaching to them. They said,

“Please continue another time.”

They couldn’t bear to listen to this any longer. It was like a horror film to them. Some people like to look at horror films it seems, but in this case, it was something they did not wish to see because it concerned them. It’s quite easy to look upon something that concerns others, and some people even revel in this, and rejoice in seeing other people suffer, but when it comes home to me, it’s a different matter.

Imagine that I’m a prisoner with some terrorists and they would show me the torture of another prisoner in a film and they would say,

“This is what we will do with you next.”

How would you feel? I think nobody would like to watch such a horror film. That is how Felix and Agrippa felt in that moment. They saw themselves standing before the bar of God, and they said,

“Please stop.”

The Bible says,

### **Hebrews 10**

<sup>26</sup> For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

<sup>27</sup> But a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and of fiery indignation, which will devour the adversaries.

“A fearful expectation of judgment.” What stands in connection with the judgment is punishment. Some people understand judgment to mean punishment, but judgment can also simply mean that a thing is investigated, that it’s searched through and through, and the punishment then is the execu-

tion of that investigation. The apostle John says,

**1 John 4**

<sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love,...

And he adds to this,

<sup>18</sup> ...but perfect love casts out all fear, because fear involves torment,...

Or “because fear involves punishment” as another translation puts it.

<sup>18</sup> ...but he who fears, has not been made perfect in love.

<sup>19</sup> We love because he first loved us.

What else do we fear? Death. Is this so? Some people do, some people don't. It depends also on how young or old we are. I remember when I was a child and I saw the first funeral, or attended the first funeral, I somehow had a fear of death. I was not too small, I was already at an age where I could think, and I saw this. I think I once saw a dead body, and it really made me fear that it will happen to me. It was only later when I really could rest myself fully in God that I lost this fear.

Many people drown this fear with a lot of activity or with indulgence in unhealthful practices, or loud music, or mirth, or with sarcasm, or with horror films. But the deeper inmost fear only Christ can take away when we find rest in Him. Then we can completely rest in Him and have no fear whatsoever.

When death comes home to us by a disease or however, then we are tested again. I will not say that I have mastered every fear, but definitely the Lord gives us strength according to our situation. This I trust to the Lord.

However, what does the world have? It has tremendous fear of death. We should read this text in *Hebrews*:

## Hebrews 2

<sup>14</sup> Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He himself likewise shared in the same that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil;

<sup>15</sup> And release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Through fear of death they were all their lifetime subject to bondage. I wonder how much this fear of death is still there with many people?

The next thing humans fear is sickness. We fear openness, because we could be discovered. We fear being abused by others. If I tell them what my situation is they may take advantage of it. These are some of the things, and there are many others that I did not mention here.

### What do Humans Fear?

- Judgment (*Hebrews 10:27*)
- Punishment (*1 John 4:18*)
- Death (*Hebrews 2:15*)
- Sickness
- Openness
- Being abused by others

These are only some examples. We sometimes fear church meetings; we fear if somebody calls us:

“Can I have a talk with you please?”

“Uhh! What does he want with me?!”

## What is the Fruit of Fear?

We have looked at the causes, and now we will look at the fruit. The fruit of fear is mistrust, for example, in God, but also in our fellow men.

It results in us being reserved: we don't speak with our fellow beings, because it could be that we say something wrong, and so we better not say anything. It means that we build walls between them and us. It's always safer to be behind a wall.

It means sometimes to be aggressive. Yes, fear sometimes leads to aggression. Why did America attack Iraq? Because they feared the weapons of mass destruction. They feared to be attacked. So fear leads to aggression. Also in the personal life of man. It leads to discord among believers. When we fear, we have no peace with one another.

### What is the Fruit of Fear?

- Mistrust
- Being reserved
- Building walls
- Aggression
- Discord
- Self-pity
- Hatred

It leads to self-pity; it leads to hatred even. These are the

fruits of fear. If there would be no fear whatsoever, if we had total rest in God, these fruits would not exist. What a wonderful fellowship we would have! There would be no problems between human beings. So all these things are the fruits of fear.

## What is the Cause of Fear?

When Sister White described the sins that are recorded in heaven,<sup>7</sup> she saw several books, and there was a ledger, and there was a headline over the sins of the people, and what was the headline? Selfishness. John describes it as a lack of love, as we have just read,

### 1 John 4

<sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear involves torment, but He who fears is not made perfect in love.

The cause is a lack of love according to this text. But according to the statement in *Testimonies*, we could also say selfishness. These two statements are quite in harmony with one another, because what is a lack of love? It's selfishness. We either have selfishness in our heart or love. These are the two anti-poles: the one on the one side and the other on the other side.

When we have fear, we must see the hidden root of selfishness. Fear itself is not the problem as such; there is a root in this. That is why John Wesley was so earnest about this matter. He could have said,

“Well, these Moravians were a bit careless about their lives. You know, that is their nature, maybe because they are Germans, but I'm British. Maybe it's a different culture.”

But he was not so superficial. He said,

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<sup>7</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 384: “Another book was opened, wherein were recorded the sins of those who profess the truth. Under the general heading of selfishness came every other sin.”

“They had no fear and I want to know why.”

He did not want to know, just to become a hero. No, he felt that he was lacking in his spiritual experience. He felt that he needed something that they had. He wanted to go to the root of the problem, to find it. It is good if we also go to the root of the problem when we find fear in our hearts. The real enemy is not fear, but what causes fear.

Very often what causes fear is clinging to my own world, because I fear that I will lose it one way or the other.

## What is the Cause of Fear?

- Lack of Love (*1 John 4:18*)
- Selfishness
  - Headline over all sins (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 384)
  - The root must be seen
  - The real enemy is not fear, but that which causes fear
  - Clinging to my own world

## The Root and its Fruits

In summary, let us look at the root and the fruits. The root is selfishness. Selfishness produces fear, and fear produces mistrust, being reserved, building walls, aggression, discord, self-pity, and hatred. That is only a summary of what we had discussed before.

## The Root and its Fruits

Selfishness

Fear

Mistrust  
Being reserved  
Building walls  
Aggression  
Discord  
Self-pity  
Hatred

### Fear and the Light of God

Let us look at some statements in the Bible concerning fear. Where is fear described, and in what context is it described? I can't read with you all these statements, even though I would like to, but you know them.



(Source: The Gospels in Art, 1904)

When Jesus appeared to his disciples on the lake. Can you



remember how they feared because they thought it was a ghost? That reminds me very much of Jacob when Christ came to him. He feared Jesus.

What did the man with the one talent say?

**Matthew 25**

<sup>24</sup> Lord, I knew you that you are a hard man, reaping where you had not sown, and gathering where you had not strawed:

<sup>25</sup> And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the earth



(Source: *Historiae Sacrae tam Veteris*, 1700)

When we look at it from a distance we think how unreasonable, especially because in the master's response to the other servants, he had shown that he was not a hard master.

The guardians at the tomb of Jesus trembled and shook for fear, and then they fell down like dead men.

When Jesus stilled the storm, and there were some boats around him, they all feared and wondered,

## Matthew 8

<sup>27</sup> What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?



(Source: Christ and the Twelve, 1867)

Herod had fear when he heard about the miracles of Jesus. We understand very well why he had this fear. He first feared John because John was telling him his sins, but even after he had beheaded John, he feared that John would come back from the dead. When he heard about Christ, he feared that this was John resurrected.<sup>8</sup>

The scribes and priests, the leaders among the Jews, feared:

### Mark 8

<sup>11</sup> And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy Him: for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching.

In this case they feared his influence.

When Zacharias was standing before the angel he feared

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<sup>8</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 223.

him, and the angel had to tell him,

### **Luke 1**

<sup>13</sup> Fear not, Zacharias: for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elisabeth shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.



(Source: Biblische Geschichte, 1893)a

Also the manner in which the angel appeared to him, namely on the right side of the altar, was an indication of favor, rather than judgment, but still he feared.

Even the shepherds feared the angels when they heard the message in the fields. The angel had to say unto them,

### **Luke 2**

<sup>10</sup> Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

When Jesus worked miracles the people often feared Him. That is a bit strange; how can you fear someone who works miracles? But that's what the Bible says:



## Luke 8

<sup>25</sup> And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him.

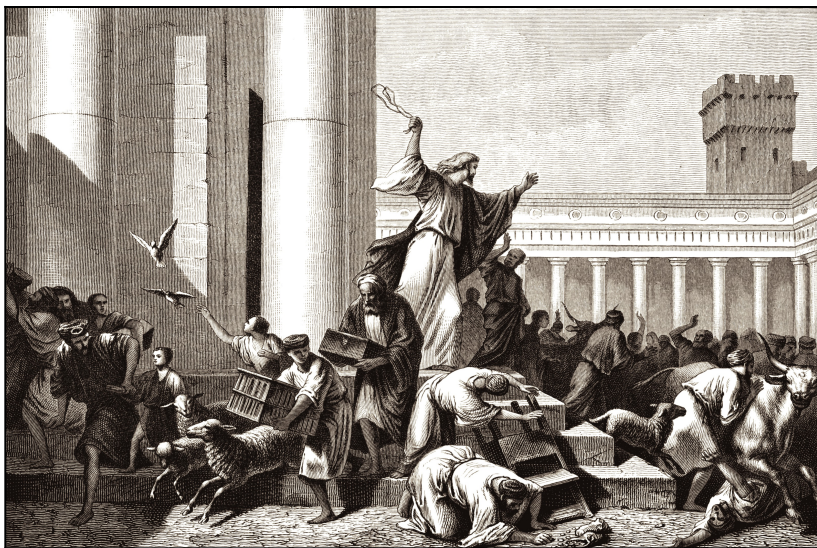
That's only one example.

## Luke 7

<sup>16</sup> Then fear came upon all and they glorified God saying, A great prophet has risen among us, and God has visited His people.

That is after Christ had raised the widow's son. So, when Jesus worked miracles, often that created fear in the people.

When Jesus was in the temple; I think we have this incident pretty much in heart, how people feared him, how they ran out in terror even, as it says.



(Source: Christ in Art, 1875)

On Mount Sinai; we know that story very well; how the people feared and trembled because of the glory of God.

The disciples on the mount of transfiguration also feared when they saw the glory of Jesus. They fell down on their

faces and they couldn't behold this anymore.

## Fear and the Light of God

- Jesus appears to the disciples (*Matthew 14:26, 27*)
- The man with one talent (*Matthew 25:25*)
- The guards at the tomb of Jesus (*Matthew 28:4*)
- When Jesus stilled the storm (*Mark 4:41*)
- Herod feared John (*Mark 6:20*)
- The priests and the high priest feared Jesus (*Mark 11:18*)
- When Zachariah saw the Angel (*Luke 1:14*)
- When the shepherds saw the angels (*Luke 2:9, 10*)
- Fear of Jesus' miracles (*Luke 4:36; 5:26; 7:16; 8:25*)
- When Jesus was in the temple (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 157-158; 590-591; *Mark 11:18*)
- At Mt. Sinai (*Exodus 19:16*)
- The disciples on the mount of transfiguration (*Matthew 17:6, 7; Luke 9:34*)

## Fear and the Judgment

Judgment is one of the main causes of fear in people. This is seen in the experience of Felix:

### Acts 24

<sup>25</sup> And as [Paul] reasoned of righteousness, self-control,...

Self-control is another word for temperance. Paul was preaching temperance to Felix. If we have a true love for our race, then we will advocate temperance, because mankind is destroying itself through intemperance. This is exactly what Paul explained to Felix.

<sup>25</sup> Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, Go away for now; when I have a convenient time, I will call for you.

### Acts of the Apostles, p. 425-426:

The Jewish princess well understood the sacred character

of that law which she had so shamelessly transgressed, but her prejudice against the Man of Calvary steeled her heart against the word of life.



(Source: Acts Explained to Children, 1888)

But Felix had never before listened to the truth, and as the Spirit of God sent conviction to his soul, he became deeply agitated. Conscience, now aroused, made her voice heard, and Felix felt that Paul's words were true. Memory went back over the guilty past. With terrible distinctness there came up before him the secrets of his early life of profligacy

and bloodshed, and the black record of his later years. He saw himself licentious, cruel, rapacious.

Never before had the truth been thus brought home to his heart. Never before had his soul been so filled with terror. The thought that all the secrets of his career of crime were open before the eye of God, and that he must be judged according to his deeds, caused him to tremble with dread.

And then comes the sad words:

But instead of permitting his convictions to lead him to repentance, he sought to dismiss these unwelcome reflections. The interview with Paul was cut short. "Go your way for this time," he said; "when I have a convenient season, I will call for you."

What a sad thing! He thereby closed the door of his heart. Maybe you remember when Sister White had a vision of the judgment, she also trembled and she said,

**Manuscript Releases, vol. 4, p. 219:**

I felt so grateful when I came out of vision and found it was not a present reality, that probation still lingered. And now I call upon you to haste and no longer trifle with eternal things.

On the other hand, there is a possibility of boldness in the day of judgment, but it is not human boldness, it's not self-confident boldness, but it's boldness that is born out of love.

#### **1 John 4**

<sup>17</sup> Love has been perfected among us in this: that we have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world.

In contrast to Adam and Eve, we can have this boldness in the day of judgment. We will pass over this for now, as that would take us too long and we don't have so much time.

## Fear and the Judgment

- Felix (*Acts 24:25; Acts of the Apostles*, p. 425)
- Boldness in the day of judgment (*1 John 4:17*)
- In contrast to Adam and Eve

### How to Become Free from Fear

We want to ask now,

“How do we become free from fear?”

That is the important question. Before we conclude we have to answer this question. First of all, we must realize how much fear is in us before we can come free. We must realize how fear is often the basis of many of our actions.

The next step is that we must realize that selfishness is the cause of fear. We must look at the root of the fear, and the antidote against selfishness is love. It is when we open our hearts towards the love of Christ and really let ourselves fall into His arms, that fear will go out of our hearts. Then we will know and believe the love that God has for us, and we will partake of the self-sacrificing love of Christ.

#### **1 John 4**

<sup>16</sup> And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love; and he that abides in love abides in God, and



God in him.

<sup>17</sup> Love has been perfected among us in this, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world.

<sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

<sup>19</sup> We love Him, because He first loved us.

I wish that we really lay hold of this love of Christ in order to be made free from fear.

### How can we become Free from Fear?

- We must realize how much fear is in us (Wesley's journey to America)
- We must realize and recognize that selfishness is the cause of fear
  - The root has to be removed
- The antidote to selfishness is love (*1 John 4:16-20*)
  - To know and believe the love that God has for us
  - To become a partaker of the selfsacrificing love of Christ

### Different Kinds of Fear

There is only one more thought I wish to share with you and this is that obviously there are different kinds of fear, because Paul describes working out our salvation with fear and trembling:

#### Philippians 2

<sup>12</sup> ...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

When we were young people, many years ago, we studied the Bible together and we thought to ourselves,

“Well, sometimes the Bible describes fear as a bad thing, and sometimes it describes fear as a good thing.”

Then we looked up in the concordance where fear is mentioned. We made a list where it is called a good thing and where it is called a bad thing. We realized that there are two kinds of fear. This I think you realize too, in your study of the Bible.

For example there’s fear of God’s presence, there’s fear of God’s glory, there’s fear to fully trust God, there’s mistrust in God’s ability. On the other hand there’s fear of separation from God.

Different Kinds of Fear		
Evil Fear	Human Fear	Good Fear
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The result of a bad conscience</li><li>• An effort at self-justification</li><li>• Spiritual</li><li>• Wants to separate from God</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The product of human nature</li><li>• An effort of self-preservation</li><li>• Human</li><li>• The self-preservation instinct</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The result of having a vision of Christ</li><li>• Self-distrust</li><li>• Spiritual</li><li>• Fears to separate from God</li></ul>

And now we come to connect this study with self-distrust. Fear of being separated from God is true, healthy self-distrust. It is:

- Respect of the Holy Spirit;

- Fear of doing my own works;
- Mistrust in my own ability.

I think you immediately realize what is the good fear and what is the bad fear. The bad fear is the fear of God's presence, the fear of God's glory, the fear of fully trusting Him. This fear separates us from God and it leads to death.

The fear of my own works, and the self-distrust which we need to have, is the fear that drives us to God. It leads us to life.



Let us not mistake the wrong kind of fear for true self-distrust. If we are timid and fearful, if we shrink from responsibility, if we have fear to open ourselves up, if we build walls, etc., then this is not a sign of self-distrust. Definitely not. It's the sign of a wrong kind of fear, and this we can be healed of only by plunging into the love of Christ, by allowing Him to cleanse us from it, and completely resting in Him.

Then, let us develop this true fear, which is fear of separa-

tion from Him, fear of taking His work into our own hands.  
Amen.

**Perfect Love**

*Capo 3*  
**Refrain**

Perfect love casts out fear, fear brings on - ly torment;  
Perfect love casts out fear,  
Perfect love makes us bold in the day of judg - ment.  
Perfect love makes us bold

1. Tri - als, loss - es, pains and death: these are fears that steal mens breath.  
2. Fear holds men as slaves with - in, slaves to fash - ion, slaves to sin;  
3. Love makes bold a - gainst all foes, per - se - cu - tions, threats and blows;

But with Christ all fears re - move, swept a - way by the pow'r of love.  
True re - li - gion breaks these bands, puts our lives in - to saf - er Hands.  
Hosts of de - mons fill the land- fear - less still, on God's word we stand.

*D.C. al Fine*

Text: 1 John 4:17,18 (Refrain)

ONE of the main themes of Adventism is the Judgment. It is a part of the First Angel's Message:

## **Revelation 14**

<sup>6</sup> And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

<sup>7</sup> Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for *the hour of His judgment is come*: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

For this reason we must be very acquainted with that topic. We must understand the philosophy of judgment:

1. For what reason there is a judgment,
2. When the judgment takes place,
3. What our position in that judgment will be, and
4. How we prepare ourselves for that judgment.

That is basic Adventist truth. The great burden of William Miller, when he preached the First Angel's Message, was to prepare the people for the judgment.

Looking back upon the history of the Reformation, beginning with Martin Luther, we see that he had a great burden for his people. He wanted to make them ready for heaven. He was so upset about the indulgences because they were separating his own people from heaven. He was a patriot, but more than this, he was a lover of people.

Likewise with William Miller. Because he had such a desire to save his fellow man, he was so earnest in preaching the message. When we shall understand the judgment and the



The Angel with the Everlasting Gospel, crying with a loud voice saying,  
The hour of His Judgment is come.

(Source: Bibelen i Billeder, 1900)

nearness of judgment, we shall have the same earnestness; and this is my desire. For this reason let us study this a little bit.

## The Role of Judgment in the Plan of Salvation

“For the day of vengeance is in my heart,  
and the year of my redeemed has come.”

*Isaiah 63:4*

The Judgment must be connected with the Gospel. As a theme text I chose:

### **Isaiah 63**

<sup>4</sup> For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed has come.

The “day of vengeance” is the Day of Judgment. That is the day, even in the Old Testament, the people of God expected God to come and judge. They looked forward to it and partly feared it. God says,

“Yes, the day of vengeance is in my heart, [that’s the Day of Judgment,] and the year of my redeemed has come.”

So you see there is a close connection even in Old Testament thought between judgment and redemption. These two are not two different topics, as theology often wants to make


them. Soteriology and eschatology: it's not two subjects it's one; the judgment and the redeemed belong together.

There are some Old Testament words for it and there is a New Testament word too. The New Testament word maybe sounds a little bit familiar, the Old Testament one does not say as much to English or German speaking people, but the Greek word is *krisis* and we have heard this before: *crisis*. A crisis is a point of time where we must make a decision for the one or for the other. Therefore we can translate it *a decision*. A judgment is a decision.

It can also be translated as *separation*. These two words are related to one another. When I make a decision, I separate. It's like walking on the wall and I have to make a decision whether I go in or whether I go out. I can't endlessly walk on the wall, it gets smaller and smaller. At some time I have to make a decision, I have to separate between the one and the other.

What is the Meaning of the Word "Judgment"?

- In the OT
  - *shafat*
- In the NT
  - *krisis*
- Crisis
- Decision
- Separation
- Atonement
- Rule (Govern)



It means *atonement* also. The Day of Atonement was the



Day of Judgment.

There is another meaning of the word which is *to rule* or *to govern*. Those are the meanings from the original words.

## What does Judgment Mean?

Now we want to look at what it means according to the context of Scripture. What does the Bible tell us that the word “judgment” means?

First of all we find that it means a separation between right and wrong. Here is an example among many:

### Deuteronomy 25

<sup>1</sup> If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that the judges may judge them, then they shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked.

On the one hand there is the righteous, on the other hand there is the wicked, and they judge between them, they judge according to right and wrong.

“What you did was right, and what he did was wrong.”

They have to make a decision whether it’s right or wrong. For that reason we also come before the bar. The judge must decide if what we did was right or wrong.

It also means separation between the good and the evil, which is the same thing: right is good and wrong is evil. What I mean here is also separation, not just between right and wrong for a person, but between the good people and the evil people. It’s a separation of people, not just a separation of what is right and what is wrong in a certain case. It separates. This is made very clear in:

### Matthew 25

<sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

On the left and on the right He separates them. This one example shows us that it is clearly judgment which is described: it's a separation.

However, it is more than simply a separation. We tend to limit the word judgment to separation. Separate between right and wrong, separate between good and evil. Yes, this is what we understand, but it's more than this. Judgment has a deeper meaning than often is thought. It means to restore a relationship.

It's not just to exclude wickedness from the kingdom of God, or to exclude the sinner, it's also to restore. That is another purpose why a judgment takes place. Unless we understand this we don't understand the whole message, "the hour of His judgment is come." It's to restore the relationship between God and man, first of all. To illustrate this let us just read one text again:

### **Isaiah 1**

<sup>18</sup> Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

In other words,

"I want to become one with you again. I want the sin that separates us to be removed."

"Come now, let us reason together" is a statement of judgment. That is what God does in judgment: He reasons with us together. We can read this text like this:

"Come now, to judgment, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Another relationship that needs to be restored is the relationship between man and man. You know that we are also in

enmity with other men. That's another purpose of judgment, as we read for example in:

### **Isaiah 2**

<sup>4</sup> He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people.

For example, He shall judge between Germany and America and rebuke many people. He shall judge between Africa and Europe, He shall judge between Africa and America, etc.

<sup>4</sup> He shall judge between the nations and rebuke many people. They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

## What does "Judgment" Mean?

### ■ Separation (between right and wrong)

■ *Deuteronomy 25:1:* "If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that the judges may judge them, then they shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked."

### ■ Separation (between good and evil)

■ *Matthew 25:32:* "All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats."

### ■ Restore a relationship

#### ■ Between God and man

*Isaiah 1:18:* "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord, Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

#### ■ Between man and man

*Isaiah 2:4:* "He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

Through the judgment, God will create true unity between different nations. That is a unity that you cannot find in the world. That's not a unity just simply for the purpose of defending your nation against an enemy, it's not a unity that is just an outward thing. It's a unity with Christ and that is a

very deep unity that cannot be broken. This is what is described here, and it is accomplished by the judgment.

This is a very brief overview of what judgment means, but we want to look yet deeper into this matter.

## **The Reason and Purpose of God's Judgments**

Let us very briefly look at the reasons and the purpose of God's judgments. This is an overview now of what we will study in the coming lessons. What are the reasons and what is the purpose of God's judgments?

The reason, first of all, must be in connection with the cross, simply because the cross explains all mysteries.

### **The Great Controversy, p. 652:**

The mystery of the cross explains all other mysteries. In the light that streams from Calvary the attributes of God which had filled us with fear and awe appear beautiful and attractive. Mercy, tenderness, and parental love are seen to blend with holiness, justice, and power. While we behold the majesty of His throne, high and lifted up, we see His character in its gracious manifestations, and comprehend, as never before, the significance of that endearing title, "Our Father."

It will be seen that He who is infinite in wisdom could devise no plan for our salvation except the sacrifice of His Son. The compensation for this sacrifice is the joy of peopling the earth with ransomed beings, holy, happy, and immortal. The result of the Saviour's conflict with the powers of darkness is joy to the redeemed, redounding to the glory of God throughout eternity. And such is the value of the soul that the Father is satisfied with the price paid; and Christ himself, beholding the fruits of His great sacrifice, is satisfied.

If we want to understand God's character, if we want to understand His judgments, naturally we must look to the cross. As Paul says:

### **1 Corinthians 2**

<sup>2</sup> I determined to know nothing among you, except Jesus

Christ and Him crucified.

What are the reasons, then, according to the cross? The cross tells us that He loves us, that's what we just read. What is then the reason for judgment? It must be that He loves us; because He wants to save us.

There are many texts quoted in the diagram which you can read but I do not want to read all of them here, just the texts which are in big letters. In *John 5*, Jesus is answering before the Sanhedrin and He explains His role in the judgment. He says,

### **John 5**

<sup>22</sup> For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son.

Why has He committed all judgment to the Son? What is the purpose, what is the reason? Why is the Father not conducting the judgment himself?

<sup>27</sup> And has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.

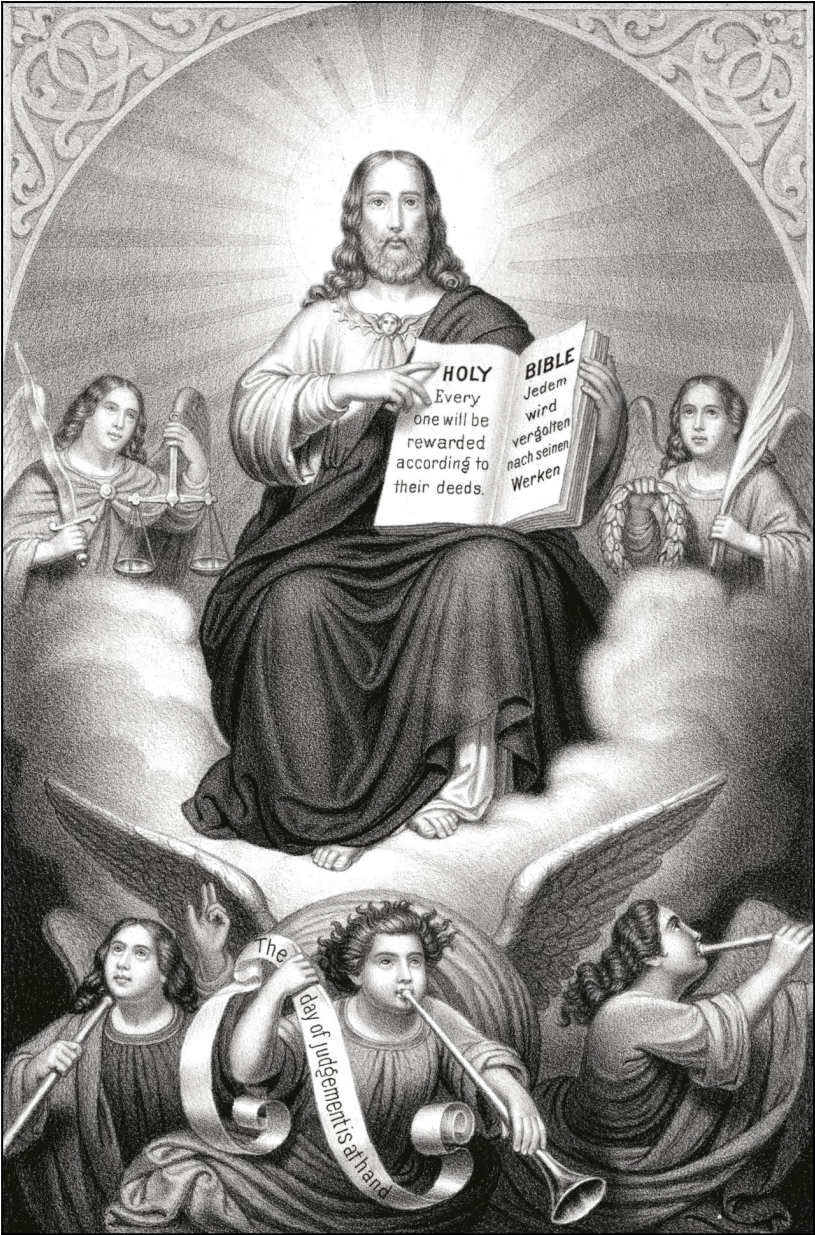
What is the reason? Because He is the Son of Man. Why is He judging, as the Son of Man? What does it mean that He is the Son of Man? What is the purpose of being Son of Man? To save us, to be one with us. Why is He judging? Because He wants to help us. That's the purpose. It's a tremendous comfort to understand this.

He also judges because of His righteousness. It's not just the love of God but also His righteousness that demands that He would judge. First of all He must explain righteousness. It is a court session that explains what is right and what is wrong. God, holding a court session, or presiding over the court session, judging, explains what righteousness is.

### **2 Corinthians 5**

<sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,

that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.



(Source: Library of Congress)

In other words, everybody needs to appear before Him, and everything needs to be explained, whether it's good or whether it's bad. It needs to be laid open, and in this, obviously, God's righteousness is explained.

There are other texts that confirm this. In *Revelation* 15 it is stated that in the end all people will see the righteousness of God because they understand His judgments.

### **Revelation 15**

<sup>4</sup> Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for your judgments have been manifested.

So the judgments of God explain His righteousness.

The purpose of God's judgments is twofold:

They cleanse. It's like washing. You go through a judgment in order to be cleansed. Different things can be cleansed. A human being can be cleansed from sin, the heaven can be cleansed, an area can be cleansed, a church can be cleansed also from sin and likewise the Sanctuary can be cleansed, according to the text we are familiar with:

### **Daniel 8**

<sup>14</sup> Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

This is a Day of Atonement or the Day of Judgment which cleanses the Sanctuary. Cleansing means to restore harmony. When something is dirty, it's disharmonious. Nobody feels comfortable when he is dirty. Nobody feels comfortable when his house is dirty, so we clean it from time to time, so that we restore harmony again.

When a person likes disorder, when he likes dirt around him, it's usually a person who is very disharmonious. He is in conflict with himself and with his neighbor.

When the house is clean, we feel peace in our heart. Have

you noticed this? Have you noticed the difference between a clean environment and an unclean environment and the condition of your heart? You definitely have peace. That's the reason why it is good when we have everything ready on Friday evening for Sabbath, that we have peace in our heart and that we can go with peace into the Sabbath.

This Sabbath day will be celebrated in heaven after there was such a dirt and disorder on this earth. This wonderful transition from dirt to cleanliness, or this cleansing is described in *Revelation* 19 and 20. First of all the great battle is described, the last battle of Armageddon where the powers of evil gather together, even after the thousand years, to fight against God. Then they will be cast in the lake of fire. That is, dirt will be disposed of, literally, and then there is a tremendous scene of peace in *Revelation* 21 (and 22 also), where New Jerusalem is described. This is another purpose of the judgment.

Then comes the end of suffering, which means that we are delivered. As God says,

### **Revelation 21**

<sup>4</sup> I will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

This is accomplished by the judgment, mind you. If there was no judgment, there would be no wiping away of tears. In a way, it is a thing to be looked forward to. It is necessary, absolutely necessary, in order to seal the universe against sin, as we also read in *Revelation* 20:13-21:4. We have here the judgment scene:

### **Revelation 20**

<sup>11</sup> Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

<sup>13</sup> The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.



<sup>14</sup> Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

<sup>15</sup> And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.



The Great White Throne Judgment

(Source: Biblische Figuren, 1560)

## **Revelation 21**

<sup>1</sup> Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.

In other words, it is disposed of, it is cleansed now.

<sup>1</sup> ...Also there was no more sea.

<sup>2</sup> Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

<sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God himself will be with them and be their God.

<sup>4</sup> And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.

That is the purpose of the judgment as we see from *Revelation* 20. In this context it's also important to see how God wipes away the tears and what He is actually doing. Why are there tears? Tears are because of sin, separation between God and man, and also because of the accusations that are leveled against God's people by Satan. Therefore, one of the purposes of the judgment is to justify the saints.

As you know in *Zechariah* 3, this is described, how Satan accuses God's people and he says,

"They are not worthy to be in His presence."

And then Christ says,

"The Lord rebuke you."

This is judgment, real judgment, and that clearly shows that the purpose of judgment is to justify the righteous.

## The Reason and Purpose of God's Judgments

- The reason for God's judgments (*1 Corinthians* 2:2; *Great Controversy*, p. 652)
  - Because He loves us
    - Because He wants to save us (*John* 5:22, 27; *2 Timothy* 4:1; *Romans* 2:16; *Acts* 17:31; *Romans* 5:8-9 without judgment there is no justification; *Zephaniah* 3:17; *Isaiah* 63:4; *Psalms* 76:9)
  - Because He is righteousness
    - Because He must explain righteousness (*2 Corinthians* 5:10; *Revelation* 15:4; 19:2; *Ecclesiastes* 12:14; *1 Corinthians* 4:5; *Psalms* 58:12; *Jeremiah* 23:5; *Isaiah* 5:16; *Matthew* 5:17)
- The purpose of God's judgments
  - Cleansing (*Daniel* 8:14)
    - To restore harmony (*Revelation* 20 & 21)
    - To end suffering, which means to deliver us (*Revelation* 21:4; *Psalms* 76:10; *Isaiah* 25:8)
    - To seal the universe against sin (*Revelation* 20:13-21:4; *Revelation* 12:9-11)
    - To justify the righteous (*Zechariah* 3:2; *Romans* 5:18; *John* 5:27; *Romans* 4:25; *Acts* 17:31)
  - To inculcate self-distrust and trust in God (*Revelation* 14:6-7)

## Creation: the First Judgment on Earth

Let us look at the first judgment that came upon the earth. Can you remember what the definition of judgment is? What does judgment mean? Two things:

1. Separation, and
2. Restoration.

We will see this exactly in the first judgment that took place on earth. The creation was the first judgment that took place on earth. Let's see this: The first day,

### **Genesis 1 [NLT]**

<sup>4</sup> Then He separated the light from the darkness.

<sup>5</sup> God called the light day and the darkness night. Together these made up one day.



(Source: J. Martin - Wellcome Collection)

What did He do in the first day? He separated the light from the darkness. If the meaning of judgment is separation, then here is a judgment. He separates two things; good and evil, righteousness and unrighteousness, the one symbolized by darkness, the other symbolized by light.

When God did this on the first day He pronounced a judgment. And it was necessary too, because the creation of the earth was part of the purpose in dealing with sin. Satan had rebelled against the government of God and in order to give an explanation, a clear demonstration of His character, God created this world. This creation was a judgment enacted, a judgment that should justify the character of God. In the first day He made a very clear separation:

“I separate darkness from light, I separate sin from righteousness, I separate Satan’s rebellion from the righteous angels.”

Satan still remained in heaven for a while after he sinned, but eventually he had to leave heaven, a separation had to take place. In order to explain the separation, the earth was created.

Let us turn to *Genesis* 1. Can you see separation in the second day?

### **Genesis 1**

<sup>6</sup> Then God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

<sup>7</sup> Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so.

<sup>8</sup> And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day.

Can you see a separation here? It’s a separation between waters above from the waters below. It goes on.

What did God do in the third day? He separated the land from the waters. That was not all, there was another separation: He separated the plants from the land. From the earth He created them, and thereby separated these two things. First it was one: earth and plants were one mass. When He separated them, there were plants on the one hand, and earth on the

other hand.

So to summarize, on the third day, there was separation between water and dry ground, and separation between ground and plants.

What did He do in the fourth day? He made the stars, and the moon and the sun and He made one for the day and the other for the night. In the *New Living Translation* again it is nicely translated.

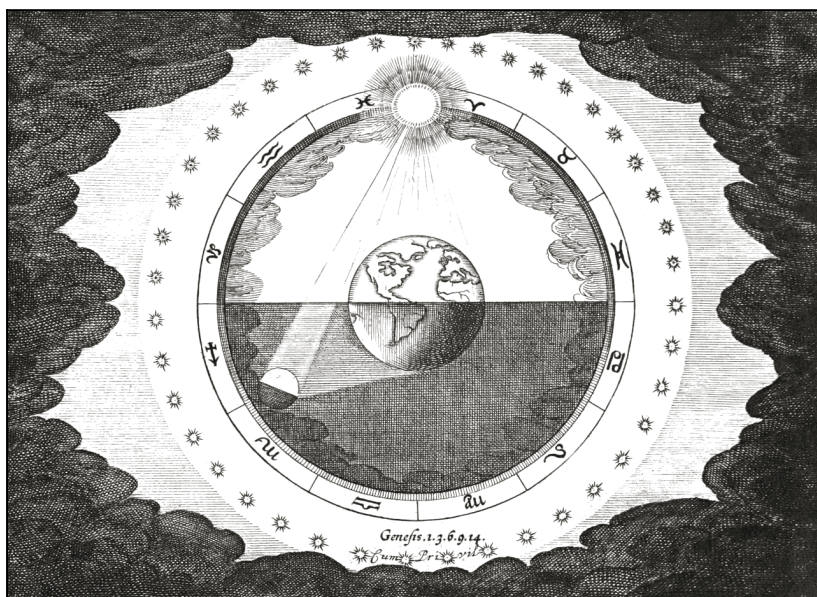
### Genesis 1

<sup>14</sup> Then God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to *divide*...

That's how it is written here, but it's the same as *separate*.

<sup>14</sup> ...the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years;

<sup>15</sup> And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth; and it was so.



(Source: *Historiae Sacrae tam Veteris*, 1700)



<sup>16</sup> Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also.

<sup>17</sup> God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth,

<sup>18</sup> And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness.

Or to “separate” light from darkness. There was a further separation from light and darkness on the fourth day.

What did He make on the fifth day? He made the fish and the birds. Where did He take them from? Again He took them from the material that was there. Again He separated the material. There was earth and from this earth He took these things and made them.



(Source: History of Our Lord, 1865)

Another way of describing it is that God separated inanimate and animate nature. As soon as He created birds, and fish He created animate nature, living things that could move by their own will, and fly and swim. He created these things from the existing material and separated them from it.

Then on the sixth day He created human beings. He created first of all other animals, mammals, and finally He created

man. When He created man, He made a separation between animal and intelligent nature. He made this very clear by saying that man should rule over the animals. There was a clear distinction, a clear separation. Some people don't understand this. They think that man eventually evolved out of animals, which erases the distinction between them that God made. He separated the two right from the beginning.

How God created man is very interesting, because He actually made him out of earth. The description in the Bible is very detailed. He formed him from earth and Sister White describes that His artwork was so perfect, that everything was in it: muscles, nerves, blood vessels, brain cells, nose, eyes, tongue, digestive tract; everything was there in that lump but it didn't function. It was just lying there like a dead person. Then He breathed His life into it, and then man was a living being. That's how He created man. He took him from this earth.



(Source: Alberti - Met Museum)

Separation between work and rest was the seventh day. We can see a big judgment scene in the whole creation of this earth.

## The First Judgment on Earth

- "...Then he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day and the darkness night. Together these made up one day. *Genesis 1:4-5 NLT* (First Day)
- "God made this space to separate the waters above from the waters below." *Genesis 1:7 NLT* (Second Day)
- Separation between water and dry ground. Separation between ground and plants. (Third Day)
- Further separation from light and darkness. (Fourth Day)
- Separation between inanimate and animate objects. (Fifth Day)
- Separation between animal and intelligent nature. (Sixth Day)
- Separation between work and rest. (Seventh Day)

The Judgment  
(Separation)

=

Creation  
(Organization)

### Judgment in the Light of Creation

Judgment means separation, and creation means organization, and these two things can be equaled.

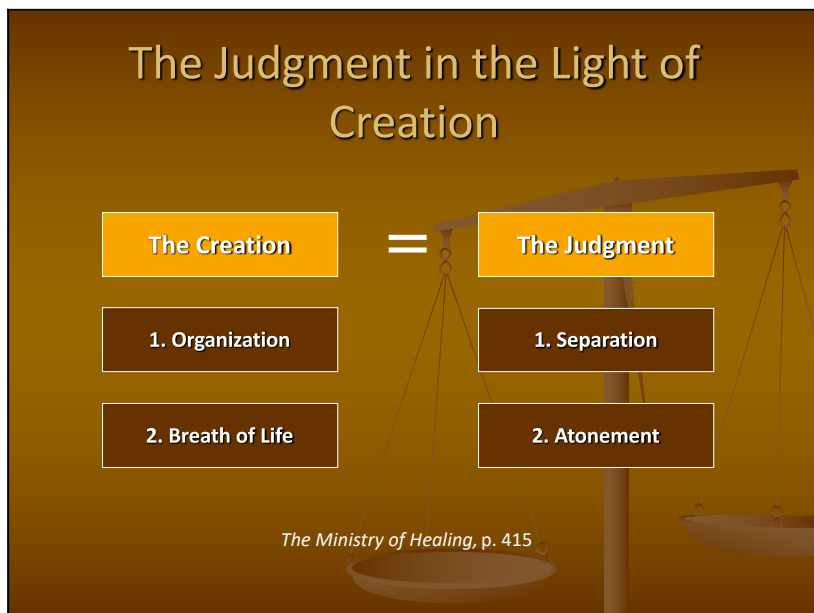
When you clean up your room, you separate the dirt from the clean things. You separate, let's say, the bed sheet from the shoes. You put them in different places. You separate your books from your cooking utensils. You separate the chairs from the carpet, putting each one in its place. In this way you organize your room, don't you? By separation you organize your room.

In creation we see both things and we see that judgment is an organization of things. But let me reiterate: to organize something is only one thing, there needs to be life also in these things. To simply organize a lump of clay is one thing, but to breathe His life into it is another.

"Judgment in the Light of Creation" means that the creation is a judgment. Creation means first there is an organization of



things, and so in judgment first there is a separation of things. Then in creation secondly, there's a breath of life into that which is organized: the breath and the clay become one. And in judgment after the separation there follows an atonement, making one or restoring harmony again between two parties. That is the parallel here.



**Ministry of Healing, p. 415:**

In the creation of man was manifest the agency of a personal God. When God had made man in His image, the human form was perfect in all its arrangements, but it was without life. Then a personal, self-existing God breathed into that form the breath of life, and man became a living, intelligent being. All parts of the human organism were set in action. The heart, the arteries, the veins, the tongue, the hands, the feet, the senses, the faculties of the mind, all began their work.

They all existed before, and now they began to work. That must have been an exciting moment!

And all were placed under law. Man became a living soul. Through Christ the Word, a personal God created man and endowed him with intelligence and power.

In this we can see judgment. Judgment first of all organizes things, it separates the good and the evil, the right and the wrong, it puts each thing in its appropriate place. Then it breathes life into that organization. And then,

### **Genesis 2**

<sup>7</sup> ...man became a living being.

This is exactly what the judgment does, the hour of which we proclaim:

### **Revelation 14**

<sup>7</sup> Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come.

## **The Announcement of the Judgment Day**

First of all, in the Old Testament there was an announcement of judgment with trumpets. Here is a picture that shows about how they looked. The Levites blew the trumpets everywhere in Israel, to call the people together for that Day of Atonement or for that Day of Judgment. On the first day of the seventh month they blew the trumpets to call them together. Then on the tenth day of the seventh month, the Day of Atonement took place. So there are ten days' warning.



### **Leviticus 23**

<sup>23</sup> And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying,

<sup>24</sup> Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall you have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.

<sup>25</sup> You shall do no servile work therein: but you shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord.

The people were called to prepare for the day in which there would be a separation between good and evil, between right and wrong, righteousness and unrighteousness. The people needed to make themselves ready. As they were to be cleansed from sin, as the sanctuary was to be cleansed from sin, they were to cleanse their hearts also and they were to prepare themselves for the journey and clean their clothes and come ready before the Lord. All this is described in *Leviticus* 16, the chapter on the Day of Atonement.

The second point was that they were not only to prepare for the separation that would take place but also for the at-one-ment. At-one-ment means to become one again with God, to come into harmony with Him. They had been separated and now they were to come into harmony with Him again.

### **Leviticus 23**

<sup>28</sup> And you shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God.

## **The First Angel's Message**

### **Revelation 14**

<sup>6</sup> Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—

<sup>7</sup> Saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.

Here again the creation and the judgment are closely connected in the First Angel's message, which is another proof that shows that creation is judgment. It's a judgment in session.

<sup>7</sup> Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judg-

ment has come; and worship Him who has made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.

Worship Him, because He will create it again. There is a connection.

The message is also a call for preparation to be separated from sin and preparation for the atonement, for becoming one with God again. It's not only that we have to separate from sin, which only the Gospel can do; but we have to become one with God, also which alone the Gospel can do. The Gospel does two things:

1. It separates us from sin, and
2. It puts a new life in its place.

It makes us one with God, at-one-ment. This is what the announcement of the Day of Judgment was.

## The Announcement of the Judgment Day



### Blowing of Trumpets (*Leviticus 23:23-25*)

1. Preparation for a day when there will be a separation (*Leviticus 16:29*)
2. Preparation for the atonement (*Leviticus 23:28*)

### The First Angel's Message (*Revelation 14:6-7*)

1. The connection between judgment and creation
2. Preparation for the separation from sin and for the atonement
3. Fear = Self-distrust (*Philippians 2:12-13*; *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 161)

## The Judgment Day in Type

In the following picture you see the High Priest as he was in

the Most Holy. The only objection I would have to this picture is that there was probably more smoke, because we are told that there was so much smoke that the Ark was veiled with the smoke. The High Priest was not supposed to behold it; it was too glorious, too bright. But at least he has the right clothes.

There is another picture which we often see in which he



wears the high priestly robes, which was not right. When the High Priest was in the Most Holy place on the Day of Atonement, he wore these simple white robes. That was the only time when he went in the Most Holy. He never went there on any other day.

In *Leviticus* 16 we read that on this day sin was removed from the Sanctuary, there was a separation, and Israel received atonement. Atonement means deliverance, it means restoration of a relationship.

But our time is over. I don't have time to read them with you, so in the next study we will continue and see what the judgment involves: what it means and how we are to prepare for it.



**L**ET us come back now to the subject of the judgment. We looked at what judgment means. We saw that it has two fundamental meanings:

1. Separation: it is separation between good and evil; between right and wrong.
2. Restoration of a relationship between God and man, and man and man.

We want to understand a little bit better how this works. So we have to go deeper into this study of “What does the judgment mean?”

## **The Day of Atonement**

The judgment day in the Old Testament is the Day of Atonement. Atonement means restoration of a relationship; to make one out of two, or bring them together, as the word atonement says: at-one-ment, which means bringing together two elements or two parties again. God makes at-one-ment with man.

The coming of the Day of Atonment was announced when the trumpets were blown on the first day of the seventh month. This prepared the people for the separation that would take place between them and sin, and also between the people and a sinner if he chose to stay with that sin. Also it prepared the people for becoming one with God again, at-one-ment.

The blowing of trumpets finds its counterpart in the first angel’s message of *Revelation* 14. This message says exactly the same thing. First of all it makes a connection between the judgment and creation.

Creation is in principle a judgment because it separates

darkness and light, earth and sea, plants and earth. Creation is an organization of matter and breathing life into it.

This is exactly what judgment is also. It organizes things that are disorderly and finally breathes life into them. There is also a preparation for that separation from sin and for the atonement because the people are told that:

“The hour of His judgment is come, make yourselves ready.”

But there is another element in it which we have not mentioned in our last study, which I want to add now. That is the element of fear.

### **Revelation 14**

<sup>6</sup> Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people,

<sup>7</sup> Saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come.

If the judgment is such a good thing, if it helps us to be organized and then breathes life into this organization, if it shows the character and love of God, then why should we fear it?

<sup>7</sup> Fear God and give glory to Him for the hour of His judgment has come.

The word “judgment” in the Old and in the New Testament it is very often connected with fear. One example is when Paul was preaching before Felix about the judgment to come, Felix trembled and feared. So much so, that he said to Paul,

“Please tell me another time because it’s too much now. I don’t want to hear more.”

What is the reason for fear? It is to create self-distrust. There’s a wonderful text in *Philippians*:



## **Philippians 2**

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

<sup>13</sup> For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

### **Christ's Object Lessons, p. 161:**

Fear lest your will shall not be held in subjection to Christ's will, lest your hereditary and cultivated traits of character shall control your life...Fear, lest self shall interpose between your soul and the great Master Worker. Fear lest self-will shall mar the high purpose that through you God desires to accomplish. Fear to trust to your own strength, fear to withdraw your hand from the hand of Christ and attempt to walk life's pathway without His abiding presence.

This is the fear we must have: not that Christ would leave us alone, but that we would let go of the hand of Christ. Do we have this fear? That is what will be created through the first angel's message.

## **Revelation 14**

<sup>7</sup> Fear God and give glory to Him for the hour of His judgment is come.

That is the blowing of the trumpets, and the judgment which the trumpets announced, actually began in 1844. In the description of that event in *Leviticus* 16, sin was removed from the sanctuary, there was a separation between the people and sin, and Israel was atoned. We see from the history of Israel that atonement means: deliverance, restoration of a relationship. The people were at peace after this.

It was a joyful event and shortly after they went into the feast of harvests, which is the tabernacle feast. A joyful event followed after the judgment was over, after they were at one with God, after they were at peace with God again. Our camp meetings are also like such a time of atonement where we become one with God.

There are two texts in the Old Testament, which describe the wonderful deliverance that this atonement brings. *Leviticus* 25 describes the Jubilee year, but this is the same in principle as the Day of Atonement.

### **Leviticus 25**

<sup>8</sup> And you shall count seven Sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven Sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years.

<sup>9</sup> Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land.

<sup>10</sup> And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family.

It is a time of freedom, of liberty, of becoming free from the bonds of Satan, and this is what atonement means.

## The Judgment Day in Type: Day of Atonement



### *Leviticus 16*

1. On this day sin was removed from the sanctuary (Separation).
2. This resulted in atonement for Israel.
3. Atonement means deliverance, restoration of a relationship.
  - a) See *Leviticus* 25:8-10
  - b) See *Isaiah* 63:4; 61:2

In the beginning of this study on the judgment we quoted

this text:

### **Isaiah 63**

<sup>4</sup> For the day of vengeance [which is the day of judgment] is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed has come.

It is the time when God redeems His children and makes them one with Him. The same we read in *Isaiah* 61:2 which describes the Jubilee year again:

### **Isaiah 61**

<sup>2</sup> To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God [which is again the judgment]; to comfort all who mourn.

## **Deliverance through Judgment: Daniel 7**

Now we want to make a very brief survey of *Daniel* 7. I hope you all know by heart what is in *Daniel* 7. Do you? It describes the four beasts that come out of the water, first the lion, then the bear, then the leopard, then the terrible beast which is not named, but is much like a dragon. It's a beast that has seven heads and ten horns.

This description of the four beasts is first of all frightening to some extent. Then suddenly the scene changes. In *Daniel* 7, not only are these things described, but there is also an explanation given.

First there's a vision in symbolic form given and then there's a brief explanation. After the explanation, Daniel desires to know more, so more detail is given of the vision itself. Then Daniel asks about particular parts of the vision. Then there is the second explanation, which goes into the details. So we have four times a repetition of the same sequence; two times in form of visions, and two times in form of explanations.

Let us run through the vision. The visions say there are four terrible beasts: they devour, they eat up, they are beasts of

prey, the kind that you don't want to meet them in nature unarmed.

### **Daniel 7**

<sup>1</sup> In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel spoke and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.

<sup>3</sup> And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.

<sup>4</sup> The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

<sup>5</sup> And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.

<sup>6</sup> After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it.

<sup>7</sup> After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.

<sup>8</sup> I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.

The judgment scene comes next and it says the books were opened and judgment was held.

<sup>9</sup> I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire.



Daniel and the Four Fantastic Beasts (1634)

(Source: Wellcome Collection)

<sup>10</sup> A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.



Next comes another scene in which we are told that the beasts are limited for some time and then are destroyed.

<sup>11</sup> I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spoke: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.

<sup>12</sup> As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.

Finally there is a description of the kingdom that is given to the Son of Man, who comes to the Ancient of Days and the kingdom was given unto Him.

<sup>13</sup> I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him.

<sup>14</sup> And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be de-

stroyed.

These are the four scenes described in the vision. Daniel's response is described:

<sup>15</sup> I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me.

What is the explanation of all that? The first explanation is that the four terrible beasts are four kingdoms.

<sup>16</sup> I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things.

<sup>17</sup> These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.

Then it goes on to talk of the kingdom that is given to the Son of Man:

<sup>18</sup> But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.

The saints receive the kingdom. That would fit best to the kingdom given to the Son of Man, but nothing else is explained. That's it. The four beasts mean four kingdoms and the kingdoms are given to the saints. Daniel is not quite satisfied and says,

<sup>19</sup> Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet;

<sup>20</sup> And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spoke very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows.

<sup>21</sup> I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them;

<sup>22</sup> Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the

saints possessed the kingdom.

To summarize, Daniel was asking:

“I would like to know more about the fourth beast especially because the fourth beast prevails against the saints. Three and a half times it has power over them and I’d like to know more about that. Also of the judgment that was held in favor of the saints, and also I would like to know more about the saints possessing the kingdom.”

It’s very natural that Daniel should want to know more about these things. An explanation is given by the Angel Gabriel.

<sup>23</sup> Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.

<sup>24</sup> And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings.

<sup>25</sup> And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

<sup>26</sup> But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end.

<sup>27</sup> And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

To summarize, Gabriel explained,

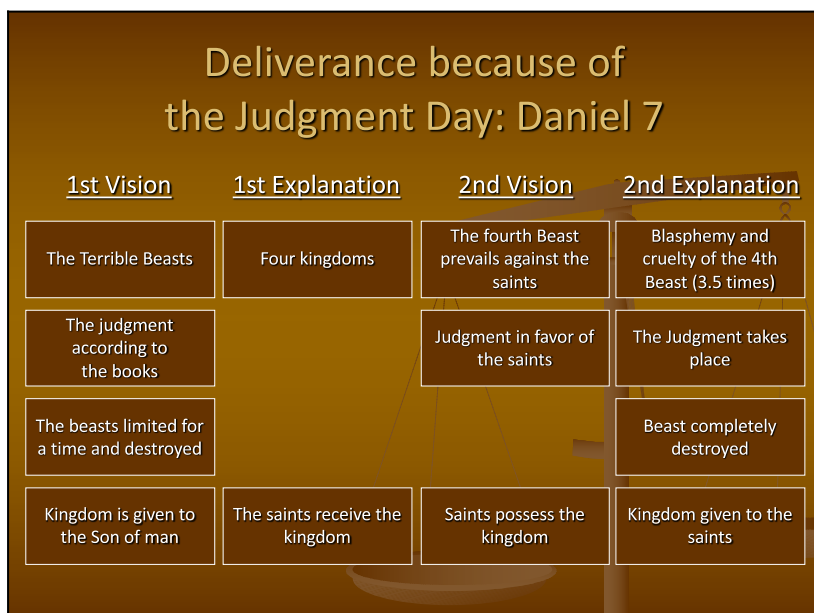
“The fourth beast, yes, it is a beast that utters blasphemy, that means it speaks against the Most High, it’s cruel and it will rule three and a half times. It will destroy everything that comes in its way and especially the saints. But then judgment is seated and the beast will be destroyed com-



pletely and so the kingdom is given to the saints.”

This is the sequence. Can we remember these four steps?

1. The power of four beasts,
2. Then a judgment that takes place,
3. Then the end of the beasts, and
4. Then the kingdom is given to the saints.



## Conclusion Drawn from Daniel 7

This in a nutshell is *Daniel 7*. What conclusion do we draw from this sequence of events? What is the lesson here? What do we learn from this? That the judgment is quite important, without the judgment there would be no end of the beasts.

Let us summarize the conclusion we draw from *Daniel 7*.

1. The beasts prevail over the saints until judgment is held and only as long as the judgment is held.
2. The judgment makes an end of the beasts; we will read *Revelation 14* to this in a minute.

3. Therefore the judgment delivers the saints from the beasts.
4. Finally, through the judgment, the kingdom is given to the Son of Man and to the saints.

The whole purpose of *Daniel 7* is to explain what the judgment is about. When Paul spoke before Felix about the judgment to come, I'm sure he must have referred to *Daniel 7* somehow, because that is the chapter about judgment. It shows us:

- The purpose of judgment, what it accomplishes;
- That judgment makes a separation between right and wrong, between good and evil; it makes an end of the evil beasts;
- That judgment creates new life because it delivers the saints from the beasts and gives the kingdom to them, which means a new life is given to them.

*Revelation 14:8-11* describes the third angel's message. It

## Conclusion Drawn from *Daniel 7*

- The beasts prevail over the saints until the judgment takes place.
- Separation ■ The judgment makes an end of the beasts.
  - See also *Revelation 14:8-11*
- New Life ■ Therefore, the judgment delivers the saints from the beasts.
  - See *Revelation 14:12-13*
- Because of the judgment the kingdom is given to the Son of Man and to the saints.

shows what terrible judgments come to the beasts, using different words than *Daniel* 7, but it describes that they will suffer terribly away from the presence of God. Then we read these wonderful words:

#### **Revelation 14**

<sup>12</sup> Here is the patience of the saints: here are they who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

This combination of the three,—the patience of the saints, the keeping of the commandments, and the faith of Jesus,—will mean deliverance from the beasts. In fact, it also says,

<sup>13</sup> Blessed are those who die in the Lord from henceforth for their works shall follow them.

You can see that the judgment plays a very important role.

### **Three Different Judgments**

We would like to understand better what kinds of judgments there are, and when they take place. We'll look at it in the light of the New Testament, but when we study it in the New Testament we see that we can apply this also to the Old Testament because they are in harmony with one another.

#### **1. The Light Judgment**

The first judgment described is the judgment of light. We call it the Light Judgment. Let us see briefly what the Light Judgment is:

##### **John 3**

<sup>19</sup> And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

A condemnation is a judgment. Another translation makes this clear:

##### **John 3 [NRSV]**

<sup>19</sup> And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the

world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

### **John 1**

<sup>4</sup> In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

<sup>5</sup> And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

The first judgment, which is the judgment of light, already separates good and evil, because evil will naturally reject the light and the good will receive the light. It also will show what is right and what is wrong. When we don't understand what is right and what is wrong, the light makes it apparent. So it is in itself a judgment: the Light Judgment. The truth separates between light and darkness, and also the truth gives life to those who receive it.

### **John 6**

<sup>63</sup> The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

### **John 1**

<sup>4</sup> In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.

<sup>5</sup> And the light shone in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

## ***2. The Investigative Judgment***

The next judgment we want to look at, is the Investigative Judgment. Investigative means after the light has been received or rejected, and after men have made their decision, there is to be an investigation of why they have rejected it and an explanation of why God sent it to them and what kind of chance God gave to them.

Such an investigation is described in many places in the Bible:

### **Ecclesiastes 12**

<sup>14</sup> For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.

The Investigative Judgment means also a separation between good and evil, between righteous and unrighteous. Such an Investigative Judgment seals the righteous; it protects them against the accusations of the enemy. In this way it gives them life.

So we have these two elements again:

1. The separation, and
2. The giving of life.

### **3. The Final Judgment**

The third kind of judgment is the Final Judgment which is not an investigation anymore, but simply carrying out the verdict that was given in the investigation. Just as an example let us look at:

#### **2 Thessalonians 1**

<sup>9</sup> These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.

That means separated from Him.

#### **Revelation 20**

<sup>14</sup> Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

<sup>15</sup> And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

That is the Final Judgment. The Final Judgment also means separation from sin and death, and it means eternal salvation for the saints.

Can we remember these three judgments?

1. Light Judgment,
2. Investigative Judgment, and
3. Final Judgment.

# The Judgment in the Light of the New Testament

- **The Light Judgment**  
(John 3:19; John 1:4)
  - Separation of light and darkness through the truth
  - Infusion of life
- **The Investigative Judgment**  
(1 Corinthians 4:5; Matthew 25:31-44; Ecclesiastes 12:14)
  - Separation between good and evil, righteous and unrighteous
  - Sealing of the righteous
- **The Final Judgment**  
(2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 20:14-15)
  - Separation from sin and death
  - Eternal salvation of the saints

## Timeline of the Judgments

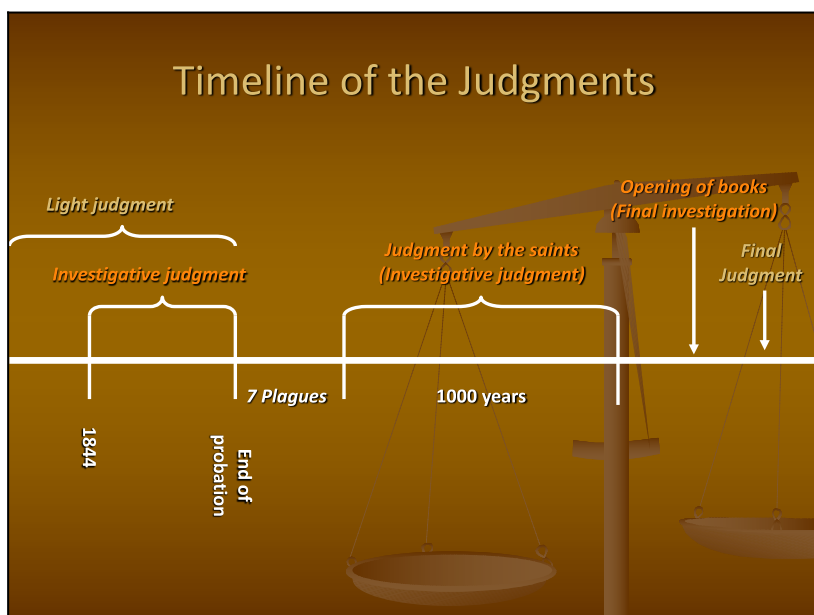
When do they take place? That's the next question. We have here a timeline. We want to see now when the different judgments take place.

When does the Light Judgment take place? One place is the camp meeting. When we hear the message on self-distrust, we can either receive it or we can reject it in our hearts. It's a judgment where separation takes place. Today we live in the time of the Light Judgment. As God sends light to His people, we are judged.

At the same time we live, since 1844, in the time of the Investigative Judgment.<sup>9</sup> It is a time now when the lives of the dead are investigated, but at the end of probation, when the Light Judgment will come to an end, then comes the Investigative Judgment of the living. It takes place at the end of probation.

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<sup>9</sup> See *The Great Controversy*, Chapter 28, "Facing Life's Record."



Then follow the seven plagues which are an execution of judgment in a way, but during the thousand years another judgment takes place, which is called the Judgment of the Saints. The Bible simply says:

### **Revelation 20**

<sup>6</sup> ...they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

But further information is given in *The Great Controversy* that it is an investigation of the lives of those who lived on earth and were not part of the first resurrection. It is also an Investigative Judgment. The Investigative Judgment before and the Investigative Judgment during the thousand years, are two different events.

After this judgment has taken place, there is another investigation after the thousand years when the wicked will be resurrected, when they will march against the city with all the hosts in order to conquer it. Then the sign of the Son of Man

will appear and they will be like paralyzed. They won't advance any further.

This is the time when books are opened again, as we read in *Revelation 20*:

### **Revelation 20**

<sup>12</sup> ...books were opened.

Whenever books are opened, there is an investigation. The people will be judged according to the things written in the books. This is another investigation. So we have three Investigative Judgments:

1. Today, till the end of probation;
2. During the thousand years; and
3. After the thousand years.

After the final investigation, which takes place around the New Jerusalem, there's the Final Judgment, which is the destruction of the wicked.

### **Why the Investigative Judgment?**

We want to ask now for the meaning of these judgments,

“For whom is this judgment?”

Maybe we should first ask another question,

“Why is there a need for an investigation at all?”

Why is this necessary? God knows already. An earthly judge needs to make an investigation in order to be able to judge fairly. If he would sentence people without a fair trial, it would mean that he would be unjust and he would make many wrong decisions.

Under dictatorships, there is no guarantee of a fair trial. But one mark of democracies or free societies is that you can always get a fair trial. That's one of the fundamental rights. Sometimes people think this is a hindrance, when someone



who commits a terrible crime gets a long trial in which to defend himself.

Dictatorships don't want to offer this, because the moment people are given the possibility to defend themselves in court, it may be that they find some reasons to get acquitted. It's very difficult sometimes to establish the truth.

But there is a principle which says, in the case of doubt it must be for the accused, or "innocent until proven guilty." It is better to let one go free who may be guilty than to condemn one to death who is innocent. To kill a person who is innocent is the worst thing that can happen.

For that reason it is absolutely necessary on this earth to have a fair trial, to have an investigation into this matter.

But does God need that? Can't He see immediately what is right and what is wrong? Can we hide anything from Him? Couldn't He execute righteous judgment on the spot? He certainly has the power and ability to do so, but this would not bring a solution to the problem that sin has raised. Sister White says,

**The Desire of Ages, p. 759:**

His authority rests upon goodness, mercy and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power.

One of the reasons why modern states today who call themselves democratic are sometimes not granting the liberty of a fair trial anymore, is because they say,

"We all know that these are criminals, they are terrorists. Therefore we all know this, it is obvious, and for that reason, there is no need for a trial."

But as soon as they go this way, they start moving away from their foundation principles. The weakness of a powerful

state, but also its strength, is that it can grant a fair trial even to its worst enemies. It's a weakness but it's also a strength.

That is also the strength of God's government: He can lay everything on a very, very solid foundation. This solid foundation takes time, true. It involves losses, true. But there is no other way. That is something that men today do not understand. It takes time, it requires losses, but it's the only way to finally overcome evil. There is no other way. Only by these means can unrighteousness be overcome.

As soon as we use the same means as unrighteousness, the battle is lost. It is not the power of God, but His character that is the prevailing power in the battle against sin. God has power. He could wipe out Satan as easily as you can throw a pebble to the ground. But He has determined that the great controversy is not to be ended like this. It is to be ended by truth and love, by a presentation of His principles.

## Why an Investigative Judgment?

"His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power." *The Desire of Ages*, p. 759



Not the power of God, but His character is the prevailing power in the battle against sin.



The judgment reveals God's righteous character in dealing with sin.

"Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. **All nations** will come and worship before you, for your righteous deeds have been revealed." *Revelation 15:4*

For six thousand years a judgment has been going on, a trial, and during this time Satan has made quite some inroads.

He has destroyed quite a lot of people and he has also won over quite a number of people. But God knows what is necessary. He knows that this is the only way to make a final end of sin.

The judgment therefore has one purpose and this is to reveal God's righteous character in dealing with sin. This matter is to be placed on a solid foundation, that means the whole process has to be absolutely in the open.

In *Revelation* 15 there is a wonderful text:

**Revelation 15 [NLT]**

<sup>4</sup> Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For You alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before You, for your righteous deeds have been revealed.

That is the ultimate victory of God's cause. Think about this. God does not gain the victory before all the nations come and worship before Him.

## **Who are "All Nations"?**

Who are all nations? Who are all people? All nations or all people, who are they? The angels? Are they the unfallen worlds? Are they the redeemed of this earth? Are they the fallen angels? Are they the sinners of this earth? Yes, all of them. That means the great controversy is ended only when the greatest sinner against God acknowledges God's righteousness, and this is the solid foundation on which His kingdom is built.

There are many texts we could read to this now, in *The Desire of Ages* and *The Great Controversy*. Maybe we should just turn to one:

**The Desire of Ages, p. 58:**

In the day of final judgment, every lost soul will understand the nature of his own rejection of truth. The cross will be presented, and its real bearing will be seen by every mind that has been blinded by transgression. Before the vision of

## Who are “All Nations”?

“Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For You alone are holy. **All nations** will come and worship before You, for your righteous deeds have been revealed.” *Revelation 15:4*

- The angels
- The unfallen worlds
- The redeemed of this earth
- The fallen angels
- The sinners of this earth

See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 58, *The Great Controversy*, p. 668-670.

Calvary with its mysterious Victim, sinners will stand condemned. Every lying excuse will be swept away. Human apostasy will appear in its heinous character. Men will see what their choice has been.

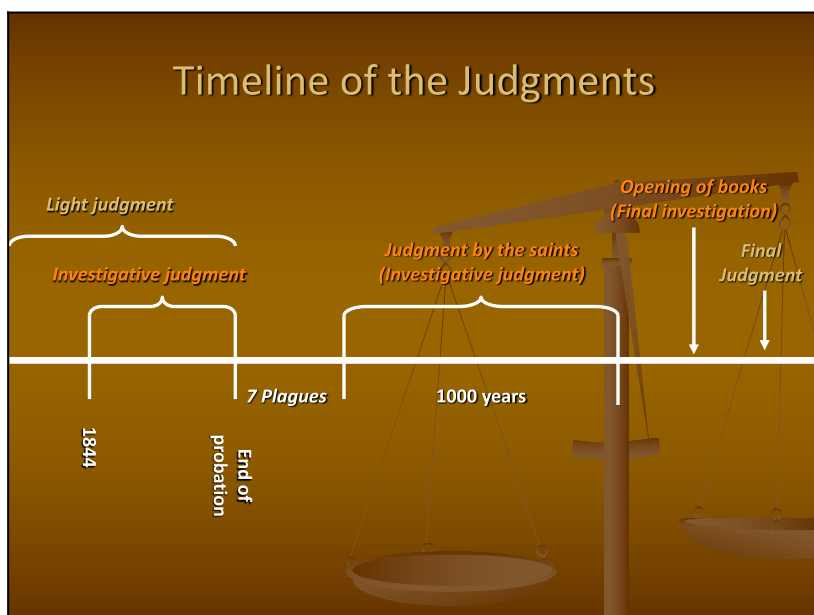
Every question of truth and error in the long-standing controversy will then have been made plain. In the judgment of the universe, God will stand clear of blame for the existence or continuance of evil. It will be demonstrated that the divine decrees are not accessory to sin. There was no defect in God's government, no cause for disaffection. When the thoughts of all hearts shall be revealed, both the loyal and the rebellious will unite in declaring,

### **Revelation 15**

<sup>3</sup> ...just and true are your ways, You King of saints.

<sup>4</sup> Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify your name?...for your judgments are made manifest.

What a victory this is! For what purpose then are the Investigative Judgments? Let's look at the timeline again. The Investigative Judgment taking place today, for whom is this



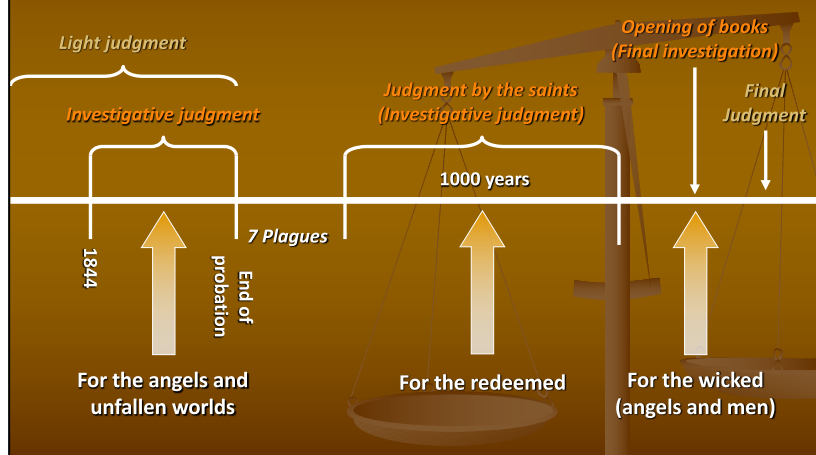
meant? Who needs a revelation of God's character today? Primarily, the angels and the unfallen worlds. They need to have a deeper understanding of what is going on here, and this judgment will lay it very open. Every secret thought will be laid open and the way God dealt with each problem, in every detail. The angels are studying it. For them, this Investigative Judgment is necessary.

For whom will the Judgment by the Saints be, during the thousand years? For the redeemed, who will see for themselves every detail of the controversy on earth.

For whom will the Investigative Judgment be at the gates of New Jerusalem when the books are opened, according to *Revelation* 20? For the wicked: both fallen angels and men. They will all see God's righteousness very clearly.

So, every Investigative Judgment is absolutely necessary, the first, second and third, and only then can the Final Judgment come.

## For Whom are the Investigative Judgments?



## The Books of Heaven

Now let us very briefly look at the books in heaven:

### Revelation 20

<sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

That is the time when the resurrected wicked stand in front of the New Jerusalem. A similar judgment scene is described in the Old Testament:

### Daniel 7


<sup>9</sup> I watched till thrones were put in place,...

<sup>10</sup> ...the court was seated and the books were opened.

We read here of books, and another book which is the Book of Life and the people were judged out of the things written in these books. So what kind of books do we find mentioned in

the Bible? What kind of books were opened?

## The Books of Heaven



- "And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and **books were opened**. And **another book** was opened, which is the **Book of Life**. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were **written in the books**." *Revelation 20:12*
- "I watched till thrones were put in place, ... The court was seated, and the **books were opened**." *Daniel 7:9-10*

First of all, we find the Book of Life described in many scriptures:

### **Daniel 12**

<sup>1</sup> ...and at that time your people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

### **Philippians 4**

<sup>3</sup> ...with other my fellowlaborers, whose names are in the book of life.

### **Revelation 20**

<sup>12</sup> ...and another book was opened, which is the book of life.

Then we have the Book of Death described:

### **Isaiah 65**

<sup>6</sup> Behold, it is written before me...

<sup>7</sup> Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, says the Lord...





The Judgment was set and the Books were opened.

(Source: Huret, Met Museum)

It is also described in *Early Writings*:

**Early Writings, p. 52:**

After the saints are changed to immortality and caught up



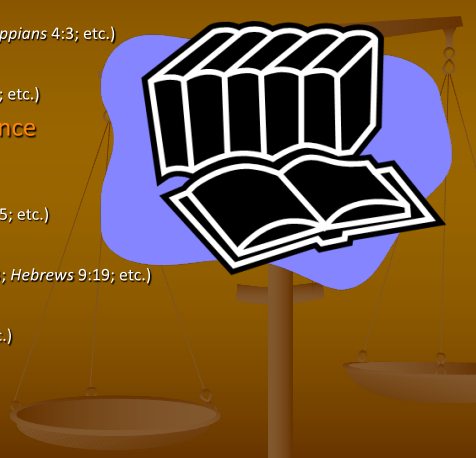
together with Jesus, after they receive their harps, their robes, and their crowns, and enter the city, Jesus and the saints sit in judgment. The books are opened—the book of life and the book of death.

The book of life contains the good deeds of the saints; and the book of death contains the evil deeds of the wicked. These books are compared with the statute book, the Bible, and according to that men are judged. The saints, in unison with Jesus, pass their judgment upon the wicked dead.

Here is described the Investigative Judgment that takes place during the thousand years, but it provides a very interesting insight into the kind of books that exist in heaven.

## Different Books Mentioned

- **The Book of Life**  
(Revelation 20:12; Daniel 12:1; Philippians 4:3; etc.)
- **The Book of Death**  
(Isaiah 65:6, 7; Early Writings, p. 52; etc.)
- **The Book of Remembrance**  
(Malachi 3:16; Psalms 56:8; etc.)
- **The Book of Records**  
(Ecclesiastes 12:14; 1 Corinthians 4:5; etc.)
- **The Law of God**  
(Deuteronomy 31:26; Nehemiah 9:3; Hebrews 9:19; etc.)
- **The Books of the Bible**  
(John 5:45; Early Writings, p. 52; etc.)

An illustration of a balance scale on a brown background. The left pan is higher and contains a stack of five closed books. The right pan is lower and contains an open book. The books are white with black outlines. The scale is a simple wooden structure with a central pillar and two pans hanging from a horizontal beam.

- We have a Book of Life and a Book of Death.
- There is also a Book of Remembrance described in *The Great Controversy*, where the good deeds of the saints are written.
- We have a Book of Records described in many other places.

- We have the Law of God, described as a book that plays an important role in the judgment.
- Finally, we have the books of the Bible, obviously, as we have read just now.

These are the different books that are mentioned in the word of God, in summary.

## Contents of the Books

What does the Book of Life contain? We just read it in *Early Writings*, p. 52. First of all, it contains the names of God's children, and secondly, the good deeds of God's children.

What does the Book of Death contain? It contains the names of the wicked and the evil deeds of the wicked.

What does the Book of Remembrance contain? It contains the names of God's children, and all their good deeds.

### Malachi 3

<sup>16</sup> Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.

### Psalms 56

<sup>8</sup> You tell my wanderings: put my tears into your bottle: are they not in your book?

The Book of Records, what does this contain? It contains the sins of all men. Sister White saw in a vision how the books were opened, and in the case of God's children, "pardoned" was entered next to the record of the sin:

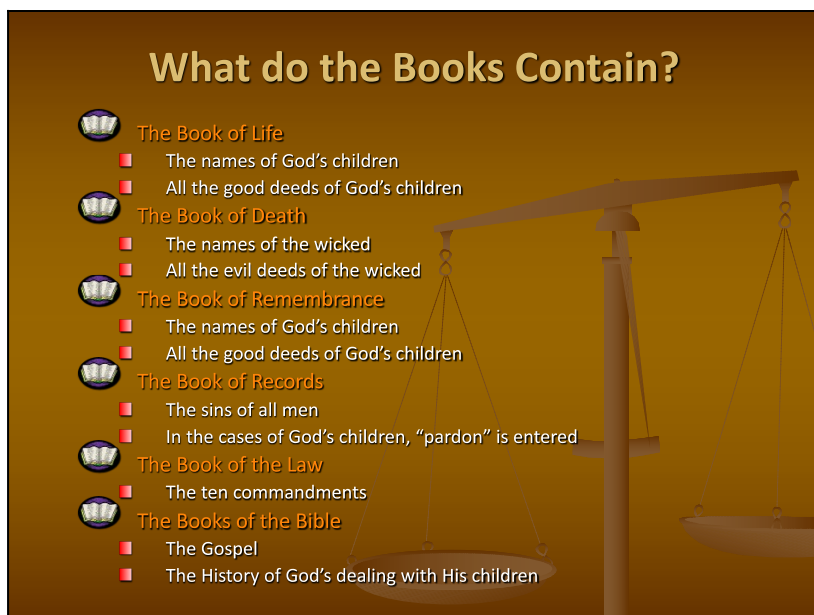
### Review and Herald, August 24, 1897:

The believing sinner is pronounced innocent, while the guilt is placed on Christ. The righteousness of Christ is placed on the debtor's account, and against his name on the balance sheet is written: Pardoned. Eternal Life.

### **The Great Controversy, p. 486:**

Sins that have not been repented of and forsaken will not be pardoned and blotted out of the books of record, but will stand to witness against the sinner in the day of God.

The Book of the Law contains the Ten Commandments. The books of the Bible contain the Gospel, in short. These are the different books, and together they contain all the history of God's dealing with His children.



### **The Bible is an Extract**

The Bible is an extract of the heavenly books. This you find when you look at exactly what the Bible contains and what the other books contain.

- The books of the Bible, for example, contain some of the records of the sins of men, which are also written in the Book of Records in heaven.
- The Bible also contains some of the records of the good deeds of the faithful, which are contained in the Book of Remembrance in heaven.

- The Bible also contains the names of some of the righteous, whose names are all written in the Book of Life in heaven.
- The Bible contains the names of some of the wicked, whose names are all to be found in the Book of Death in heaven.
- The Bible contains the Law, which is also found in the Most Holy apartment in the heavenly sanctuary.

The Bible contains all this, therefore it must be an excerpt of all the books in heaven.

## The Bible is an Extract of the Heavenly Books

- It contains the records of the sins of men (**Book of Records**)
- It contains the records of the good deeds of the faithful (**Book of Remembrance**)
- It contains life for the believers (**Book of Life**)
- It condemns the wicked (**Book of Death**)
- It contains the **law** which is found in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary

"... the priests joined with the ignorant mob in declaring passionately, 'His blood be on us, and on our children.' Matthew 27:24-25. Thus the Jewish leaders made their choice. Their decision was registered in the book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book which no man could open. In all its vindictiveness this decision will appear before them in the day when this book is unsealed by the Lion of the tribe of Judah." *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 293-294

This is confirmed by a statement in *Christ's Object Lessons* where Sister White describes the book in the hand of the Lion of the tribe of Judah as recorded in *Revelation 5*:

### **Christ's Object Lessons, p. 293-294:**

...the priests joined with the ignorant mob, declaring passionately, "His blood be upon us and our children."

Do you remember when they cried this concerning Christ?

Thus the Jewish leaders made their choice. Their decision was registered in the book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book which no man could open. In all its vindictiveness this decision will appear before them in the day when this book is unsealed by the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

Here, a heavenly book in which these deeds are entered, is mentioned. But the event is also recorded in the Bible. Therefore the Bible is a copy, or an excerpt, of what we find in heaven.

## Contrasts

There are contrasts, and the contrasts tell us something. There is a contrast for example, between the Book of Life and the Book of Death, obviously. There is a contrast also between the Book of Remembrance and the Book of Records of Sin. What is the message of these contrasts?

First of all, we are either spiritually alive or dead. We cannot be both at the same time. Therefore our names are either in the Book of Life or in the Book of Death. Everybody must ask himself the question,

“Where is my name? Is it in the Book of Life or is it in the Book of Death?”

The Book of Remembrance and the Book of Records of Sin have this message: good deeds cannot atone for evil deeds, therefore our names will be found in the Book of Remembrance only when our sins are forgiven; only when “pardoned” is entered next to the sin. Otherwise there’s no place for our names and our deeds in the Book of Remembrance.

God does not say,

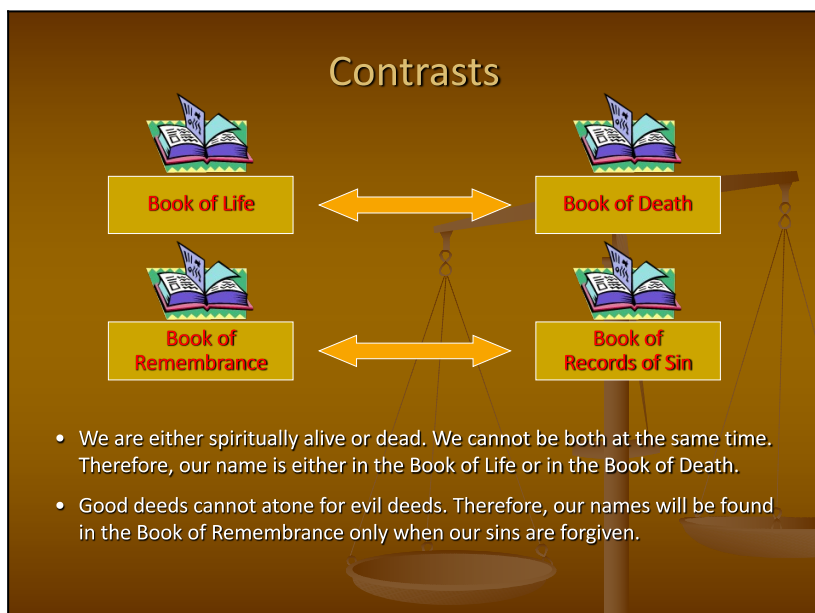
“Well he has so many evil deeds and so many good deeds, so because of the good deeds I will not count his evil deeds.”

God never does this. There is no good deed that can atone

for an evil deed, only the blood of Christ can atone for sin. For that reason there is a “mournful blank” in the Book of Remembrance when we have unforgiven sins:

**Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, p. 486:**

They had loved that work which would bring the greatest profit in this life; and opposite their names in the ledger devoted to good works there was a mournful blank.



## The Problem of Sin

Let us look at the problem of sin that exists in the universe. Through inheritance we have received a sinful condition. It's not only through inheritance, we have also cherished sin, and the practice of sin has also created more sinfulness in our hearts. So by inheritance and also by cherishing sin or cultivating it, we are sinful; that is our condition.

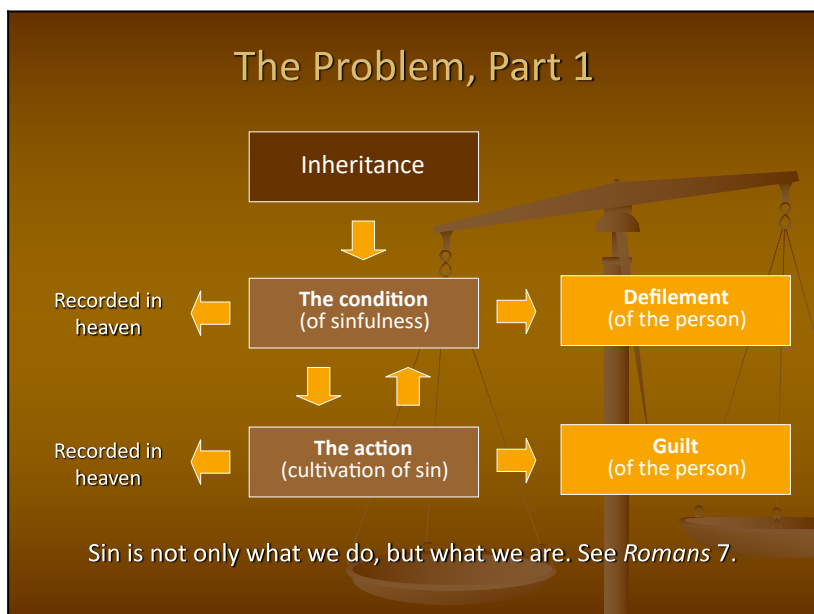
The condition of sin and the action of sin are two different problems, as we have learned in the past. The condition defiles us, it makes us dirty, and this defilement is recorded in heaven. The action places guilt upon us and this is also

recorded in heaven. We have a record of our defilement and we have a record of our guilt, both.

More than this, when our sins are forgiven there is also a defilement of the sanctuary, but this we will see in a minute. First of all, this is the problem on this earth: there is defilement and guilt. And in heaven there is simply a record of both these things in the Book of Records. That is the problem.

“Sin is not only what we do, but what we are.”

We have two things: the condition, and the action. We must understand what the solution is for each part concerning the judgment and the books in heaven.



The defilement of the person, the fact that he is dirty, and the record of the sinful condition are two different things, but they both need to be dealt with.

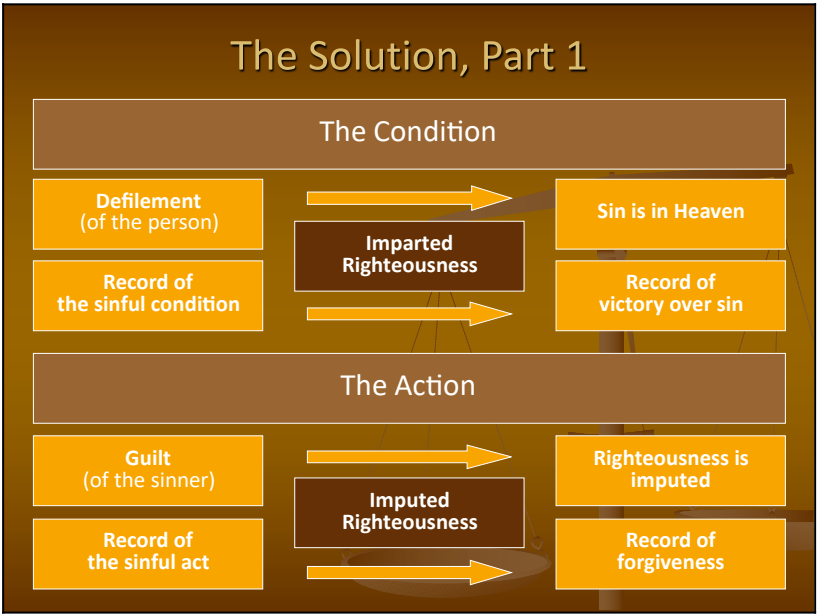
Likewise, the actions of sin incur guilt in the sinner himself, but also there is a record of those sinful acts in heaven. How

does God deal with these things?

In the case of the defilement God needs to impart His righteousness, to cleanse us from this dirt. In the case of the guilt, He imputes His righteousness. He reckons us righteous, when He delivers us from that sinful condition.

Through the imparted righteous which delivers us from the defilement, our sins come into heaven. Now sin is in heaven as an actual defilement of the heavenly sanctuary, and the record is now also changed in heaven. That means behind the defilement, instead of the record of the defilement, there is now a record of victory.

In the case of the actions of sin, instead of the guilt, righteousness is imputed; and instead of the record of the sinful act there is a record of forgiveness in heaven. On this earth the sinner is cleansed, but in heaven the sin defiles the heavenly sanctuary. In heaven there is a record of victory over sin, and there is also a record of forgiveness, but it is also polluted, both things.





The problem goes a little bit further, because even though our condition is now righteousness and our lives speak of victory, and God has justified us, even though there is a record of forgiveness, there is still someone who does not like this, and who puts us into question. That is Satan.

We read this in *Zechariah* 3. Satan says,

“Well, but no, no, he’s not. Does he have the victory? I don’t believe that. Is he living it out? Is he enduring? No, I don’t think so. Is he fit for heaven? Certainly not, I mean you have thrown me out so you must throw him out. [Concerning the action,] has he deserved this forgiveness? Has he deserved the title for heaven?”

Likewise, the sanctuary is still polluted by our sin. So these are the problems still existing even though we are free from sin on this earth.

We can’t for a moment say, everything now is beyond question, beyond doubt. There is a tremendous struggle still going on. Everything has to be placed on a very solid foundation. Don’t forget this. We need to have patience. In delivering us, God needs to do more than simply delivering us here on this earth. There is a controversy waging and going on.

What is the solution, then, concerning the condition and the action? The solution is the Investigative Judgment. The question is asked by Satan,

“Has he maintained the victory? Is he reliable? Is he fit for heaven?”

God says,

“Okay, ask these questions and I’ll answer them.”

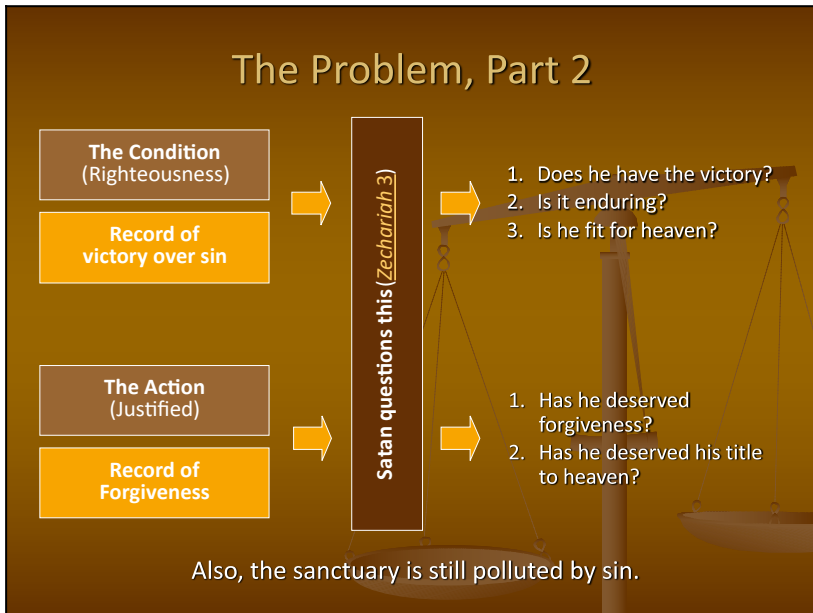
God will say,

“The grace of Christ has saved him from falling.”

He will then say,

“So he is reliable, he has lived on this earth without sin. He is fit for heaven, I can show this.”

Like with Job, God proves this, and therefore the sin will be removed from the sanctuary.



Concerning the action, the question is asked,

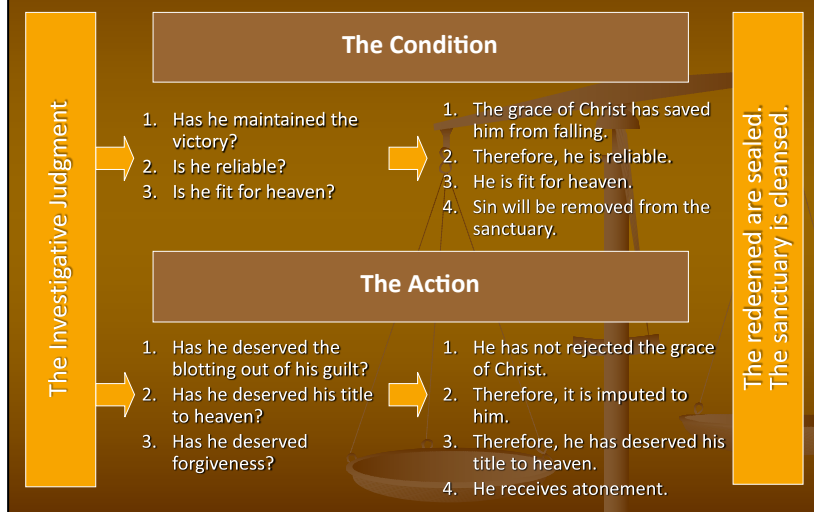
“Has he deserved the blotting out of his guilt? Has he deserved the title of heaven? Has he deserved forgiveness?”

The answer is,

“He has not rejected the grace of Christ, therefore it is imputed to him. Therefore he has deserved the title for heaven. He receives atonement not because of his righteousness but because of Christ’s righteousness.”

For this reason the redeemed are sealed and the sanctuary is cleansed.

## The Solution, Part 2: The Cleansing of the Sanctuary



This is the result of that Investigative Judgment and now the saints are delivered from the beasts, from the powers of evil. That is the message of *Daniel 7*, and that is the message of the judgment.

### The Reason and Purpose of God's Judgments

In summary, what are the reason and the purpose of God's judgments?

The reason is, because He loves us, because He wants to save us and because of His righteousness also. He must explain righteousness: what is right and what is wrong.

The purpose of God's judgments is: cleansing, to restore harmony, to end suffering, which means to deliver us, to seal the universe against sin and to justify the righteous.

I added another point, which is to inculcate self-distrust and trust in God. That is another purpose of the judgments of God. When we stand before the judgments we will understand very, very clearly that nothing, absolutely nothing of any of it

have we deserved. It is by Christ's righteousness that we stand.

That does not mean that we stand there without deliverance from sin. We have been delivered, while on this earth, prior to the judgment, but we will cast our crowns at the feet of Jesus acknowledging that it is through Him that we are delivered. The real purpose is to create the proper fear of God; to inculcate self-distrust and trust of God. That is the tenor of the whole Bible, isn't it?

## The Reason and Purpose of God's Judgments

- The reason for God's judgments (*1 Corinthians 2:2; Great Controversy, p. 652*)
  - Because He loves us
    - Because He wants to save us (*John 5:22, 27; 2 Timothy 4:1; Romans 2:16; Acts 17:31; Romans 5:8-9* without judgment there is no justification; *Zephaniah 3:17; Isaiah 63:4; Psalm 76:9*)
  - Because He is righteousness
    - Because He must explain righteousness (*2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 15:4; 19:2; Ecclesiastes 12:14; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Psalms 58:12; Jeremiah 23:5; Isaiah 5:16; Matthew 5:17*)
- The purpose of God's judgments
  - Cleansing (*Daniel 8:14*)
    - To restore harmony (*Revelation 20 & 21*)
    - To end suffering, which means to deliver us (*Revelation 21:4; Psalms 76:10; Isaiah 25:8*)
    - To seal the universe against sin (*Revelation 20:13-21:4; Revelation 12:9-11*)
    - To justify the righteous (*Zechariah 3:2; Romans 5:18; John 5:27; Romans 4:25; Acts 17:31*)
  - To inculcate self-distrust and trust in God (*Revelation 14:6-7*)

I hope we can understand the judgments now, also in the light of what we have studied here during the camp meeting. With these thoughts I want to close, praying that we shall, in our minds, often dwell on the judgments of God, as Paul did, and then be able, as he was able, to present it to the people.

I want to remind you that even the powerful Felix trembled and shook when he heard these words of the Gospel. I believe the same will be repeated again when God gives the Holy Spirit. But in order for Him to give the Holy Spirit, we must

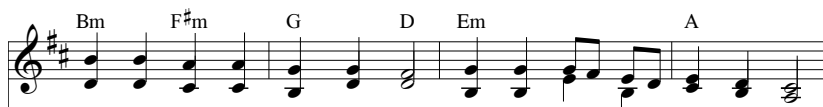
cooperate with Him in putting our minds into these matters, to truly understand the judgments.

I want to invite you now to read all the Bible texts given in the diagrams and to study them and find even more. I am sure you will. Amen.

## Call to Judgment



1. Blow the trum - pet loud and clear, let all know the judgment's near,
2. Gath - er all to Zi - on's hill, judgment day's demands ful - fill.
3. Come O priests at al - tar weep, judgment hour's no time to sleep.
4. Pour out crown - ing gift of grace, bless - ing of the ho - liest place.



- Sanc - ti - fy the ho - ly fast, tak - ing in the poor out - cast.  
 Con - gre - ga - tion sanc - ti - fy, world - ly pleas - ures cru - ci - fy,  
 Spare Thy peo - ple, gra - cious Lord, give them hearts of one ac - cord.  
 Sons and daughters proph - e - sy; Earth's Re - deem - er glo - ri - fy.



- Call the sol - emn as - sem - bly, haste to end Christ's ag - o - ny.  
 El - ders, child - ren, groom and bride, look up - on His pierc - ed side.  
 Judge Thy poor, break heathen's reign; seal them with the lat - ter rain.  
 Ho - ly bride Je - ru - sa - lem wed to King of Beth - le - hem.





THE theme of our camp meeting was self-distrust, and the key text for this was to be found in the chapter in *The Desire of Ages*, “The Call by the Sea.” This is a text we should learn by heart:

**The Desire of Ages, p. 249:**

The first thing to be learned by all who would become workers together with God is the lesson of self-distrust.

## The Tenor of the Bible

I would choose another text as well in this context. It’s from “David’s Sin and Repentance,” chapter 71 in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, the first paragraph:

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 717:**

The Bible has little to say in the praise of men. Little space is given to recounting the virtues of even the best men who have ever lived. This silence is not without purpose; it is not without a lesson. All the good qualities that men possess are the gift of God; their good deeds are performed by the grace of God through Christ. Since they owe all to God the glory of whatever they are or do belongs to Him alone; they are but instruments in His hands.

More than this—as all the lessons of Bible history teach—it is a perilous thing to praise or exalt men; for if one comes to lose sight of his entire dependence on God, and to trust to his own strength, he is sure to fall. Man is contending with foes who are stronger than he.

**Ephesians 6 [margin]**

<sup>12</sup> We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in high places.

It is impossible for us in our own strength to maintain the conflict; and whatever diverts the mind from God, whatever

leads to self-exaltation or to self-dependence, is surely preparing the way for our overthrow. *The tenor of the Bible is to inculcate distrust of human power and to encourage trust in divine power.*

Everything that we learn from the Bible, from the first page to the last page is to inculcate trust. It's designed to inculcate distrust, first of all in human power, and to encourage trust in divine power. What we have done in these studies is to understand, or begin to understand, the tenor of the Bible.

What is the Bible about? What does it want to teach us? It wants to teach us distrust, but not just as a theory, but to inculcate, that means to implant, it into us; distrust in human power, and to encourage trust in divine power.

Whether we believe it or not, this camp meeting is not sufficient. We have not yet fully inculcated distrust of human power, neither have we truly been encouraged to trust in divine power; this will come after. God will teach us through lessons that He will certainly give us; this is truly so.

But we shall remember again what we have experienced here. We shall remember again what we have experienced and we shall certainly not forget these lessons. We shall turn back to the word of God whenever it is necessary.

## **The Foot Washing a Judgment Scene**

Let us now turn to *John* 13 about the foot washing, and we want to read the chapter beginning in verse 1. The purpose for this is that we desire to understand in what way this is connected with our theme this week.

### **John 13**

<sup>1</sup> Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

<sup>2</sup> And supper being ended, the devil having already put it



into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him,  
<sup>3</sup> Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God,

<sup>4</sup> Rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded himself.

<sup>5</sup> After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

<sup>6</sup> Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, Lord, are You washing my feet?

<sup>7</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.

<sup>8</sup> Peter said to Him, You shall never wash my feet! Jesus answered him, If I do not wash you, you have no part with me.

<sup>9</sup> Simon Peter said to Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!

Yesterday we have studied a little bit about the judgment, and we have a judgment scene here before us. What is judgment? Separation and restoration, and both things happened here. A separation was necessary; a separation of the sin that lingered in the disciples; and their sin was alienation from one another. They could not stand one another, because everybody felt that the other was in his way for getting a higher position.

They were almost strangers to one another, even though they were brothers, very close. Yet that was their feeling at the moment, so this feeling had to be washed out from them; it had to be separated from them. That was what the judgment needed to do. In its stead, love to Christ and love to the brethren had to be implanted in their hearts.

Another separation that needed to take place was the separation from Judas, which we read a little bit later about. Judas was not converted to the cause of Christ; he only used it as a means to get himself into position. He wanted to rule himself; he would not want to submit. That was his spirit, but nobody realized it; nobody saw what Judas really was.

For that reason it was quite an operative task to separate this cancer from the people. It was not directed primarily against the person Judas, it was directed against the spirit of Judas. The church needed to be cleansed from that spirit.

Restoration—we can see this also in the fact that a new trust had to be restored in them to Jesus and to one another. Obviously if you take it one step further, if Judas was separated, then his place needed to be restored as well. All this would have been necessary to do, and Jesus saw it before him.

But He saw more. He saw that even though the judgment on this scene could accomplish a new spirit in them in which they would now concede to one another the highest place, they still would have self-trust to a great extent. This we see as we read on in this chapter.

### **Self-Confidence Reveals Itself Again**

First of all, Peter's attitude, "You shall never wash my feet," speaks of a lot of self-confidence.

"I am clean, I don't need this."

Peter was so confident in himself, he did not need the services of Jesus, only sometimes, only when he said,

"Now it's time that You can give me something, now You can serve me, now I need something."

But Jesus said,

"No, no, you shall always come and ask; and I am the One who guides you."

When Jesus told him,

#### **John 13**

<sup>8</sup> If I don't wash your feet, you have no part with me,

—Peter now wanted to have everything washed, which on the one hand expresses his love to his master, and on the

other hand again he is in control, and he is holding the steering wheel.

“Here, do it this way, do it this way Master, this way, this way.”



(Source: Huret, Met Museum)

He always had something to tell his Master, how to do the job. Well, Jesus explained to him,

“Let it happen this way, you don’t understand everything now, you will understand later.” (verse 7)

When would he understand? Only after he had betrayed his Lord. Only after he had fallen. Until this point he did not understand, even though he thought he understood.

### **John 13**

<sup>12</sup> So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, Do you know what I have done to you?

<sup>13</sup> You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am.

<sup>14</sup> If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.

<sup>15</sup> For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

<sup>16</sup> Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him.

<sup>17</sup> If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

<sup>18</sup> I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He who eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me.

<sup>19</sup> Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He.

<sup>20</sup> Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives me; and he who receives me receives Him who sent me.

Then Christ announces Judas the betrayer. We don’t need to read this step by step now. They all wanted to know,

“Who is it that betrays You?”

### **John 13**

<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered, It is he to whom I shall give a piece of

bread when I have dipped it. And having dipped the bread,  
He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.

They probably even then did not fully understand, but at least Judas went out and finally it was clear that Judas was separated from that body. From now on he would just expose himself even further and further.

<sup>27</sup> Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, What you do, do quickly.

<sup>28</sup> But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him.

<sup>29</sup> For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, Buy those things we need for the feast, or that he should give something to the poor.

<sup>30</sup> Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night.

We clearly see a judgment scene here: separation between light and darkness, day and night.

### **Peter's Lesson in Self-Distrust**

Then Jesus announces His departure, in verse 31-35. Then He foretells Peter's denial:

#### **John 13**

<sup>36</sup> Simon Peter said to Him, Lord, where are You going? Jesus answered him, Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you shall follow me afterward.

<sup>37</sup> Peter said to Him, Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for your sake.

It's amazing, he just received the foot washing, and how full he still was of self-confidence. Jesus told him plainly,

“Wait, you will understand, you will understand.”

Jesus could not have saved Peter from the ordeal, from the trial that was before him, but He wanted to save him from falling. One thing that Jesus wanted to show Peter in the

whole foot washing ceremony was,

“Peter, Peter, distrust yourself; don’t have so much self-confidence; you think you have it, but you don’t have it yet.”

“Well, why, why? Of course I have it, of course I can follow you.”

“No, no, wait, you will understand after.”

“Well, of course I will lay down my life for You, why do you distrust me like this?”

“Peter, wait, I will tell you later.”

### **John 13**

<sup>38</sup> Jesus answered him, Will you lay down your life for my sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied me three times.

This story again is a very, very strong lesson of how important it is that we learn self-distrust, and how difficult also it is to learn this lesson. When we look at this story a little bit closer, there is another one in the Bible, a parable, an object lesson, which Jesus uses, which is very similar to this one. But first let us look at the other texts which speak of His denial.

### **Mark 14**

<sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.

<sup>30</sup> But he spoke more vehemently, If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!

<sup>31</sup> And they all said likewise.

One more Bible text I wish to share with you:

### **1 Corinthians 10**

<sup>12</sup> Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

This Bible text shows the situation of Peter. He thought that he stood, but he should have taken heed lest he fall.





(Source: J. Collins, Wellcome Collection)

Now let's look at *Luke 18*:

### **Luke 18**

<sup>9</sup> Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

Can we see here our theme in this Bible verse? He spoke to

some who trusted in themselves. They had no self-distrust. That was the situation of Peter. The result is they despised others, because of this.

<sup>10</sup> Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

<sup>11</sup> The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.

<sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.

<sup>13</sup> And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner!

<sup>14</sup> I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

This parable we want to trace in the chapter “The Two Worshippers” in *Christ’s Object Lessons*. After quoting this text, Sister White goes a little bit in detail about the character of these two people.

**Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 150-151:**

“God, I thank you,” he says, “that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.” He judges his character, not by the holy character of God, but by the character of other men. His mind is turned away from God to humanity. This is the secret of his self-satisfaction.

Then we read the lesson from this:

Whoever trusts in himself that he is righteous, will despise others. As the Pharisee judges himself by other men, so he judges other men by himself.

Where have we learned this? In what story did we specially learn this factor that we despise others when we judge them by ourselves?

His righteousness is estimated by theirs, and the worse



they are the more righteous by contrast he appears. His self-righteousness leads to accusing. "Other men" he condemns as transgressors of God's law. Thus he is making manifest the very spirit of Satan, the accuser of the brethren. With this spirit it is impossible for him to enter into communion with God. He goes down to his house destitute of the divine blessing.



(Source: Millais, Parables of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ)

Peter needed to be washed to some extent from that spirit in order to be able to have communion with God.

**Christ's Object Lessons, p. 152:**

For each of the classes represented by the Pharisee and the publican there is a lesson in the history of the apostle Peter. In his early discipleship Peter thought himself strong. Like the Pharisee, in his own estimation he was "not as other men are." When Christ on the eve of His betrayal forewarned His disciples, "All you shall be offended because of me this night," Peter confidently declared, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." *Mark 14:27, 29*. Peter did not know his own danger. Self-confidence misled him.

Self-confidence is our worst enemy, because it is like a deception that is in our own hearts. It constantly misleads us. It leads us in the wrong direction, where we should not go.

He thought himself able to withstand temptation;

Remember Adam and Eve? Eve thought she was strong enough to withstand temptation, and wise enough to discern it.

He thought himself able to withstand temptation; but in a few short hours the test came, and with cursing and swearing he denied his Lord.

## **Peter's Victory over Self-Distrust**

**Christ's Object Lessons, p. 152-154:**

When the crowing of the cock reminded him of the words of Christ, surprised and shocked at what he had just done he turned and looked at his Master. At that moment Christ looked at Peter, and beneath that grieved look, in which compassion and love for him were blended, Peter understood himself.

The key sentence here is, "In that look, Peter understood himself." What is freedom from self-confidence? What is healthy self-distrust? One of the first definitions of healthy

self-distrust is to understand ourselves. But we can't understand ourselves, by ourselves. It was in the look of the Master that he understood himself.

He went out and wept bitterly. That look of Christ's broke his heart. Peter had come to the turning point, and bitterly did he repent his sin. He was like the publican in his contrition and repentance, and like the publican he found mercy. The look of Christ assured him of pardon.

Now his self-confidence was gone. Never again were the old boastful assertions repeated.



(Source: Carolsfeld, *Bibel in Bildern*, 1860)

That was also a judgment. Certainly, when he went out into the darkness, in utter self-despair, the terrible sin of self-confidence was separated from him. The foot washing did a part, but it could not do everything. Jesus had to say to Peter,

“You do not understand it now, but let it happen; you will

fully understand it later.”

Peter didn’t see it like this.

“Of course I understand what Jesus is doing, I see what He is doing, and when He tells me, I even submit to Him, so I don’t understand what He wants, I don’t understand.”

It was a little bit a rebellious, “I don’t understand.” It was somehow like this:

“Explain to me! You make it too hard, nobody can understand You. If I don’t understand You, being intelligent, what with my neighbors, they won’t understand You at all.”

**Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 154:**

Christ after His resurrection thrice tested Peter. “Simon, son of Jonas,” He said, “Do you love me more than these?”

Self-confidence would have answered, “Yes I love you more than these.”

Peter did not now exalt himself above his brethren. He appealed to the One who could read his heart.

**John 21**

<sup>17</sup> Lord, [he said,] You know all things; You know that I love You.

In other words,

“If You tell me that my love is not deep enough, I will accept it; I do not know myself, I have seen this.”

**Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 154:**

Then he received his commission. A work broader and more delicate than had heretofore been his was appointed him. Christ bade him feed the sheep and the lambs. In thus committing to his stewardship the souls for whom the Saviour had laid down his own life, Christ gave to Peter the strongest proof of confidence in his restoration.

This was no longer self-confidence, but confidence in Christ.

What a difference! Changed from self-confidence to confidence in Christ. When Christ says, "Well done my servant," that is a testimony. But if I say, "I am perfect," that is totally different.

**Christ's Object Lessons, p. 154:**

The once restless, boastful, self-confident disciple had become subdued and contrite. Henceforth he followed his Lord in self-denial and self-sacrifice. He was a partaker of Christ's sufferings; and when Christ shall sit upon the throne of His glory, Peter will be a partaker in His glory.

The evil that led to Peter's fall and that shut out the Pharisee from communion with God is proving the ruin of thousands today. There is nothing so offensive to God or so dangerous to the human soul as pride and self-sufficiency.

That is the enemy we really must fear.

Of all sins it is the most hopeless, the most incurable.

## **No Boastful Claim to be Saved**

**Christ's Object Lessons, p. 155:**

Peter's fall was not instantaneous, but gradual. Self-confidence led him to the belief that he was saved, and step after step was taken in the downward path, until he could deny his Master. Never can we safely put confidence in self or feel, this side of heaven, that we are secure against temptation. Those who accept the Saviour, however sincere their conversion, should never be taught to say or to feel that they are saved.

Think about this.

"I am born again, I'm saved; and it's not so easy to lose the rebirth experience."

We have tended to put confidence in these things, and the result was that we thought we could afford a few sins, and we would still be safe. That is not the case. We should never feel that we are saved.

This is misleading. Every one should be taught to cherish hope and faith.

It's not wrong to hope this, and to have faith in this, but to have this assurance in myself, "I'm saved," that is wrong. What's the difference between the two? The difference is, one is dependence on self, and the other is dependence on what Christ can do. We have to understand in our personal life what that difference is. That is the science of salvation. When we talk to other people who have overcome when under temptation, and we glory in their faith, this could prove their downfall.

**Christ's Object Lessons, p. 155:**

This is misleading. Every one should be taught to cherish hope and faith; but even when we give ourselves to Christ and know that He accepts us, we are not beyond the reach of temptation. God's word declares,

**Daniel 12**

<sup>10</sup> Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried.

Only he who endures the trial will receive the crown of life. (*James 1:12.*) Those who accept Christ, and in their first confidence say, "I am saved," are in danger of trusting to themselves. They lose sight of their own weakness and their constant need of divine strength. They are unprepared for Satan's devices, and under temptation many, like Peter, fall into the very depths of sin. We are admonished,

**1 Corinthians 10**

<sup>12</sup> Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall.

Our only safety is in constant distrust of self, and dependence on Christ.

It was necessary for Peter to learn his own defects of character, and his need of the power and grace of Christ. The Lord could not save him from trial, but He could have saved him from defeat. Had Peter been willing to receive Christ's warning, he would have been watching unto prayer. He would have walked with fear and trembling lest his feet should stumble. And he would have received divine help so

that Satan could not have gained the victory.

It was through self-sufficiency that Peter fell; and it was through repentance and humiliation that his feet were again established. In the record of his experience every repenting sinner may find encouragement. Though Peter had grievously sinned, he was not forsaken. The words of Christ were written upon his soul,

**Luke 22**

<sup>32</sup> I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.

In his bitter agony of remorse, this prayer, and the memory of Christ's look of love and pity, gave him hope. Christ after His resurrection remembered Peter, and gave the angel the message for the women,

**Mark 16**

<sup>7</sup> Go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you into Galilee; there shall you see Him.

Peter's repentance was accepted by the sin-pardoning Saviour.

## Seeking Pardon as Peter Did

### Christ's Object Lessons, p. 156-157:

And the same compassion that reached out to rescue Peter is extended to every soul who has fallen under temptation. It is Satan's special device to lead man into sin, and then leave him, helpless and trembling, fearing to seek for pardon. But why should we fear, when God has said,

**Isaiah 27**

<sup>5</sup> Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me.

Every provision has been made for our infirmities, every encouragement offered us to come to Christ.

Christ offered up His broken body to purchase back God's heritage, to give man another trial.

**Hebrews 7**

<sup>25</sup> Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.

By His spotless life, His obedience, His death on the cross



of Calvary, Christ interceded for the lost race. And now, not as a mere petitioner does the Captain of our salvation intercede for us, but as a Conqueror claiming His victory. His offering is complete, and as our Intercessor He executes His self-appointed work.

He will look upon no trembling suppliant without raising him up. He who through His own atonement provided for man an infinite fund of moral power, will not fail to employ this power in our behalf. We may take our sins and sorrows to His feet; for He loves us. His every look and word invites our confidence. He will shape and mold our characters according to His own will.

That is when we catch a glance of His look as Peter did.

### **Christ's Object Lessons, p. 157-158:**

In the whole Satanic force there is not power to overcome one soul who in simple trust casts himself on Christ.

#### **Isaiah 40**

<sup>29</sup> He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increases strength.

#### **1 John 1**

<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The Lord says,

#### **Jeremiah 3**

<sup>13</sup> Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God.

#### **Ezekiel 36**

<sup>25</sup> Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you.

But we must have a knowledge of ourselves.

That is healthy self-distrust. To have a knowledge of ourselves. Do you think you have this? I fear we don't have it yet. But that is what Jesus wants to give us, in the foot washing, in the communion service. He wants to take us one step further. The purpose of these services is to get a knowledge of our-



selves.

**Christ's Object Lessons, p. 158-159:**

But we must have a knowledge of ourselves, a knowledge that will result in contrition, before we can find pardon and peace. The Pharisee felt no conviction of sin. The Holy Spirit could not work with him. His soul was encased in a self-righteous armor which the arrows of God, barbed and true-aimed by angel hands, failed to penetrate. It is only he who knows himself to be a sinner that Christ can save. He came "to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." *Luke 4:18*. But "they that are whole need not a physician." *Luke 5:31*. We must know our real condition, or we shall not feel our need of Christ's help. We must understand our danger, or we shall not flee to the refuge. We must feel the pain of our wounds, or we should not desire healing.

The Lord says,

**Revelation 3**

<sup>17</sup> Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

<sup>18</sup> I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire.

We know this as the Laodicean message.

The gold tried in the fire is faith that works by love. Only this can bring us into harmony with God. We may be active, we may do much work; but without love, such love as dwelt in the heart of Christ, we can never be numbered with the family of heaven.

No man can of himself understand his errors.

**Jeremiah 17**

<sup>9</sup> The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?

The lips may express a poverty of soul that the heart does not acknowledge. While speaking to God of poverty of spirit, the heart may be swelling with the conceit of its own superior humility and exalted righteousness. In one way only can

a true knowledge of self be obtained. We must behold Christ. It is ignorance of Him that makes men so uplifted in their own righteousness. When we contemplate His purity and excellence, we shall see our own weakness and poverty and defects as they really are. We shall see ourselves lost and hopeless, clad in garments of self-righteousness, like every other sinner. We shall see that if we are ever saved, it will not be through our own goodness, but through God's infinite grace.

The prayer of the publican was heard because it showed dependence reaching forth to lay hold upon Omnipotence. Self to the publican appeared nothing but shame. Thus it must be seen by all who seek God. By faith—faith that renounces all self-trust—the needy suppliant is to lay hold upon infinite power.

## How to Pray

How shall we pray in such a way as not to come boasting in our own humility? This we read in the next paragraph. That's a model prayer we can also learn by heart.

### **Christ's Object Lessons, p. 159:**

No outward observances can take the place of simple faith and entire renunciation of self. But no man can empty himself of self. We can only consent for Christ to accomplish the work. Then the language of the soul will be,

This is how we should pray here in our fellowship prayers; in our personal prayers also:

“Lord, take my heart; for I cannot give it. It is your property. Keep it pure, for I cannot keep it for You. Save me in spite of myself, my weak, unchristlike self. Mold me, fashion me, raise me into a pure and holy atmosphere, where the rich current of your love can flow through my soul.”

Let's not come to God and say,

“Here, I will keep my heart pure for You, I will change from now on, I will do this, I will do that.”

Let's say to the Lord,

"I cannot do it, but I give it to You, that You may do it. It is your property, I cannot keep it pure. You keep it pure."

This is true self-distrust.

**Christ's Object Lessons, p. 159:**

It is not only at the beginning of the Christian life that this renunciation of self is to be made. At every advance step heavenward it is to be renewed. All our good works are dependent on a power outside of ourselves. Therefore there needs to be a continual reaching out of the heart after God, a continual, earnest, heartbreaking confession of sin and humbling of the soul before Him. Only by constant renunciation of self and dependence on Christ can we walk safely.

**Need to Remember Our Mistakes**

Peter never forgot that he had denied his Lord, and this made him sure. Whenever he was tempted to trust himself again, he remembered,

"But this is what I am, this is my real condition, I am a wretched man, I must be delivered. Who will deliver me from the body of this death?"

That was his constant language.

**Christ's Object Lessons, p. 160:**

The nearer we come to Jesus and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly we shall discern the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the less we shall feel like exalting ourselves. Those whom heaven recognizes as holy ones are the last to parade their own goodness.

The apostle Peter became a faithful minister of Christ, and he was greatly honored with divine light and power; he had an active part in the up-building of Christ's church; but Peter never forgot the fearful experience of his humiliation; his sin was forgiven; yet well he knew that for the weakness of character which had caused his fall only the grace of Christ

could avail. He found in himself nothing in which to glory.

How quickly we go over our mistakes; put them behind us, and wish never to remember them again. Even less, though, do we want another person to remind us about them. But that was not Peter's experience. He constantly had it before him, and when Paul one time rebuked him, he very readily accepted it. He said,

"Yes you are right, I cannot depend on myself."

He did not defend himself. He was not combative anymore. He was submissive.

### **Christ's Object Lessons, p. 160-161:**

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

At every advance step in Christian experience our repentance will deepen. It is to those whom the Lord has forgiven, to those whom He acknowledges as His people, that He says,

#### **Ezekiel 36**

<sup>31</sup> Then shall you remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight.

Again He says,

#### **Ezekiel 16**

<sup>62</sup> I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the Lord;

<sup>63</sup> That you may remember, and be confounded, and never open your mouth any more because of your shame, when I am pacified toward you for all that you have done, says the Lord God.

Then our lips will not be opened in self-glorification. We shall know that our sufficiency is in Christ alone. We shall make the apostle's confession our own.

**Romans 7**

<sup>18</sup> I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing.

It's a new study of *Romans 7*. It's not in contradiction to what we learned before, but if we concentrate only on the one side, and do not see how much self-distrust is conveyed in this chapter, we will fail to get the whole message.

**Romans 7**

<sup>18</sup> In me dwells no good thing.

That means apart from Christ, this is my condition.

**Christ's Object Lessons, p. 161:**

**Galatians 6**

<sup>14</sup> God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

In harmony with this experience is the command,

**Philippians 2**

<sup>12</sup> Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

<sup>13</sup> For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

This is the proper fear which is described here.

God does not bid you fear that He will fail to fulfill His promises, that His patience will weary, or His compassion be found wanting. Fear lest your will shall not be held in subjection to Christ's will, lest your hereditary and cultivated traits of character shall control your life.

**Philippians 2**

<sup>13</sup> It is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Fear lest self shall interpose between your soul and the great Master Worker.

This is a call to self-distrust.

Fear lest self-will shall mar the high purpose that through you God desires to accomplish. Fear to trust to your own strength, fear to withdraw your hand from the hand of Christ and attempt to walk life's pathway without His abiding presence.

## **Give the Glory to God**

### **Christ's Object Lessons, p. 161:**

We need to shun everything that would encourage pride and self-sufficiency; therefore we should beware of giving or receiving flattery or praise.

How quickly is this done. But shouldn't we encourage our children when they have done well? Shouldn't we encourage our brethren when they have gone in the right direction? When they have overcome sin? When they have true repentance, etc.? What we can do is to encourage them to fix their hope in Christ. We can encourage them by praising Christ for having delivered them, and we can assure them that as they continue in that way, Christ will continue to deliver them.

But we must beware of one grain of praise to the human agent. For example,

"What you did was congenial, what you did was fantastic! What you did was special! That is something nobody could understand so easily! You are better than the others! Fantastic!"

This is the kind of language that we should be aware of, especially when we give it to others, and we often will hear it from others, because the world has another standard. When God blesses us, we will hear this, and we must be aware of this kind of flattery and praise.

### **Christ's Object Lessons, p. 161:**

It is Satan's work to flatter. He deals in flattery as well as in accusing and condemnation. Thus he seeks to work the ruin of the soul. Those who give praise to men are used by

Satan as his agents.

But they don't know it.

Let the workers for Christ direct every word of praise away from themselves. Let self be put out of sight. Christ alone is to be exalted. "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood," let every eye be directed, and praise from every heart ascend. (*Revelation 1:5.*)

I would like that we contemplate about this in the foot washing: it is a step of deliverance from self-trust, self-confidence. Let us come to the foot washing with a sense of our real need. We need to be washed, and we need to listen to what God tells us, through every agent, through our fellow believers. Also when He speaks to us through other means.

But let us not think that we can afford to close our eyes, even slightly, to the word of God, however it may come to us. I desire that we shall have a similar experience to that of the disciples when they became truly unified. Self-assurance and self-confidence separate us from Christ to a degree; we noticed this in our studies. And whatever separates us from Him, separates us from one another.

But once these barriers are broken down, then there will be a true unity. And as we experience it, we shall carry it to the world field. Let us have this self-distrust in our heart, we cannot create it ourselves, but we can pray to the Lord,

"Lord I cannot do it, but here is my heart, please do it for me."

Shall we do this now, kneeling down together, praying for this?

# Lord, Take My Heart

D Em G 1. A 2. A

Lord, take my heart, for I can-not give it. give it.

Lord, take my heart,

Lord, take my heart,

F#m G Em A

It is Thy pro-per-ty. Keep it pure, for I can-not keep it for Thee.

Bm Em7 F#m Em G 3 A

Save me in - spite of my - self, my weak un - christ-like self.

D D7 G D G Em G

Mold me, fash-ion me, raise me in - to a pure and ho - ly at - mo -

A(sus4) A Bm F#m 3 3

sphere, where the rich cur - rent of Thy love can flow through my soul.



The musical score is written for a single melodic line and a bass line. The key signature is one sharp (F#), indicating G major. The melody consists of two versions, each with three measures. The first version (1.) has chords G, A(sus4), and A. The second version (2.) has chords G, A(sus4), A, and D. The lyrics 'Raise me Lord!' are repeated under both versions. The bass line provides harmonic support with chords and a melodic line in the lower register.

1. G A(sus4) A | 2. G A(sus4) A D

Raise me Lord! Raise me Lord! Raise me Lord!

Text: *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 159



Jesus praying in Gethsemane

(Source: Bible Scenes, 1891)

**M**ARRIAGE and Weddings: how we shall conduct ourselves in regard to them? The question comes up because there are different habits in different countries.

Some countries have wedding ceremonies that are performed officially, and others don't have them at all. There are some countries who do not have these simply because it's not a habit. My suggestion was, in the case of one brother, that if it is not a habit in your country, then establish such a habit.

You might ask me, and the believers would ask him, for a biblical reason. We must give a reason for everything that we do. We don't want to just begin a custom that is not founded in the word of God.

### **Marriage is a Public Contract**

It is true that a wedding ceremony is not instituted like the Lord's Supper, or Baptism, which are definitely commanded by Christ. But what the Bible makes clear, and what I think common sense also tells us, is that marriage is a public contract; it's not a private thing. Some people, even in our culture, think,

"Why should I declare it to others? We have agreed with one another to be husband and wife and it's a personal matter between us, so why should we tell anybody else?"

The simple reason is, that if it is not officially declared, you don't have the protection of society. The protection of society is what God has given to marriage, and for that reason it must be publicly declared.

An example of this is found in the story of Boaz and Ruth, which is described in *Ruth* 4:1-11. We don't want to read ev-

everything, you know the story very well. The question for Ruth was, who was the nearest of kin who would marry her? There was one, but he did not want to take her, so Boaz came in and took this role. Then it says,

#### **Ruth 4**

<sup>6</sup> And the close relative said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance. You redeem my right of redemption for yourself; I cannot redeem it.

<sup>7</sup> Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging, to confirm anything. One man took off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was confirmed in Israel.

<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the close relative said to Boaz, Buy it for yourself. So he took off his sandal.

<sup>9</sup> And Boaz said to the elders of the people, You are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's from the hand of Naomi.

<sup>10</sup> Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from his position at the gate. You are witnesses this day.

He made it very, very public, very clear. There was no question. He said,

“This is my wife.”

There are many other examples of wedding ceremonies, and of public declarations, which we could quote here. One is Isaac's marriage. In the time of Christ there was a marriage that He attended. It is described again and again as a public matter, and not as a private matter.

### **A Right Order is Essential**

In order for a marriage to be a successful one it is necessary that a right order is kept. The right order is:

1. It is based on a spiritual unity.



#### **Ruth 4**

(Source: The Bible and Its Story, 1909)

<sup>9</sup> And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, You are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi.

<sup>10</sup> Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: you are witnesses this day.

2. There must also be a mental compatibility, that the two think alike in some degree.
3. Finally there is a physical unity.

But before the physical unity takes place and even before the mental unity takes places too much, there should be an involvement of the public, for the sake of protection.

For example, we have Marcus and Judith who had this thought independently in their minds, and they first went to their parents and spiritual parents, to speak with them concerning the thought. Marcus came to us even before he talked to Judith. Then finally they talked about their intention before the whole church, and they said,

“Look, if anybody has anything or sees anything against our friendship and eventual marriage, please let us know, because that is our intent.”

Now the whole church is involved, the whole church bears the burden and we all pray for them. As you see, they are friends with one another, but they still keep separate from one another physically speaking, that if for some reason it is not God’s will, everything can be reversed again, without regret. This is the proper conduct in which we believe.

It gives a time of test, a time of trial, in which we as the church can also ask the Lord to put them through such tests as will prove the value of their union.

Very often this order is turned around. The couple first start a friendship, become very close with one another, and then they ask the parents and the church. When this happens, usually it’s very difficult to say no, because they are so close already. When you say no, it’s like destroying something.

For that reason, it’s important that before you start a closer friendship, you involve those who are responsible, and those who are wiser and those who can make a better decision than

you yourself. That's a part of self-distrust.

Unfortunately through the self-confidence that people have today, especially young people, this questioning attitude is not there. They just say,

“We know better and we just have to get the permission of the older ones.”

That is one reason why so many marriages fail, because young people do not have the experience. So, in order to be an example to the younger ones, and to others, let us really go about this in the right way.

## **How to Make a Public Declaration**

Where do we need a public declaration? We are members of two societies: the world, and the church. Both societies need to be clearly informed. The society of the world, which is represented by the state, needs to get clear information that we are husband and wife, and so likewise the society of the church in which we live, needs to be clearly informed.

When this protection is made, the house is built, you can say. Then the two can move in, and really start the marriage. But if you move in before the house is built, you will get troubles. That has been our experience in the past.

So, in those countries where a wedding ceremony is not customary, let us establish one. Let us say very clearly,

“Here we will declare.”

There is no specific formality that needs to be fulfilled in that sense. There is no need for a special dress, or that the ceremony has to follow a certain form; all this is not necessary. The main point is that it is properly declared before the church, that a prayer of dedication is spoken, and a prayer of blessing, and that the church can say fully Amen to the matter.





Martin Luther's marriage to Catharine von Bora, June 13, 1525

(Source: Scenes from the Life of Luther, 1883)

But before the actual ceremony takes place, the church will have been informed already previously, and they will have been prepared, so they can, in such an assembly, give their Amen to this union. When this is the case then it shall have



the blessing of God.



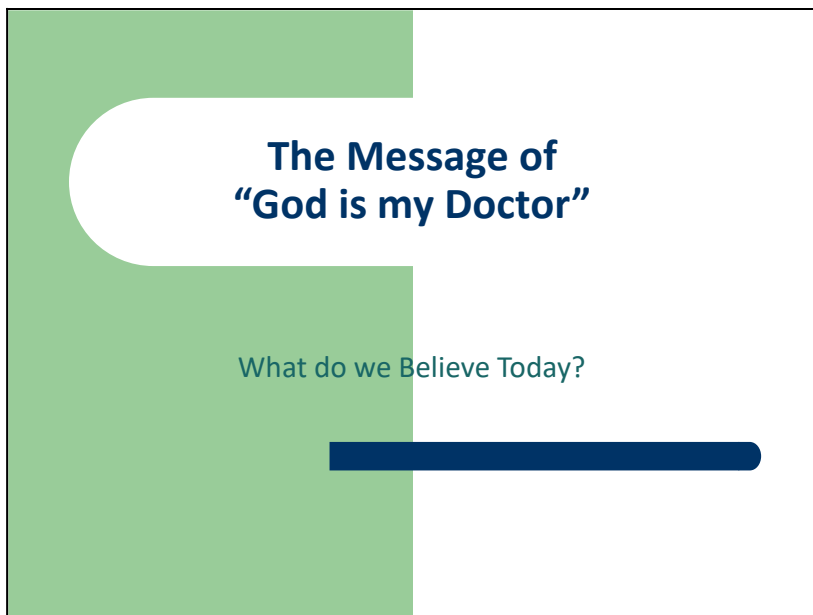
The same declaration should be made before the state, as far as it is possible in the different countries. I don't know how it is done in certain places, especially in Africa, but make sure that the world knows it. Make it as clear as you can.

For the church, I recommend that you have a simple ceremony. It doesn't need to be a big one, but it must have this character: that the church is assembled, that the elder or minister is there, that he prays in behalf of the church for the couple, and dedicates them to God.

So, with this I want to close.

**T**HIS morning we have repeated some history of our health message in order to find what exactly we have to repent of, because we want to make a confession.<sup>10</sup> This we wanted to publish, and we wanted to add a point about our past attitudes, or our past concepts about “God our Doctor” as well.

In order to understand this a little bit better, I will review the history. I headlined this consideration in the following way:



Maybe I should have headlined it, “What shall we repent of? What is the sin we want to confess?” Maybe that would be another subheading to this. But we are dealing here with the

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<sup>10</sup> See the Appendix: Our Confession.

message of “God is my Doctor.”

## Where Shall We Look?

So, the first question is, “Where shall we look?” I would like to begin with a quote in:

### **Early Writings, p. 14:**

While I was praying at the family altar, the Holy Ghost fell upon me, and I seemed to be rising higher and higher, far above the dark world. I turned to look for the Advent people in the world, but could not find them, when a voice said to me, “Look again, and look a little higher.” At this I raised my eyes, and saw a straight and narrow path, cast up high above the world. On this path the Advent people were traveling to the city, which was at the farther end of the path. They had a bright light set up behind them at the beginning of the path, which an angel told me was the midnight cry. This light shone all along the path and gave light for their feet so that they might not stumble. If they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the city, they were safe.

The Adventist people here were at first not seen and Sister White was told to look a little bit up, and they were walking on this path, and this path was perfectly lit by a light, and where did it come from? It came from behind, from the midnight cry.

Now instead of Advent people put here Sabbath Rest Advent people. That is our movement. We are traveling on a path and how do we find this path? What kind of light do we have that lightens the path? It’s the light that has shone in the beginning. It shines brighter and brighter as we go on. That’s the purpose of Jesus, but we must not forget where it started because that light will lead us to the city. What was the light? It was the light on “God is my Doctor,” which was preached in 1978. So, let us paraphrase the quote this way:

The Sabbath Rest Advent people are in the world but they

are traveling on the path. They are traveling to the city at the further end of the path. They have a bright light set up behind them at the beginning of the path, which the angel told me was the message of “God is my Doctor” in 1978. The light shone all along the path, and gave light for their feet, so that they might not stumble. If they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the city, they were safe.

## **What was the Message of 1978?**

This applies to us. We have to think about this statement for a while, but let’s first of all look at what was the message of 1978. I will give you some points now, which we seem to think was the message. I don’t say that all these points are wrong, but this was not the message.

- That we should only use natural medicine, that is nothing new; that’s basically what Adventists have believed all the time.
- That we shall not go to doctors, hospitals, and shall not go under operations, this was not the message. You can read it in our camp report, or listen to tapes of that time.
- Was the message that we would always be healed, provided we had faith? No, that was not the message. In fact, it was even mentioned in those first presentations, that Sister White, for example, and Paul were not healed.

So what was in the message of 1978, if these points were not part of it?

The message began with a study on the law in Galatians. The message on the law of Galatians referred to 1888, and the basic point was that righteousness or life does not come by the law. Adventists in general believed that they had the truth because they were keeping the Sabbath, and they were pointing their friends from the other churches to the law of God. They said,

“Look here, you must keep the Sabbath in order to be God’s people, because that is what it says in the fourth commandment.”

Then the others would reply,

“We are not standing under the law anymore, because that is what we read in *Galatians* 3.”

There was a controversy over this question of whether to keep the Sabbath or not. Adventists argued,

“That is not right, you have a wrong interpretation of *Galatians* 3, because it talks there about the ceremonial law; and not of the moral law. We still stand under the moral law, but not under the ceremonial law.”

Then Waggoner and Jones came along and they preached that the law in *Galatians* is the moral law. That seemed to destroy the Adventist argument altogether, so it caused a problem. But, their real message was not that we shall not keep the law anymore, the message was that when the law is fulfilled in us, we no longer stand under the law. The law written on stony tables is what we are under as sinners, but when we receive the life of Christ, we have the living law within us, and are no longer condemned by the law which is written on stony tables. They were preaching the law written into the heart, which is righteousness, it is life, and it does not come by the law, but from Christ. It’s an important point.

So the message of 1978 was, health does not come by the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. Everybody who really could grasp this message developed a personal relationship with Christ. If that personal relationship with Christ is not there, then this message is valueless. It is not a message that can just be received as an intellectual exercise. It’s impossible; we cannot just have it as a doctrine written on our doorposts. It’s either written in the heart or it’s not there.

If that message is not written in the heart, if Jesus is not our

personal Doctor, then we don't have it. Then we will draw all kinds of personal conclusions, which may be quite wrong. Let me emphasize again, the message of 1978 in a nutshell is:

*Health does not come by the law,  
but by faith in Jesus Christ.*

## What was the Message of 1978?

- We studied the law in Galatians
- The message of 1888: Righteousness (life) does not come by the law
- The message of 1978: Health does not come by the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ
- Acts 4:12

In this connection let us briefly turn to where Peter spoke before the Sanhedrin, and he said:

### **Acts 4**

<sup>12</sup> Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

You know that the word “salvation” can also be translated “healing.” “Nor is there *healing* in any other.” That is quite a valid translation, because that was the context. They asked him,

“How did you heal this man?”

And he said,

“This shall be known to you that there is no healing except by Jesus Christ.”

So, let's read this again,

#### **Acts 4**

<sup>12</sup> Nor is there *healing* in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be *healed*.

In a nutshell, this was the message of 1978.

### **The History of Changes in Our Understanding**

Now let us look a little bit at the history and how it went. The history after 1978 went like this: There was enthusiasm and there was excitement at first when the message was received. It seemed to be a wonderful message for us and I would almost describe it like the experience in *Revelation 10*; it was sweet in our mouths, but it was a bit bitter in our stomach when we swallowed it, because our expectations were not fulfilled.

What were our expectations? What were our enthusiasm and excitement based upon? We expected that the miracles of the times of Jesus' ministry would be immediately repeated. We thought that from now on God would work miracles among us, miracles of healing. That was definitely our belief.

It was considered merely a matter of faith that this would actually happen. So the only prerequisite to seeing actual miracles was just faith. If that faith was there, we would definitely see these miracles; that was our belief.

The question of treatments and doctors would not need to be dealt with. There was no need to discuss these points, because Jesus would always heal. It was considered an unimportant question in the enthusiasm and excitement which we had. We would not look at these things, neither would we ask



many questions concerning this. We thought that it is always the will of God to heal, even though that was not the message.

As I said already, that was more or less the expectation; we did not even look at the exceptions. In fact, in one case, if I am not mistaken, the statement was even made,

“When we pray for healing we don’t pray ‘if it is your will,’ because we know it is always God’s will to heal us. After all didn’t God say that He will heal all your diseases? And He will forgive you all your iniquities? There are no exceptions, so therefore that means, He will always heal, except when we don’t have faith. That is clear, He will not heal in those cases.”

That was more or less the expectancy.

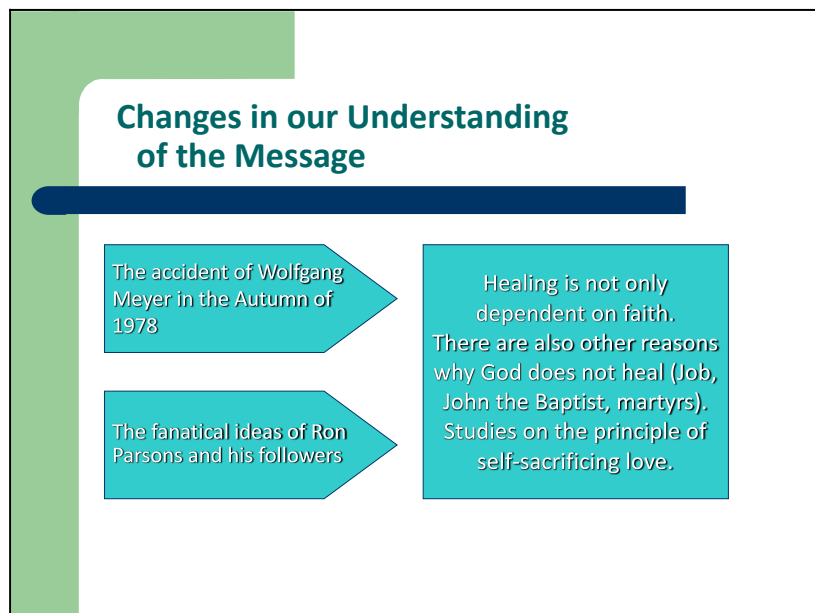
But then the history went on. It was in the autumn of 1978, when the American Camp meetings were still on, that something happened, and that was the tragic accident of Wolfgang Meyer. On a trip to Rumania where he did not get entrance, he came back and was involved in a car accident, where he and two other believers died. Another event that was quite important for us was the fanatical ideas of Ron Parsons and his followers. That took shape a little later, but we can almost say their roots began in this time.

In addition to this we should add that we were convicted that God would resurrect Wolfgang. It seemed like the opportunity for a miracle. But, he was not resurrected. Two times we prayed for him, and each time nothing happened.

So, what we learned through these things, through the fanatical ideas and also through the experience that we went through, is that healing is not only dependent on faith. There are also other reasons why God does not heal.

I want to say that this was not something new, because it was contained in the message of 1978 already. But, now it became more prominent; now it was really a matter of also our clear understanding. We studied Job, we studied John the Bap-

tist, we studied the martyrs, and these were the studies on the principle of self-sacrificing love, which gave quite a balance, especially to the fanatical ideas which came up.



## Questions That Came Up

After some years, more questions arose. For example:

1. What is the place of treatments in the work of healing?
2. What is the place of doctors: believing and non-believing?
3. In Germany at that time we had one doctor and others who soon became doctors, and the question was,
  - a. Should the believers now all go to them, or should they not?
  - b. How is it with unbelieving doctors? Would it be a denial of faith to go to them?
  - c. Anyway, shall we even use treatments, and what kind of treatments?

Another question was,

4. What is natural medicine?
  - a. The one would say, "This is natural."
  - b. The other would say, "That is natural."

And, another question:

5. Are operations a denial of faith?
  - a. It was vehemently denied, or
  - b. It was vehemently supported.

These were the questions that caused quite some friction and tension among us, and uncertainty. What were the different positions on these questions? I repeat these questions here:

1. What is the place of treatment in the work of healing?
  - a. One position would be: "They are a denial of faith."
  - b. Another position: "They are only a token of faith without any other value."
  - c. And another position would say: "They are life-saving essentials. Without treatments you will die, so you must have treatments."
2. What is the place of doctors? That is, of believers and unbelievers?
  - a. Some would say: "There is no place for doctors; you don't need a doctor when Christ is your doctor."
  - b. And others would say, "Well if the doctor is a believer you can go to him, but only if he is a believer."
  - c. And others would say, "You can go to any doctor; they are all equal, and anyway, the doctors of the world are often wiser than our doctors."

Those were the positions; I just repeat them here, along with the different viewpoints.

3. What is natural medicine?
  - a. Some would say “To do nothing is natural; natural is if the body helps itself. As soon as you do something, that is unnatural already.”
  - b. Others would say, “Only water.”
  - c. And others would say, “Herbs need to be taken as well.” They would make a big science of certain herbs.
  - d. Others said, “Everything is natural when used wisely.”
4. Are operations a denial of faith? You could rephrase the question in this way: “Is it a denial of faith to go to the hospital?”
  - a. Some would say “Yes.”
  - b. Some would say “No.”
  - c. This question could also be stated as: “What is real cooperation with God in this situation?”

These were the different positions taken at that time. I want to say very clearly, these have nothing to do with the light of 1978. These questions were raised later. They were raised by different circumstances. Maybe they were raised also because we were self-confident, or because we had no real trust in God.

These questions, or the answer to these questions are not the message. We must look back to the message. What was the message in 1978?

### **Is Treatment a Denial of Faith?**

The question also was asked, with reference to operations in a hospital, “What is a denial of faith?” We looked then at *Romans* 14. We had a sister who was asking,

“Was it a denial of faith that I had a liver operation?”

## Different Positions

**What is the place of treatments in the work of healing?**

- A denial of faith
- Only a token of faith without any other value
- Life-saving in essence

**What is the place of doctors (believing and unbelieving)?**

- No place for doctors
- Only “believing” doctors
- Any doctor (doctors of the world are often wiser)

**What is natural medicine?**

- Do nothing
- Only water or herbs
- Everything, when used wisely

**Are operations a denial of faith?**

- Yes
- No

That is when we read *Romans 14* together, where we saw that individual guidance in personal matters is important, and that medical treatment is a personal matter. When God is my personal Doctor I must know exactly what to accept, and what not to accept.

- If a person sees that an operation is the will of God for him, then let him do this, that’s his faith.
- If somebody thinks that he should have no operation because he believes that this is where God led him, then he shall have no operation.

It was a great relief when we studied this together. On the other hand, I see the possibility that we become so indefinite in the end that we can believe almost anything and it still fits. But that’s not the point here. We have a message that God is our Doctor; but exactly how to apply this in the individual case must be a personal matter. Everything else would be limiting the freedom of conscience.

## Is Treatment a Denial of Faith?

- *Romans 14* – Medical treatment is a personal decision based upon your faith.
- The key is a personal relationship with the Physician: Christ.

So that, we certainly believe, is a very important issue in this matter.

### A Comparison: Romans 13

But let us go a little bit further. We want to make a comparison and for this we will take *Romans 13*. Do you know what we read in *Romans 13*? It is about the state and the civil authorities:

#### **Romans 13**

<sup>1</sup> Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

<sup>2</sup> Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

<sup>3</sup> For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.

<sup>4</sup> For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil,

be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

<sup>5</sup> Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.

<sup>6</sup> For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing.

<sup>7</sup> Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

Then it goes on to describe love to your neighbor and the main thought of all this is:

“If you do this, then you have nothing to fear of the authorities, because God has not given the authorities power to punish those who keep the law.”

So, if you keep the law you have nothing to fear. Now let's make a comparison between the worldly governments and the official medical system. In what way can we make a comparison between these two things?

First of all, the government uses the sword. What does the official medical system use? Drugs, exactly.

Secondly the worldly government protects the citizens and that is the task given to it by God.

When we say it protects its citizens, are we included in this? Definitely yes, even Christ himself was included in this, as we have seen in our study on the Roman soldiers and Christ. The Roman soldiers protected Christ when the Jews wanted to tear Him apart, when He was before Herod. They wanted to tear Him apart, and in that moment, the Roman soldiers stepped in and hindered them. That was essential; it was necessary so that Christ could die on the cross, because to die before Herod was not the ordained place. God had to protect Him, and He protected Him in this case through the Roman soldiers.

Another example would be Paul, who very frequently was protected, by the sword of the Romans, from his enemies. That is the purpose of the worldly government—to protect the citizens. In this way the state is God’s servant. God uses it to protect the citizens, generally, and to protect even the people of God specifically.

But even though God uses the government as His servants, we must not depend on that protection. We depend not on the protection of the sword of the state, but we depend on Christ, and on His angels. If I don’t depend on the angels, if the sword of the state is my protection, where will I end up? I will definitely come into great trouble.

But at the same time, while I’m not depending on the state, I still accept that protection because God is using it. When I stand under the protection of Caesar I stand under his protection only because I believe that God uses him.

But it may be, that God leads me so that I don’t need the protection of the government at all. You remember the story recorded in the book, *Angel Over Her Tent*, where Sister White was once threatened by some juveniles who wanted to harm her, and it was somehow known by some Adventists, and they said,

“Sister White, you have to have some protection, because they will come tonight and they will destroy your tent.”

She said,

“I don’t need a protection.”

But they insisted,

“But, you must have.”

“Okay, well if it is your choice, but I don’t need it.”

Then finally a policeman was placed there, because the brethren insisted, and that night he saw an angel over her



tent, and he was deeply impressed, and he said,

“This lady does not need me, because she has a greater protection.”

So at times, God uses the power of Caesar, but we must not depend on that power, and very often we cannot, because the state, even though it is God’s servant, does not always fulfill its job properly.

Aside from worldly governments, there is better way to help the evildoer. That is through the work of loving missionaries.

**Ministry of Healing, p. 106:**

The love of Christ, manifested in unselfish ministry, will be more effective in reforming the evildoer than will the sword or the court of justice. These are necessary to strike terror to the lawbreaker, but the loving missionary can do more than this. Often the heart that hardens under reproof will melt under the love of Christ.

What does this mean? Does it mean that we disregard Caesar? No. Does it mean that we do not cooperate with him when necessary? No. Does it mean that we despise him? No. Does it mean that we do not recognize him as God’s servant? No, of course we do. Sister White says,

“They are necessary, but the loving missionary can do more.”

While God uses this way, He has also another way.

There is a parallel here to the official medical system:

The state uses the sword; the medical system uses drugs. The one is using force, the other is using force.

The state power is used to save lives; the medical system is also used to save lives.

The purpose of the government is to protect its citizens; the

same for the official medical system; its purpose is to protect life.

The worldly government is used as God’s servant, so the official medical system is also used as God’s servant for the general health of her population.

The worldly government must not be depended upon, and so likewise we must not depend on the skill of the official medical system. That means we must not put our trust in these things. We must not cling to them, as though our life depended on them. We must depend on God, that is the message. Finally, there is also another way, and we know that Jesus can do more.

### A Comparison: Romans 13

Worldly Government	Conventional Medicine
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Uses the sword</li><li>• Protects the citizens</li><li>• Is God’s servant</li><li>• Is not what we depend on</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Uses drugs</li><li>• Protects life</li><li>• Is God’s servant</li><li>• Is not what we depend on</li></ul>
<p>“The loving missionary can do more.”</p> <p><i>The Ministry of Healing, p. 106</i></p>	<p>Jesus can do more</p>

This comparison gives some place to the work of the official medical system, which we have not seen in the past. It gives it some place, which does not mean that this is the way to be used in the last work. But, it is a place, and we must recognize it; otherwise, we will get into trouble.

Our problem is that in our self-confidence we did not give these things any place. Because of this we came to the border of getting into difficulties even with state authorities. God protected us to this point of time so that we had no real trouble, but we could have got into trouble very easily, and I must say it's God's mercy, that in spite of our self-confidence, He protected us.

## **Self-Confidence in the Health Message**

We want to come to this point of self-confidence. In what way does self-confidence express itself through the health message? There are two ways:

First of all, in our supposed superior knowledge of the law. We expected that we would get such a knowledge of the law that would be superior to anything that the world has, with all the laboratories, etc. Because of this, we would definitely know how to treat the sick and would heal them.

But you know, the world is quite diligent. For example, they study how to combat cancer, and when you read the medical reports, you see that they are trying to put a gene into the cells whereby the cancer cells kill themselves, and that's quite sophisticated. It requires a lot of knowledge and skill to do this.

Would you expect that we are superior in knowledge? But we are tempted to think this, because God has blessed us. He has blessed our students in school, he has blessed us maybe in our studies in the university, or wherever, so that we got extraordinary grades, that we were even better than others often. Because of this, we thought,

“Look, God is blessing us here, and that means He will give us a knowledge of the law that nobody knows, that the world does not know. He will show us the right herb that the others don't know, so we will get the superior knowledge.”

This is self-confidence. It is not speaking of self-distrust, is

it? This is not the message of 1978. It's quite the opposite. The message is this: We do not get health by the law, so we must not look to a superior knowledge of the law. We must acknowledge that the world knows more about the law than we do.

Not for one moment should we think that our knowledge is better, even though through the *Spirit of Prophecy* we have a very simple knowledge that often is more effective than the complicated mechanisms that are developed in the world. But, it's not something we can be very proud of. It's not our superior knowledge of the law and we must not even expect something in this direction.

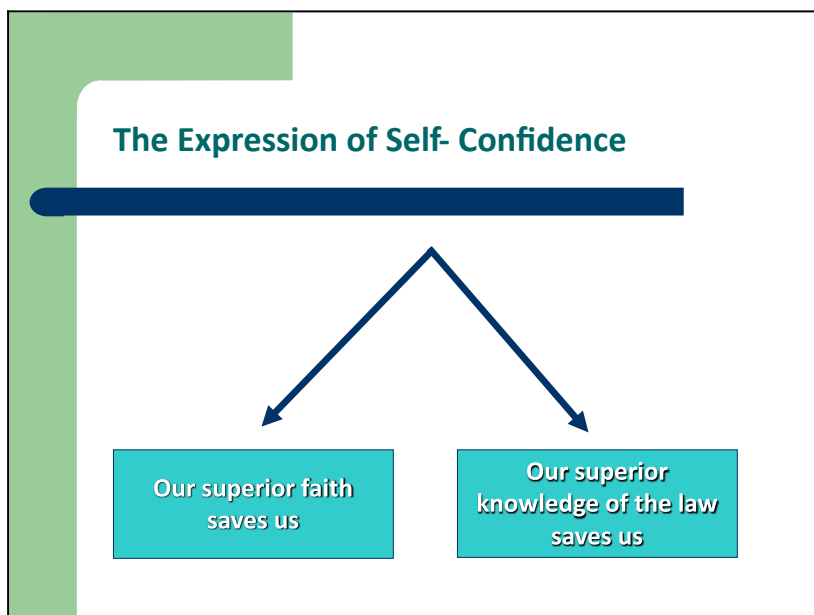
But, again, as we studied the life of Christ, and saw how greatly He was blessed by God, and how He was the head and not the tail, we thought we would be the head and not the tail as well. That means that we would get knowledge that the world does not have. Forget about this. That is not the health message, even though I wish that our physicians would get very good knowledge and apply it, and I support them in this. But we will not see the fulfillment of the health message through these things.

The other expression of self-confidence in this field is that our superior faith saves us. Of course, we have more faith than the others; for that reason it saves us. Our faith is the correct one; we believe that God is our doctor, so therefore God will help us. But again, it's all self-confidence.

This self-confidence has often brought us into very difficult positions, very difficult situations. For this reason what God gave us this year is quite important. Let me say again, it is not our knowledge of the law of God that saves us; on the other hand we must not be proud of our ignorance either. We must not go around and say,

“We know nothing, and because we know nothing we just have faith, and because of that faith we are saved.”

That is self-confidence, just in another guise.



Our position, or our acceptance of the message of God being our Doctor depends on one thing: that we have a personal relationship with that Doctor. Let me say this again: the issue is not whether we go to an earthly doctor or not, the issue is not whether we are operated on or not; the issue is, how is our personal connection with our heavenly Doctor? That is the real issue, and everything else is secondary, because when this is right, when we have this experience, then it is a matter of personal leading what we shall do exactly.

We expect according to the *Spirit of Prophecy* that God will show us ways and means where we do not need to use drugs; where we do not need to use the sword, which is in the end a curse, because he who takes the sword shall perish by the sword.

Sister White makes it very clear that God will give His people wisdom to apply treatments where the use of drugs is not necessary. At the same time we must realize that because we

are in the world we have to cooperate with the official medical system to some degree, and we have experienced this to the extent to where we actually had to accept even a treatment that we would not think was according to our faith. We believed certainly that there is only one way of practicing the healing art and we could not see any room for the drugs, and had, therefore, a very bad conscience.

I want to say that we still do believe that the sword is not the way of God, neither in the state nor in the official medical system. But, at the same time, we must acknowledge that God has given these people a certain task and their task is to, if possible, save lives. We know that politicians are sometimes corrupt and so medical people are also sometimes corrupt. But at the same time, they have received a certain authority from God, which we must recognize.

Our self-confidence that led us to think that our faith is superior, that led us to think that our knowledge is superior has made us fools at times in the world, and that is good because it has taught us to be more distrustful of ourselves.

We could take it two ways. It either can lead us to dependence on Christ, or it can lead us to turn away from the message. May the Lord keep us from turning away from the message, and help us to see how dependent we are upon Him, and how much we need Him, and how much closer we must come to Him in order to experience Him as our Doctor.

## **A Radical Reform**

What we need is a radical reform. What does radical mean? It means going back to the roots. We have to go back to the roots of the message of 1978, and what is that message? The message is that health is from Christ; that we need a personal relationship with Him.

With these thoughts I want to close.

# Appendix: Our Confession

Dickendorf, Friday, June 25, 2004<sup>11</sup>

1. We confess the spirit of self-confidence which we often mistook for faith. This spirit has hindered us from receiving the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We ask the Lord for a clearer revelation of Christ which will lead us to a healthy self-distrust and dependence on His power alone.

## **John 15**

<sup>5</sup> I am the vine, you are the branches: He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing.

2. We confess that we have not been thorough enough in cooperating with God in the testing of candidates for baptism, marriage, ordination, and church work. We shunned confrontation, were concerned about our reputation, and did not strictly apply the Word of God. We recognize the need to say “no” where it is necessary, and we will do so by God’s grace.
3. We confess that we did not clearly understand that every calling is conditional. This includes the calling of a messenger, an elder, a Church member, a worker, or a movement. This led to a dangerous sense of security which has harmed the Church.
4. We confess that sensuality has grown among us through our failure to be a real brother and friend to our brethren who are weak in this area.

## **Proverbs 27**

<sup>5</sup> Open rebuke is better than secret love.

5. We confess a wrong concept about re-marriage which has brought many evils into the Church. According to the

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<sup>11</sup> This confession was drawn up after a consideration of the truths presented in the chapters on Confession, and a consideration of the example by David and others, of confessing the sins openly that had hurt or hindered the cause of God.

Word of God there are only two reasons that free a person to re-marry. The first one is physical death:

**Romans 7**

<sup>1</sup> Know you not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?

<sup>2</sup> For the woman which has a husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he lives; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

The second is physical adultery:

**Matthew 5**

<sup>32</sup> But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced commits adultery.

**The Adventist Home, p. 341:**

Your ideas in regard to the marriage relation have been erroneous. Nothing but the violation of the marriage bed can either break or annul the marriage vow.

The wrong concept existed among us that there was a third reason for re-marriage, namely, spiritual adultery (spiritual death). This wrong concept resulted in some wrong counseling which led to marriages that the Word of God does not support.

6. We confess a lack of cooperation with God in the area of confessing our sins. It is our duty to confess our sins, but in some cases we have, with a wrong understanding of Sabbath Rest, expected the Lord to hide the secrets of our lives. We have misunderstood the goodness of God by not seeing His abhorrence of sin and by believing that we could escape the consequences once we repented of our sins. While sins of a purely private nature should not be made public, we will not seek solutions to problems by keeping sins secret that have an effect on others.
7. We confess the spirit of self-confidence in the realm of healing. We thought that we had a knowledge of the law



which was superior to the world and that we could rely on this knowledge for healing. On the other hand, we thought we had a superior faith which we believed could save us from sickness and death. At the same time, sins, especially sins of sensuality, existed among us which made it impossible for God to work for us in a greater measure. We are dependent on Christ for the healing of soul and body.

#### **Acts 4**

<sup>12</sup> Neither is there salvation [healing] in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

We ask Him humbly to make each one of us willing to accept any way He wants to individually lead us in this realm.

8. Our misconceptions and self-confidence have brought suffering, harm, and sadness to Christ and our fellow humans. We are sorry for this and ask for forgiveness and cleansing. We dedicate ourselves to humble service to Christ and all humankind.





