



the  
**REFORMATION**  
*herald*

Vol. 64, No. 4

week of prayer

**KNOWING**  
**GOD**

DECEMBER 1-10, 2023

# the REFORMATION *herald*

Volume 64, Number 4

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## KNOWING HIM IS LOVING HIM

What a wonderful Saviour is Jesus our Lord! The more we know Him, the more we love Him. To fellowship with other believers of like precious faith then comes as a natural result—and the annual Week of Prayer provides a perfect opportunity to enrich our experience in this regard. Hasn’t the Lord been good to us during the past year? We cannot deny it. Without His grace, we would not even be here to join in these special readings right now.

“In His prayer to the Father, Christ gave to the world a lesson which should be graven on mind and soul. ‘This is life eternal,’ He said, ‘that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.’ John 17:3. This is true education. It imparts power. The experimental knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent, transforms man into the image of God. It gives to man the mastery of himself, bringing every impulse and passion of the lower nature under the control of the higher powers of the mind. It makes its possessor a son of God and an heir of heaven. It brings him into communion with the mind of the Infinite, and opens to him the rich treasures of the universe”<sup>1</sup>

As we go through these readings on the theme “Knowing God,” having a fervent desire indeed to know Him better, we can be abundantly blessed beyond measure. Let us put our mind to this aim, share the readings also with others who may be isolated or homebound, and remember the following dates:

**Prayer with fasting:** Sabbath,  
December 9

**Offering for missions:** Sunday,  
December 10

May we each as individuals and as a church to be truly imbued by the Holy Spirit with a much deeper knowledge of God and of Christ through this Week of Prayer!

<sup>1</sup> *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 114.

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“The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold.”—*Education*, p. 57.

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# KNOWING GOD

## KNOWING GOD

Deciding whom to speak with and befriend makes a big difference in one's life. Social media has somewhat revolutionized the attitudes of many, as it is a mode of communication that is typically fast and frequent. In any case, whether by social media, phone, text, letter, or in person, communication with a good, true friend can provide real encouragement in life. On the other hand, a false friend or toxic acquaintance can trigger discouragement or even depression. The amount, intensity, and frequency of the interaction all make a difference.

We may have more choice in this matter than we might realize. Certain things in life are beyond our control, but other things we can decide to some extent. The apostle Paul warns: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15:33).

"Nothing can more effectually prevent or banish serious impressions and good desires than association with vain, careless, and corrupt-minded persons. . . . The more engaging they are in other respects, the more should their influence be dreaded as companions, because they throw around an irreligious life so many dangerous attractions."<sup>1</sup>

## THE AMAZING CONTRAST

Yet, what if we communicate with—and learn to know very well—One who is pure, holy, and perfect? What a blessing beyond comparison! By communicating closely with our Creator, our spiritual life is engaged and energized, our moral compass set aright, our heart purified.

"The Lord has called us out of the world to be a peculiar, holy people unto Himself. 'Yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.' [Jeremiah 31:3.] Are you indeed drawing nigh to God? If so, be assured that He is drawing nigh unto you."<sup>2</sup>

"If we keep the Lord ever before us, allowing our hearts to go out in thanksgiving and praise to Him, we

shall have a continual freshness in our religious life. Our prayers will take the form of a conversation with God as we would talk with a friend. He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Often there will come to us a sweet joyful sense of the presence of Jesus. Often our hearts will burn within us as He draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. When this is in truth the experience of the Christian, there is seen in his life a simplicity, a humility, meekness, and lowliness of heart, that show to all with whom he associates that he has been with Jesus and learned of Him."<sup>3</sup>

This is what the world is hungering and thirsting to see. If we lack this close relationship with Christ—this personal connection with Him—our missionary efforts in His name will be fruitless.

"The outpouring of the Spirit in the days of the apostles was 'the former rain,' and glorious was the result. But the latter rain will be more abundant."<sup>4</sup>

May the experience of those in the time of the early rain be repeated today—and indeed, much more abundantly: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and **they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus**" (Acts 4:13, emphasis added).

"When God's people humble the soul before Him, individually seeking His Holy Spirit with all the heart, there will be heard from human lips such a testimony as is represented in this scripture, 'After these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.' There will be faces aglow with the love of God; there will be lips touched with holy fire, saying, 'The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.'"<sup>5</sup> *R*

## References:

- <sup>1</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 126.
- <sup>2</sup> *Letters and Manuscripts*, vol. 6, Letter 31, 1889.
- <sup>3</sup> *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 129, 130.
- <sup>4</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 21.
- <sup>5</sup> *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 1008.



Friday, Dec. 1, 2023

# Talking With GOD

—COMPILED FROM THE WRITINGS OF E.G. WHITE

A spark of God's own life has been breathed into the human body, making man a living soul, the possessor of moral endowments, and a will to direct his own course of action. He has the privilege of becoming a partaker of the divine nature. This will give him power to conquer evil, and love and choose that which is good. He has a conscience, which, under the control of God, will approve the right and condemn the wrong. And he may, if he will, have fellowship with God. He may walk and talk with God as did Enoch. This holy companionship is denied to none who will believe on Christ as their personal Saviour.<sup>1</sup>

## AN OPEN RELATIONSHIP

Enoch walked with God, and when assailed by the tempter, he could talk with God about it. He had no "It is written," as we have, but he had a knowledge of his heavenly Companion. He made God his counselor, and was closely bound up with Jesus. And Enoch was honored in his course. He was translated to heaven without seeing death. And those who will be translated at the close of time will be those who commune with God on earth.<sup>2</sup>

Through nature and revelation, through His providence, and by the influence of His Spirit, God speaks to

us. But these are not enough; we need also to pour out our hearts to Him. In order to have spiritual life and energy, we must have actual relationship with our heavenly Father. Our minds may be drawn out toward Him; we may meditate upon His works, His mercies, His blessings; but this is not, in the fullest sense, communing with Him. In order to commune with God, we must have something to say to Him concerning our actual life.

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him.<sup>3</sup>

Our heavenly Father waits to bestow upon us the fullness of His blessing. It is our privilege to drink largely at the fountain of boundless love. What a wonder it is that we pray so little! . . .

Why should the sons and daughters of God be reluctant to pray, when prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven's storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources of Omnipotence? Without unceasing prayer and diligent watching we are in danger of growing careless and of deviating from the right path. . . .

If we regard iniquity in our hearts, if we cling to any known sin, the Lord will not hear us; but the prayer of the penitent, contrite soul is always accepted. When all known wrongs are righted, we may believe that God will answer our petitions.<sup>4</sup>

### CONSTANT CONTACT

There is no time or place in which it is inappropriate to offer up a petition to God. There is nothing that can prevent us from lifting up our hearts in the spirit of earnest prayer. In the crowds of the street, in the midst of a business engagement, we may send up a petition to God and plead for divine guidance, as did Nehemiah when he made his request before King Artaxerxes. A closet of communion may be found wherever we are.<sup>5</sup>

Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears

before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children. "The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." James 5:11. His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice. There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel.<sup>6</sup>

### ASK, SEEK, KNOCK

"Ask." The asking, makes it manifest that you realize your necessity; and if you ask in faith you will receive. The Lord has pledged His word, and it cannot fail. If you come with true contrition you need not feel that you are presumptuous in asking for what the Lord has promised. When you ask for the blessings you need, that you may perfect a character after Christ's likeness, the Lord assures you that you are asking according to a promise that will be verified. That you feel and know you are a sinner is sufficient ground for asking for His mercy and compassion. The condition upon which you may come to God is not that you shall be holy, but that you desire Him to cleanse you from all sin and purify you from all iniquity. The argument that we may plead now and ever is our great need, our utterly helpless state, that makes Him and His redeeming power a necessity.

"Seek." Desire not merely His blessing, but Himself. "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace." Job 22:21. Seek, and you shall find. God is seeking you, and the very desire you feel to come to Him is but the drawing of His Spirit. Yield to that drawing. Christ is pleading the cause of the tempted, the erring, and the faithless. He is seeking to lift them into companionship with Himself. "If thou seek Him, He will be found of thee." 1 Chronicles 28:9.

"Knock." We come to God by special invitation, and He waits to welcome us to His audience chamber. . . . Let those who desire the blessing of God knock and wait at the door of mercy with firm assurance, saying, For Thou, O Lord, hast said, "Everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."<sup>7</sup>

The Elder Brother of our race is by the eternal throne. He looks upon every soul who is turning his face toward Him as the Saviour. He knows by experience what are the weaknesses of humanity, what are our wants, and where lies the strength of our temptations; for He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. He is watching over you, trembling child of God. Are you tempted? He will deliver. Are you weak? He will strengthen. Are you ignorant? He will enlighten. Are you wounded? He will heal. . . . Whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. Your spirit will be braced for endurance. The way will be opened for you to disentangle yourself from embarrassment and difficulty. The weaker and more helpless you know yourself to be, the stronger will you become in His strength. The heavier your burdens, the more blessed the rest in casting them upon the Burden Bearer.<sup>8</sup>

### UTMOST REVERENCE

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 dwelleth in light unapproachable, as they would address an equal, or even an inferior.<sup>9</sup>

There is a growing lack of reverence for our Maker, a growing disregard of His greatness and His majesty. But God is speaking to us in these last days. . . .

When the still small voice which

succeeds the whirlwind and the tempest that moves the rocks out of position, is heard, let all cover their face, for God is very near. Let them hide themselves in Jesus Christ; for He is their hiding place. The cleft in the rock is hidden with His own pierced hand while the humble seeker waits in bowed attitude to hear what saith the Lord unto His servant.<sup>10</sup>

### A GREAT PRIVILEGE

It is a wonderful thing that we can pray effectually, that unworthy, erring mortals possess the power of offering their requests to God. What higher power can man desire than this—to be linked with the infinite God? Feeble, sinful man has the privilege of speaking to his Maker. We may utter words that reach the throne of the Monarch of the universe. We may speak with Jesus as we walk by the way, and He says, I am at thy right hand.

We may commune with God in our hearts; we may walk in companionship with Christ. When engaged in our daily labor, we may breathe out our heart's desire, inaudible to any human ear; but that word cannot die away into silence, nor can it be lost. Nothing can drown the soul's desire. It rises above the din of the street, above the noise of machinery. It is God to whom we are speaking, and our prayer is heard.

Ask, then; ask, and ye shall receive. Ask for humility, wisdom, courage, increase of faith. To every sincere prayer an answer will come. It may not come just as you desire, or at the time you look for it; but it will come in the way and at the time that will best meet your need. The prayers you offer in loneliness, in weariness, in trial, God answers, not always according to your expectations, but always for your good.<sup>11</sup>

The way to the throne of God is always open. You cannot always be on your knees in prayer, but your silent petitions may constantly ascend to God for strength and guidance. When tempted, as you will be, you may flee to the secret place of the Most High. His everlasting arms will be underneath you. . . .

Pray with humble hearts. Seek the Lord often in prayer. In the se-

cret place, alone, the eye sees Jesus and the ear is opened to Jesus. You come forth from the secret place of prayer to abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Temptations come, but you press closer and still closer to the side of Jesus and place your hand in His hand. Then you gain a rich experience, resting in His love and rejoicing in His mercy. The worries and perplexities and cares are gone, and you rejoice in Jesus Christ. The soul is quick to hear the Father's voice, and you will commune with God. All criticism is banished, all judging of others has been expelled from the soul.<sup>12</sup>

### PUBLIC PRAYER

All should feel it a Christian duty to pray short. Tell the Lord just what you want, without going all over the world. In private prayer all have the privilege of praying as long as they desire and of being as explicit as they please. They can pray for all their relatives and friends. The closet is the place to tell all their private difficulties, and trials, and temptations. A common meeting to worship God is not the place to open the privacies of the heart. . . .

There are some, I fear, who do not take their troubles to God in private prayer, but reserve them for the prayer meeting, and there do up their praying for several days. Such may be named conference and prayer meeting killers. They emit no light; they edify no one. Their cold, frozen prayers and long, backslidden testimonies cast a shadow. All are glad when they get through, and it is almost impossible to throw off the chill and darkness which their prayers and exhortations bring into the meeting. From the light which I have received, our meetings should be spiritual and social, and not too long. Reserve, pride, vanity, and fear of man should be left at home. Little differences and prejudices should not be taken with us to these meetings. As in a united family, simplicity, meekness, confidence, and love should exist in the hearts of brethren and sisters who meet to be refreshed and invigorated by bringing their lights together.<sup>13</sup>

### PRIVATE PRAYER

Family or public prayer alone is not sufficient. Secret prayer is very important; in solitude the soul is laid bare to the inspecting eye of God, and every motive is scrutinized. Secret prayer! How precious! The soul communing with God! Secret prayer is to be heard only by the prayer-hearing God. No curious ear is to receive the burden of such petitions. In secret prayer the soul is free from surrounding influences, free from excitement. Calmly, yet fervently, will it reach out after God. Secret prayer is frequently perverted, and its sweet designs lost, by loud vocal prayer. Instead of the calm, quiet trust and faith in God, the soul drawn out in low, humble tones, the voice is raised to a loud pitch, and excitement is encouraged, and secret prayer loses its softening, sacred influence. There is a storm of feeling, a storm of words, making it impossible to discern the still, small voice that speaks to the soul while engaged in its secret, true, heartfelt devotion. Secret prayer, properly carried out, is productive of great good. But prayer which is made public to the entire family and neighborhood is not secret prayer, even though thought to be, and divine strength is not received from it. Sweet and abiding will be the influence emanating from Him who seeth in secret, whose ear is open to answer the prayer arising from the heart. By calm, simple faith the soul holds communion with God and gathers to itself divine rays of light to strengthen and sustain it to endure the conflicts of Satan. God is our tower of strength.<sup>14</sup>

In the secret place of prayer, where no eye but God's can see, no ear but His can hear, we may pour out our most hidden desires and longings to the Father of infinite pity, and in the hush and silence of the soul that voice which never fails to answer the cry of human need will speak to our hearts. . . .

Those who seek God in secret telling the Lord their needs and pleading for help, will not plead in vain.<sup>15</sup>

## A SAMPLE PRAYER

My heavenly Father, we come to Thee at this time just as we are—poor and needy and helpless—unless Thou wilt take hold of our case. And Thou hast said, “Let him take hold of My strength, and make peace with Me: and He shall make peace with Me.”

May the petition of this congregation come up before Thee at this time as a power before Thy throne. We know that our Saviour is presenting His hands before Thee, saying, “I have graven them upon the palms of My hands.” Oh, God, I plead with Thee, for Christ’s sake, that Thou wilt accept our petitions for these that are going away. They know not what is before them; but they have Thy promise that Thy righteousness shall go before them, and that the glory of the Lord shall be their rearward.

We love Thee, our Saviour; and we desire to see gathered into Thy fold every soul that it is possible to save. Imbue, we beseech Thee, this whole congregation with Thy holiness upon this Sabbath day. Oh, may the light of heaven shine forth upon Thy people here. Let the Holy Spirit rest upon those who shall leave us. We have told them, Lord, that we would pray for them; and we now present our petitions in their behalf, praying that Thou wouldst help them to put on the whole armor of God. Take them in charge, Lord, and prepare them this day for service. Oh, my Lord, I beseech of Thee that Thou wouldst open doors where they can enter. Here are some who are preparing to go to China in a little while. Fit them for service, Lord; give them courage; prepare the way before them. They have been learning how to present

the truth of God to those of their own nationality; and wilt Thou help them, my Father?

I beseech Thee, Lord, to arouse the church as they never have been aroused before. Oh, stir up their hearts, Lord. Many of them are now in a paralyzed condition, because they have done so little; but when they begin to use their capabilities for Thee, we know that Thou wilt give them Thy reviving power. Oh, my heavenly Father, I ask Thee that for the sake of Jesus of Nazareth, Thou wouldst bless this entire congregation. Let the sinners in Zion feel the convicting power of God upon them. Let them tremble before Thee, lest they neglect to seek thee until it is too late. I ask Thee, Lord, to open their hearts to receive the Saviour, who has been knocking, knocking, knocking for entrance, until the hairs of His head are wet with the dew of night. Oh, my Father, my Father, wilt Thou, for the sake of Christ, move upon every heart in this congregation!

I ask Thee, Jesus, that the salvation of God may be revealed, and that those of our people who by their donations have helped so nobly to carry the work, will not become weary in well doing. We know that call after call comes to them; but O my Father, Thou art giving to them gift upon gift, and art letting them have the blessings of the dew, the sunshine, and the showers, making their fields fruitful.

I ask Thee, my heavenly Father, that the rich blessing of heaven may fall upon this congregation when, after returning to their homes, they try in their humble way to visit their neighbors, to help those who are sick, and to do missionary work wherever they are.

Oh, my Father, my Father, I look right to Thee. Thou hast heard my petition so many times. I believe in Thee; I rejoice in Thee; and I know that Thy word will be verified.

Bless the sinners here. Bless the youth here. As they go to our schools to become educated, fit them up, that they may become missionaries for God. Take them as they are. Encircle them in the arms of thy mercy, and love them freely, and Thy blessed name shall have all the glory when the human family shall be gathered home by Thee—when we shall unite as members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King.

Oh, I thank Thee that we have a God who hears prayer; that we have a Saviour who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; and that we have the privilege of working for the salvation of souls. Bless our ministers; imbue them with Thy power. Let the Holy Ghost come upon them. Oh, let heaven be opened, and let the light of Thy glory be revealed, and let it be known that there is a God in Israel who hears and answers prayer.

And now we commit all to Thee. We know that these missionaries will be kept by Thy power; for Thou alone canst keep them; and Thy blessed name shall have all the praise, all the glory, now and forevermore. Amen.<sup>16</sup> *R*

### References:

- <sup>1</sup> *The Signs of the Times*, August 26, 1897.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, November 11, 1897.
- <sup>3</sup> *Steps to Christ*, p. 93.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 94, 95.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.
- <sup>7</sup> *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 130, 131.
- <sup>8</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 329.
- <sup>9</sup> *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 252.
- <sup>10</sup> *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, pp. 315, 316.
- <sup>11</sup> *Messages to Young People*, p. 250.
- <sup>12</sup> *In Heavenly Places*, p. 86.
- <sup>13</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 578.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.
- <sup>15</sup> *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 84, 85.
- <sup>16</sup> *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 4, pp. 294–296.

He is watching over you, trembling child of God. Are you tempted? He will deliver. Are you weak? He will strengthen. Are you ignorant? He will enlighten. Are you wounded? He will heal.



Sabbath, Dec. 2, 2023



# Knowledge *that* KILLS

—BY ROLLY C. DUMAGUIT

*1st Vice President, General Conference*

## THE CRISIS IN EDEN

In the garden of Eden, there were two special trees, each planted by God for a distinct purpose. The first was the tree of life with healing virtue—a fountain of youth and immortality, while the second was the tree that would give the knowledge of good and evil. Eve ate of the fruit of this second tree when she was “deceived by the serpent, to think that there was something withheld which would make them wise, even as God. Instead of believing and

confiding in God, she basely distrusted His goodness, and cherished the words of Satan.”<sup>1</sup>

“Here the father of lies made his assertion in direct contradiction to the expressed word of God. Satan assured Eve that she was created immortal, and that there was no possibility of her dying. He told her that God knew that if she and her husband should eat of the tree of knowledge, their understanding would be enlightened, expanded, and ennobled, making them equal with Himself.”<sup>2</sup>

“After Adam’s transgression he at first imagined that he felt the rising to a new and higher existence. But soon the thought of his transgression terrified him. The air that had been of a mild and even temperature, seemed to chill them. The guilty pair had a sense of sin. They felt a dread of the future, a sense of want, a nakedness of soul. The sweet love, and peace, and happy, contented bliss, seemed removed from them, and in its place a want of something came over them that they never experienced before. They then



for the first turned their attention to the external. They had not been clothed, but were draped in light as were the heavenly angels. This light which had enshrouded them departed. To relieve the sense of lack and nakedness which they realized, their attention was directed to seek a covering for their forms; for how could they meet the eye of God and angels unclothed?

"Their crime is now before them in its true light. Their transgression of God's express command assumes a clearer character. Adam censured Eve's folly in leaving his side, and being deceived by the serpent. They both flattered themselves that God, who had given them everything to make them happy, might yet excuse their disobedience, because of His great love to them, and that their punishment would not be so dreadful, after all."<sup>3</sup>

Now a new inclination developed in their being. A bent toward evil was formed—a tendency that now enslaved them. They had experimented with a new height of sinfulness. A new height of knowledge to do wrong. "Thus Adam and Eve were worked upon by Satan until God's restraint was snapped asunder, and their education under the teacher of lies began in order that they might have the knowledge that God had refused them—to know the consequence of transgression."<sup>4</sup>

## BEFORE THE FLOOD

"The human race yet retained much of its early vigor. . . . There were many giants, men of great stature and strength, renowned for wisdom, skillful in devising the most cunning and wonderful works; but their guilt in giving loose rein to iniquity was in proportion to their skill and mental ability.

"God bestowed upon these antediluvians many and rich gifts; but they used His bounties to glorify themselves, and turned them into a curse by fixing their affections upon the gifts instead of the Giver. . . . Not desiring to retain God in their knowledge, they soon came to deny His existence. They adored nature in place of the God of nature. They glorified human genius, worshiped

the works of their own hands, and taught their children to bow down to graven images. . . .

"Men put God out of their knowledge and worshiped the creatures of their own imagination; and as the result, they became more and more debased. . . . If the mind is never exalted above the level of humanity, if it is not uplifted by faith to contemplate infinite wisdom and love, the man will be constantly sinking lower and lower. . . . God had given men His commandments as a rule of life, but His law was transgressed, and every conceivable sin was the result. The wickedness of men was open and daring, justice was trampled in the dust, and the cries of the oppressed reached unto heaven."<sup>5</sup>

Later on they explored the forbidden knowledge of wrong marriage relationships:

"Polygamy had been early introduced, contrary to the divine arrangement at the beginning. The Lord gave to Adam one wife, showing His order in that respect. But after the Fall, men chose to follow their own sinful desires; and as the result, crime and wretchedness rapidly increased. Neither the marriage relation nor the rights of property were respected. Whoever coveted the wives or the possessions of his neighbor, took them by force, and men exulted in their deeds of violence. They delighted in destroying the life of animals; and the use of flesh for food rendered them still more cruel and bloodthirsty, until they came to regard human life with astonishing indifference."<sup>6</sup>

The exploration of this forbidden knowledge of sexuality did not end with only polygamy. "If there was one sin above another which called for the destruction of the race by the flood, it was the base crime of amalgamation of man and beast which defaced the image of God and caused confusion everywhere. God purposed to destroy by a flood that powerful, long-lived race that had corrupted their ways before him."<sup>7</sup>

The quest to find new and advancing knowledge continued. But the knowledge they were thirsting for was invented by the father of lies. Soon every imagination of their hearts was only evil continually, so

the Lord said unto Noah, "The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth" (Genesis 6:13). None escaped the consequences of their wrong use of knowledge. All died except Noah and his family.

## THE TOWER OF BABEL

After the flood waters had subsided, "those who desired to forget their Creator and to cast off the restraint of His law felt a constant annoyance from the teaching and example of their God-fearing associates, and after a time they decided to separate from the worshippers of God. . . .

"They decided to build a city, and in it a tower of such stupendous height as should render it the wonder of the world. These enterprises were designed to prevent the people from scattering abroad in colonies. God had directed men to disperse throughout the earth, to replenish and subdue it; but these Babel builders determined to keep their community united in one body, and to found a monarchy that should eventually embrace the whole earth. . . .

"The dwellers on the plain of Shinar disbelieved God's covenant that He would not again bring a flood upon the earth. Many of them denied the existence of God, and attributed the Flood to the operation of natural causes. Others believed in a Supreme being, and that it was He who had destroyed the antediluvian world; and their hearts, like that of Cain, rose up in rebellion against Him. One object before them in the erection of the tower [of Babel] was to secure their own safety in case of another deluge. By carrying the structure to a much greater height than was reached by the waters of the Flood, they thought to place themselves beyond all possibility of danger."<sup>8</sup>

New knowledge of architecture and structural design was invented. Knowledge to organize and direct vast multitudes of people to construct this massive tower was also developed. Soon a new style of monarchical government was introduced, making one person king

and their city the metropolis of the universe in defiance of God.

“Suddenly the work that had been advancing so prosperously was checked. Angels were sent to bring to naught the purpose of the builders. The tower had reached a lofty height, and it was impossible for the workmen at the top to communicate directly with those at the base; therefore, men were stationed at different points, each to receive and report to the one next below him the orders for needed material or other directions concerning the work. As messages were thus passing from one to another the language was confounded, so that material was called for which was not needed, and the directions delivered were often the reverse of those that had been given. Confusion and dismay followed. All work came to a standstill. There could be no further harmony or cooperation. The builders were wholly unable to account for the strange misunderstandings among them, and in their rage and disappointment they reproached one another. Their confederacy ended in strife and bloodshed. Lightnings from heaven, as evidence of God’s displeasure, broke off the upper portion of the tower and cast it to the ground. Men were made to feel that there is a God who ruleth in the heavens.”<sup>9</sup>

## IN THE WILDERNESS

When God delivered His people from Egypt, the Egyptians—including Pharaoh—acknowledged that the God of Israel is powerful and a living God. The Israelites had been miraculously delivered from bondage to make them free, happy, and healthy people that would serve only Him. He gave them laws to govern them and statutes to guide their spiritual path. He directed them into the desert for forty years instead of guiding them straight to Canaan for two weeks to try their characters and to make them know more about the character of God.

Reaching Mount Sinai, the Lord gave Moses the Ten Commandments. While waiting for Moses’ return from the Mount, the Israelites became restless and nervous as to why Moses coming was delayed.

They were determined not to go forward to the promised land but to retreat back to Egypt and they finally decided to make a statue of a golden calf as their god to lead them. Since Aaron was second in command, the people demanded that he do it.

“Aaron feared for his own safety; and instead of nobly standing up for the honor of God, he yielded to the demands of the multitude. . . . He made a molten calf, in imitation of the gods of Egypt. The people proclaimed, ‘These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.’ And Aaron basely permitted this insult to Jehovah. He did more. Seeing with what satisfaction the golden god was received, he built an altar before it, and made proclamation, ‘Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord.’ . . . Under the pretense of holding ‘a feast to the Lord,’ they gave themselves up to gluttony and licentious reveling.”<sup>10</sup>

Instead of directing their faith to the knowledge and allegiance to the true God during this waiting time, they turned on the acceptance of the knowledge of the false god. They made a feast which ended up in the forbidden knowledge of gluttony, licentiousness, and revelry. The love of pleasure disguised by a “form of godliness”! A religion that permits men, while observing the rites of worship, to devote themselves to selfish or sensual gratification, was pleasing to the multitudes in the days of Israel. And there was pliant Aaron, who, while holding positions of authority in the church, yielded to the desires of the unconsecrated, thus encouraging them to sin.

At the height of their wild, riotous celebration, Moses arrived at the encampment with the two tables of stone and saw Israel worshiping the golden calf. His anger was greatly kindled, and he threw down the tables of stone, broke them, burned the golden calf, ground it to powder, strewed it upon a stream, and made the people drink of it to show the utter worthlessness of the false god they had been worshiping.

Again and again the tendency to accept the knowledge given by the father of lies has been repeated. In this instance the people ignored the all-powerful God and chose instead

to accept the twisted idea that a mute, immobile, molten-sculptured Egyptian god could lead them back to Egypt. We can see here that such knowledge ended up in destruction.

## AT THE MESSIAH’S COMING

“The Hebrews were the chosen people of God. It was their common hope that the Messiah would come to free them from bondage to the Roman power. However, the true purpose of the Saviour’s mission was made known through the sanctuary services. Every sacrificial offering prefigured the coming of the Saviour. The paschal lamb and services pointed to Christ. In beholding these services, those who desired a true knowledge of God would realize He came to save his people from their sins.

The prophets revealed many details about this over the centuries, and the Jewish leaders were not ignorant of the miraculous birth of Christ. They had heard the news of the shepherds and special coming of the Magi. They had met Jesus in the synagogue when He was twelve and were astonished to His knowledge of the prophecy despite that He did not attend any rabbinical schools. They saw His ministry marked with divine healing and supernatural power. They heard Him claiming to be the great I AM and to cleanse the temple twice with great authority. Truly the Messiah had come, but they failed to receive Him because they accepted the knowledge invented by the father of lies. They maintained the idea that the coming Messiah must come from a wealthy family and be of royal lineage and highly educated. In their minds, Jesus did not seem to qualify in all these requirements. They despised Him, rejected Him, and hated Him to the core. That precipitated their decision to crucify Him. “Their satanic shouts, ‘His blood be upon us and to our children’, were echoed in the terrible calamity that came upon their city and temple four decades later—all because of the erroneous and fatalistically presumed knowledge of misidentifying the Messiah!”

## IN OUR DAYS

The quest for destructive knowledge has become even more widespread in our days. The Lord in His mercy sent the three angels messages to sound forth the everlasting gospel before the great day of the Lord will come. One of their special messages is: "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 water" (Revelation 14:7).

Shortly after the initial proclamation of this message, Satan sent an emissary to try to destroy the knowledge that God is the Creator of universe. In 1859, Charles Darwin, an English scientist, wrote a book, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, which lay the foundation of evolutionary theory asserting that all species have evolved rather than having been created. Tragically, most educational institutions today, from primary schools to universities, adhere to this idea.

Satan also invented another school of thought totally denying the existence of God: Atheism is an absence of belief in any deity or even that deities exist. This philosophy was promoted in the 18th century during the so-called "Age of Enlightenment." The political movement that embraced this concept culminated in the lawlessness of the French Revolution. Yet an estimated 450–500 million people still profess Atheism today.

Satan was still not content with his inventions, so he also introduced Pantheism, the belief that reality, the universe and the cosmos are essentially divinity itself and that this, as a supreme supernatural being or entity is still expanding and creating, since the beginning of time, or that all things compose an all-encompassing, immanent god or goddess with the universe itself as a manifestation of deity that includes all astronomical objects. This idea crept into the early Adventist denomination through Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, causing over 4,000 church members to leave the

faith, including many ministers and teachers.

Another school of thought invented by Satan is the so-called **Hyperianism**. It teaches that "you are divine. You are god becoming. There is no creator god to bow down to. Beyond matter there exists an immaterial domain: The source reality. You can catch fractured glimpses of this world in psychedelic states, frequency states, . . . By loosening the reducing valve of the brain, you can explore the inner realms of mind and the god within."<sup>11</sup>

Aside from paganism, Satan has invented many more subtle forms of religions to try to deceive the very elect. He knows that the final remnant church is the only church of God in this planet earth. These believers he shakes to form distinct, separate groups to confuse the honest people of God. However, God has given us a clear identification of His church in the time of the end.

"The different parties of professed Advent believers have each a little truth, but God has given all these truths to His children who are being prepared for the day of God. He has also given them truths that none of these parties know, neither will they understand."<sup>12</sup>

## CONCLUSION

From the time of Adam until now, Satan has always been indoctrinating perverse types of knowledge to humanity and saying that you will not die, you will become a god, you are a god, nature is God, and that the devil does not exist. It's amazing to note that many learned people actually accept this. Are you liable to accept such a notion? Those who believe Satan's lies will receive greater delusions—and if we choose the knowledge invented by Satan, then ultimately we will reap the sure result of destruction. (See Malachi 4:1.)

"Sad will be the retrospect in that day when men stand face to face with eternity. The whole life will present itself just as it has been. The world's pleasures, riches, and honors will not then seem so

important. Men will then see that the righteousness they despised is alone of value. They will see that they have fashioned their characters under the deceptive allurements of Satan. The garments they have chosen are the badge of their allegiance to the first great apostate. Then they will see the results of their choice. They will have a knowledge of what it means to transgress the commandments of God."<sup>13</sup>

But instead, the Lord wants us to know Him personally. The psalmist says, O taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8). He wants us to worship our Creator alone, who declares, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). By so doing we can have life eternal. Jesus explained that "this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). As our knowledge of Him grows deeper, we can appreciate His love towards us and render to Him our utmost service. One day He will invite us to enter the gates of that city and offer us the fruit of the tree of life and bestow upon us true knowledge.

"All the treasures of the universe will be open to the study of God's redeemed. . . . Upon all things, from the least to the greatest, the Creator's name is written, and in all are the riches of His power displayed.

"And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character."<sup>14</sup>

May the Lord bless you wonderfully during this Week of Prayer! Amen. *R*

## References:

- <sup>1</sup> *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 40.
- <sup>2</sup> *Confrontation*, p. 13.
- <sup>3</sup> *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 41.
- <sup>4</sup> *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Commentary], vol. 1, p. 1083.
- <sup>5</sup> *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 90, 91.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 91, 92.
- <sup>7</sup> *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 69.
- <sup>8</sup> *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 118, 119.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 119, 120.
- <sup>10</sup> *Conflict and Courage*, p. 97.
- <sup>11</sup> <https://www.iamhyperian.com/youaregod/>
- <sup>12</sup> *Early Writings*, p. 124.
- <sup>13</sup> *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 318, 319.
- <sup>14</sup> *God's Amazing Grace*, p. 368.



| Sunday, Dec. 3, 2023

# Does God *KNOW* YOU?

—BY JOAN SELVI ALWIN

*Tamil language editor, India*

**GOD IS ALL KNOWING:** Inspiration tells us that God is all-knowing or “omniscient.” “For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things” (1 John 3:20). This means that He has perfect knowledge of all things. He does not have to learn anything and He does not have to reason things out. God knows everything that will happen and that has happened. His omniscience means that He has perfect knowledge, perfect understanding, and perfect wisdom. God being the source of all intelligibility of creation, by His nature is all knowledge. We are created in His

image, so for sure He knows us. God watches each one of us. “For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven” (Job 28:24).

**GOD KNOWS US BEFORE WE ARE KNOWN:** King David said: “Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them” (Psalm 139:16, NKJV).

God said to Jeremiah: “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and

I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5).

We read also in 1 Chronicles 22:9 that the life circumstances of Solomon the king were foreknown of God.

The Lord gave Josiah his name 32 years before his birth and prophesied of his life as to be one of the few kings who would obey God and do what was right in His sight (1 Kings 13:2).

Abraham was given the promise by God that nations would come from him, yet at that time he had no children; his wife Sarai was barren. They waited 25 years for the promised child Isaac to be born.

Sarah thought to “help” God’s prophecy to be fulfilled by giving her maidservant Hagar to Abraham to conceive a child. Although that was not God’s plan, in His mercy, He nonetheless comforted Hagar with a prophecy which was fulfilled (Genesis 16:12).

When Abraham was 99 years old, God promised His long-awaited child. “And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac; and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him” (Genesis 17:19).

The birth of John the Baptist was likewise prophesied (Luke 1:13).

Christ’s birth was announced in advance when the angel of the Lord appeared unto Mary, “And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David” (Luke 1:30-32). The Lord who knew all before they were born knows each of us, too.

**GOD KNOWS OUR THOUGHTS:** God knows everything we have ever done, but He also knows everything we have ever thought. God knows absolutely everything about us. The psalmist said, “Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off” (Psalm 139:2). We can hide our thoughts from others, and even deceive them about our thoughts by deliberately lying. But we cannot hide anything from God. The Bible says, “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Hebrews 4:13).

**GOD IS THE GOD OF KNOWLEDGE:** The prayer of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, declared: “Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a

God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed” (1 Samuel 2:3).

King David said, “Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it” (Psalm 139:5, 6).

**GOD KNOWS THE FUTURE:** God knows everything that will happen. The Lord said, “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isaiah 46:10).

God prophesied about the future of Abraham in Genesis 18:18, about Benhadad, king of Syria (2 Kings 8:9), Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:1), and Solomon (1 Kings 5:5). The Lord who knows the future of these people would also definitely know our future too. So, let us submit to His wisdom.

**GOD HEARS OUR PRAYERS:** “And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee” (Numbers 12:13). The Lord heard the prayer of Moses and Miriam was healed from leprosy.

When king Hezekiah was sick unto death, the prophet Isaiah confirmed that he would die, the king prayed unto the Lord, who had compassion on him and extended his life (2 Kings 20:3-6).

The sun stood still and the moon stayed (Joshua 10:12-14) in response to Joshua’s prayer. The God who heard the prayers of these faithful people will also hear our prayers.

In a time of life-threatening crisis, God heard the prayers of Esther and delivered His people.

**GOD KNOWS US BY NAME:** God called people by name in the Scriptures. There are examples when He spoke to Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and Saul of Tarsus by name (Isaiah 43:1; Exodus 3:4; 1 Samuel 3:10; Acts 9:4).

**GOD GAVE NAMES TO PEOPLE:** He told a famous patriarch, “Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall

be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee” (Genesis 17:5).

**SARAH:** Abraham was not only the member of his family to receive a name change from God. His wife did, too. “And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but “Sarah shall be her name be” (Genesis 17:15). She would be a mother of nations and kings would be born of her.

**JACOB:** Jacob also received a new name from the Lord. The angel said, “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed” (Genesis 32:28).

**MAHERSHALHASHBAZ:** The prophet Isaiah had a son who was named by God—a name that was also part of a prophecy. When Isaiah’s wife bore a son, “Then said the Lord to me, Call his name Mahershalhashbaz” (Isaiah 8:3).

**JEZREEL:** The prophet Hosea’s first-born son was given a meaningful name by God: “And the Lord said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel” (Hosea 1:4).

**LORUHAMA:** The prophet Hosea’s daughter was another one who received a symbolic name from the Lord: “God said unto him, Call her name Loruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away” (Hosea 1:6).

**LOAMMI:** The prophet Hosea’s second son was named by God: “Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God” (Hosea 1:9). God has a purpose for each one of us by giving a name to us.

**GOD SPEAKS TO US IN MANY WAYS:** God is all powerful.

He is omnipresent. He is sovereign. The Bible is filled with the accounts of God speaking to individuals, to families and to nations. In the past He spoke in many different ways and that is true today as well. God speaks to all men through His creation. "For the invisible things . . . that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20). "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge" (Psalm 19:1, 2). God communicated with His people in the past through angels, prophets, dreams, visions, miracles, and even through a donkey. The donkey opened its mouth and spoke to Balaam (Numbers 22:28).

**GOD SPEAKS TO US THROUGH HIS WORD:** Jesus is the Word of God (John 1:1). It is one way that God speaks to us personally and powerfully even today. Not only are we to have a relationship with God through His word, but we also should be ready to give an answer to others whenever necessary, with meekness and fear (1 Peter 3:15). When the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness, the Lord responded to the devil's temptations by quoting truth from God's word. (Matthew 4:1-11). We must learn the truth which is found in the word of God, the sword of the Spirit with which we can defeat the enemy of our souls. As we put on the whole armor of God, we can stand against the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:11). Honoring and obeying God's word is key to hearing God's voice. (See John 14:21, 23.)

**GOD SPEAKS IN A STILL, SMALL VOICE:** When the prophet Elijah was discouraged and depressed, God spoke to him in an unexpected way. Sometimes God will speak through the wind, an earthquake or fire but most often He speaks in a still small voice, so we have to be attentive. (See 1 Kings 19:11-13.)

**GOD SPOKE THROUGH HIS SON JESUS:** God revealed Himself

fully through the person, character, words, behavior, and works of His Son. Jesus reveals God to man by His whole person. He taught the people in parables, stories, object lessons, and especially through His own example of how to live a Godly life. (Read Hebrews 1:1, 2; Mark 4:34; Matthew 7:3-5; John 13:3-7.)

**GOD SPEAKS THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT:** When Jesus was on this earth, God spoke to humanity through Him, and when Jesus returned to the Father, the Holy Spirit was sent to lead us into all truth to be our Comforter from God (John 14:26). God's Holy Spirit is poured upon all who believe and accept Jesus as personal Saviour and He will guide us into all the truth. Let us therefore submit ourselves to the will of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

**GOD SEARCHES EVERY HEART:** David appealed to his son, "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind. For the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever" (1 Chronicles 28:9). This advice to king Solomon clearly reveals to each and every one that God knows our imaginations. Let us be very careful in all our deeds and thoughts.

**THE LORD GOD LOOKS UPON THE HEART:** God told the prophet Samuel to anoint David as a king, explaining that the outward appearance is not what matters most; it is the heart that only He sees (1 Samuel 16:7).

**GOD'S EYES SEE ALL THINGS:** The Scripture speaks symbolically of the eyes of God seeing all things. "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (2 Chronicles 16:9). "For mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is there iniquity hid

from mine eyes" (Jeremiah 16:17). "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye shall he not see?" (Psalm 94:9).

**GOD KNOWS WHAT EVIL PEOPLE THINK:** "Therefore he knoweth their works, and he overturneth them in the night, so that they are destroyed" (Job 34:25). King Nebuchadnezzar was proud of building the great city of Babylon by his power. When the words were still on the mouth, a voice from heaven said that he would not be king for seven years and would live with wild animals and eat grass like an ox. (Read Daniel 4:17-37.) Later he realized his sin and turned towards God.

**GOD KNOWS THE HAPPENINGS ON THE EARTH:** Lord God spoke to Moses from the burning bush and God asked him to lead His people out of Egypt and rescue from slavery. "And the Lord said 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" (Exodus 3:7). God watches each and every thing that happens on earth. Let us not grow weary, and let us put our trust in the Lord.

**GOD KNOWS THE THINGS OF THE PAST:** The apostle affirms, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18).

**GOD IS PERFECT IN JUDGMENT:** Only God who is perfect in knowledge would be competent to judge humanity (2 Peter 3:7). When people realize they will have to stand one day before an all-knowing God, this should cause them to evaluate the way they live their lives. Jesus says, "by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:37).

**GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISE:** God made this promise to His people. "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). If we seek Him with all our

heart, we will hear His voice. God knows what exactly is in the heart of every man. If God knows us, then He knows what we are going through in life. We are not alone and we have not been forgotten. God knows the struggles we face in life. He knows our temptations and our family situation, and He has promised us that He will never leave us nor forsake us. Deuteronomy 31:6; John 3:16.

**GOD IS ALWAYS WITH HIS CHILDREN IN NEED:** King Darius was the ruler over Babylon and had placed Daniel as the first president. Daniel believed in God and followed the Lord's command. Jealous rivals persuaded the king to make a law requiring all to only worship him, and if any who would worship any other God would be thrown into the den of lions. Since Daniel prayed three times a day with his windows open to God, sure enough, he was thrown into the lions' den. But the Lord God was with him and He shut the lions' mouths and protected Daniel (Daniel 6:21, 22).

King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold in the province of Babylon and invited all in authority to come for the dedication of the image. Whoever would not bow down and worship the image would be thrown into a burning fiery furnace. Three young Hebrews who did not bow down and worship the image, were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. The Lord God was with them in the fiery furnace and they were not burned; the fire had no power over them (Daniel chapter 3).

God was with Moses in leading the Israelites from Egyptian slavery. He miraculously supplied the people with water from the rock and manna from heaven. The Lord God parted the sea and the people crossed on dry land (Exodus 14:16).

This same God then covered up the enemy in the depth of the same sea and brought salvation to His people. He is the same God who works on our behalf even today. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Read Exodus chapter 14.)

After the death of Moses, God made the people to pass through river Jordan on dry ground. The priests that bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on the dry ground in the midst of Jordan. (Read Joshua chapter 3.)

God was with Noah and his family and preserved them from flood, for they all obeyed God. "And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation" (Genesis 7:1). The flood was forty days upon the earth and all flesh died and every living substance destroyed, but God preserved Noah and his family. The Lord was with them.

Abraham was called of God to leave Ur of the Chaldees. He obeyed unquestioningly the commands of God and believed His covenant promise that his seed would become a new nation. (See Genesis chapter 12.) Just as God made and kept His promises to Abraham, God has made promises to us too.

In Genesis 39:1-6, Joseph was sold into slavery by his own brothers. The Lord God was with Joseph in the unknown country, where he attained the favor of Potiphar, who promoted him over his whole household. Eventually God directed circumstances to make Joseph second-in-command of Egypt, especially to take charge of preparations for the coming famine. (Read Genesis 41:37-45.) Joseph knew the Lord was with him.

God was with Jonah when he was in the belly of a gigantic fish. The Lord preserved him there and

heard his prayer in his affliction. The fish then vomited out Jonah, who agreed to go to Nineveh and convince the entire city to repent. Although he had not obeyed at first, he, too, repented for having avoided his duty. We need to obey God in all circumstances whatever God asks us to do; we must not hesitate to obey His voice.

**GOD'S CALLING TO EACH ONE OF US:** The Lord God is not asking anything from us. He asks for our heart: "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways" (Proverbs 23:26). And the Lord asks us to follow His commandments and the words of the scriptures in order to hear the voice of God. We have to spend time with Him. The more we are with Him, the better we will know His voice. "Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear" (Matthew 13:16). As we grow in faith, we will learn to hear God's voice. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). We must ask God to reveal to us anything that is hindering our relationship with Him, and then obey Him. For that we have to meditate on the scriptures. We have to make ourselves available to God through prayer and worship. Let us be still in His presence. The Lord says, "Be still and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth" (Psalm 46:10). Let us remain pure and true and firm, remembering our character is being imprinted upon the books of heaven. Amen. *R*

“God knows everything we have ever done, but He also knows everything we have ever thought. God knows absolutely everything about us.”



Wednesday, Dec. 6, 2023

# The Real Cause OF TROUBLES

—BY ARCADI MANGUL

*Minister, Moldova*

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Can you imagine a life without any troubles? Well, to imagine something like this is difficult for us, born as we are into a world of sin. But for me, since the moment I first began to know the God of love more closely, I have been fascinated to discover that a world without troubles isn’t a fairy tale, but rather is a project which is indeed being realized by God.

## THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

When speaking about troubles, we mean bitterness, sorrow, suffering, offense, displeasure, pain, etc. These troubles are often caused by the sinful actions of people, whether

intentionally or unintentionally. Their actions, due to sin being a controlling power in their lives, bring about much of the unhappiness in our world. An inspired passage in the book *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* explains it well:

“By venturing to disregard the will of God upon one point, our first parents opened the floodgates of woe upon the world. And every individual who follows their example will reap a similar result. The love of God underlies every precept of His law, and he who departs from the commandment is working his own unhappiness and ruin.”<sup>1</sup>

So, sin is not just a juridical term which means law-breaking. It is also the beginning of a complex process which causes numerous troubles not only for the person who has jumped started it, but also for those who are linked with the action.

## SIN IS NOT GOD’S INVENTION

Most people seem to think that God is responsible for the appearance of sin in the universe. The following false ideas are given as arguments in this case:

Sin is law-breaking. God is the Author of the law. So, if the law did not exist, neither would sin.

God created Lucifer, who was the first one to sin. If Lucifer did not exist, neither would sin.

Such ideas are false. Inspiration clearly reveals:

“God did not create evil. He only made the good, which was like Himself. . . . Evil, sin, and death . . . are the result of disobedience, which originated in Satan.”<sup>2</sup>

Understanding it correctly, we can comprehend the real purpose



of God's law and its value for us because the law has been given to us that we may be able to detect or recognize sin and address it. As mentioned above, God's law defines sin as a term, but its process may also exist beyond the law. Let's just give an example. The 6th commandment says: "You shall not kill." and the 7th commandment says: "You shall not commit adultery." If these two commandments were not included in the law, it would not mean that it is good to kill and commit adultery—so people would still not be happier if they did those things.

Thus we understand why God, wanting to keep us from troubles, proposes for us to live in accordance with His holy law. We can see why the Holy Scriptures give us this guidance in order to break the chain of sin and avoid it. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

But the culmination of our human foolishness is that we avoid troubles at any cost and complain about the unpleasant situation we have—while at the same time we continue to love sin and jump-start the very processes which cause troubles for ourselves and those around us.

## SELFISHNESS

God is love. This totally defines our Creator. God isn't selfish. Man was created in God's image, after God's likeness. But the very first change that occurred when sin entered was the replacement of love with selfishness:

"Man was originally endowed with noble powers and a well-balanced mind. He was perfect in his being, and in harmony with God. His thoughts were pure, his aims holy. But through disobedience, his powers were perverted, and selfishness took the place of love."<sup>3</sup>

The basis of most troubles is selfishness. It causes a man to feel as if

he is everything and everything is just for him. As a result, this attitude turns him into a consumer and an oppressor. Carefully studying the Bible record, we discover this course of action. After the transgression, Adam and Eve were disposed to accuse anyone else in order to try to escape their sure condemnation. Cain killed Abel also for this reason. Judas made mischief among the disciples and even betrayed the Saviour for selfish motives. Nowadays, selfishness is still the problem in the world at large—and it is not limited only to there. Even the church is paralyzed because of selfishness. Whatever the position, background, belief, or age, so much revolves around the gratification and desire of depraved hearts. Wherever selfishness dwells, love, peace, forgiveness, understanding, humility, and meekness disappear—and as a result, love of pleasure, desire for gain, greediness, hate, misunderstanding, anxiety, and dissatisfaction appear. Such a selfish course of action is predestinated to self-destruction.

But in clear contrast, we can understand how altruistic God is, and what a wonderful example He has given to us through the personality of the Lord Jesus Christ! The paragraph below describes it:

"'Christ pleased not Himself.' He did nothing for Himself; His work was in behalf of fallen man. Selfishness stood abashed in His presence. He assumed our nature that He might suffer in our stead. Selfishness, the sin of the world, has become the prevailing sin of the church. In sacrificing Himself for the good of men, Christ strikes at the root of all selfishness. He withheld nothing, not even His own honor and heavenly glory. He expects corresponding self-denial and sacrifice on the part of those whom He came to bless and save."<sup>4</sup>

## EVIL IMPOSES ITSELF

Another noticeable problem with sin is how it manages to multiply and spread without providing us with any advance notice. Having read the paragraphs above, we have

seen that God is love, and this love is replaced with selfishness through sin. So, knowing that God is also life, we can see that life is replaced with death in this case. Life is a conscious choice, but the first sin that was committed on earth included death in it.

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12).

This happens with any sin. Evil multiplies against our will, without our desire. From the moment we have been infected with the illness of sin, we have become its bearers and transmitters at the same time. It is quite discouraging. But thanks be to God that He hasn't left us without hope! In God's plan of salvation there is the possibility to wake up from death's lethargy.

## TWO CATEGORIES

All people are sinful, but not everyone wants to continue pursuing a course of sin. There is a difference here. 2 Thessalonians 2:3 presents the expression "man of sin" in reference to one who chooses to pursue a course of sin and make certain demands—and one of the demands is to force everyone to do what the "man of sin" considers to be a good thing to do. Whom does the "man of sin" want to force? Certainly those who have been awakened by the Holy Spirit, who have realized the cost the innocent Creator paid for the consequences of sin. In this case, the activity of the "man of sin" has been and will continue to be a source of troubles throughout the ages. Here is what Inspiration tells us:

"The Roman Catholic Church, uniting the forms of paganism and Christianity, and, like paganism, misrepresenting the character of God, has resorted to practices no less cruel and revolting. In the days of Rome's supremacy there were instruments of torture to compel assent to her doctrines. There was the stake for those who would not concede to her claims. There were massacres on a scale that will never

be known until revealed in the judgment.”<sup>5</sup>

The history is repeated. The “great tribulation” through which God’s people must pass, will be of the same nature because it will be conducted by the “man of sin.”

“The dignitaries of church and state will unite to bribe, persuade, or compel all classes to honor the Sunday. The lack of divine authority will be supplied by oppressive enactments. Political corruption is destroying love of justice and regard for truth; and even in free America, rulers and legislators, in order to secure public favor, will yield to the popular demand for a law enforcing Sunday observance. Liberty of conscience, which has cost so great a sacrifice, will no longer be respected. In the soon-coming conflict we shall see exemplified the prophet’s words: ‘The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.’”<sup>6</sup>

The paragraphs above answer the question many people ask, “If I want nothing more to do with sin, won’t I have troubles? Sure, I will.” As long as sin exists, troubles will exist, too. That’s why many people are discouraged. But I prefer to be among those few people mentioned above, and I choose not to be a source of troubles for anyone else anymore. Neither for God, nor for people.

## TROUBLERS OF ZION, REPENT!

Let’s study an inspired passage written in the book *Evangelism*:

“There are in our churches those who profess the truth who are only hindrances to the work of reform. They are clogs to the wheels of the car of salvation. This class are frequently in trial. Doubts, jealousies, and suspicion are the fruits of selfishness, and seem to be interwoven with their very natures. I shall name this class chronic church grumblers. They do more harm in a church than two ministers can undo. They are a tax to the church and a great weight to the ministers of Christ. They live in an atmosphere of doubts, jealous-

sies, and surmisings. Much time and labor of the ambassadors of Christ are required to undo their work of evil, and restore harmony and union in the church. This takes from the courage and strength of God’s servants and unfits them for the work He has for them to do in saving perishing souls from ruin. God will reward these troublers of Zion according to their works.”<sup>7</sup>

Here is a description of a category of people, to which any of us, even I, the author of the article, could belong. These are people who have known God, devoted their life to Him, left the ranks of the evil one and joined those who want nothing to do with sin. But envy and suspicions nonetheless exist in their life. Actually, these things might not typically be classified as sins against God’s law on a major scale, but they are still Satan’s weapons to discourage and destroy His church and hinder the work of the Holy Spirit. The Testimonies tell us the following:

“Envy, jealousy, evil surmising, and evilspeaking are of Satan, and they effectually bar the way against the Holy Spirit’s working. Nothing else in this world is so dear to God as His church. Nothing is guarded by Him with such jealous care. Nothing so offends God as an act that injures the influence of those who are doing His service. He will call to account all who aid Satan in his work of criticizing and discouraging.”<sup>8</sup>

I can claim that it is a sin. Maybe it is not under directly expressed jurisdiction of the Ten Commandments but, as we have said before, even if there is no exact commandment about it, it leads to discouragement and sin inevitably. Neither God nor we gain anything from such action.

We call God our Father. “Will those whose names are upon the church books, who claim to be the sons and daughters of God, consider their relation to God and their fellowmen? We must depend entirely upon the mercy of a sin-pardoning Saviour and shall we allow our hearts remain hard and unsympathizing? Can any provocation authorize us to cherish unkind feelings, or cause

us to harbor ill feelings or seek revenge? Can we cast the first stone in condemnation of a brother, when God is extending His mercy toward us, and forgiving our trespasses against Him? Should God enter into judgment with us, our debt would be found to be immense, yet our heavenly Father is willing to forgive. Men will be dealt with by God, not according to their opinion of themselves, not according to their self-confidence, but according to the spirit which they reveal toward their erring brethren.

“A spirit of harshness and severity is the spirit of Satan. Pride of heart, if cherished, creates envy, evil surmising, and leads to revenge. There is danger of our exaggerating casual words or actions into intentional offenses, and of thinking that some one has done us an injustice that merits our coldness, indifference, or contempt. Yet the Lord has charge of these very persons whom we accuse; angels of God minister unto them. He who reads the heart may see more genuine goodness in them than in him who harbors ill feelings against them for a supposed wrong. ‘If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; if he repent, forgive him.’ Treat him and his errors as you wish God to treat you when you offend Him. Charity does not rejoice in evil; revenge does. Be careful to manifest zeal for yourselves that you may show out of a good conversation your meekness of wisdom. Avoid every bitter word, every unkind action. Love as brethren; be kind; be courteous. Do not scandalize the truth by bitter envying and contention; for such is the spirit of the world. Let not these unholy traits once be named among you.”<sup>9</sup>

## AIMING THE AXE AT THE ROOT

In preparation for the kingdom of God, John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, explains a distinct reality: “And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire” (Matthew 3:10).

Those who have cherished hatred in the heart until it has strengthened and become part of their character, must have a different experience if they would share in the latter rain. The Lord bids us empty our hearts of the selfishness which is the root of alienation.

The apostle Paul further warns of the importance of targeting a deadly, formidable root: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: looking diligently **lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you**, and thereby many be defiled" (Hebrews 12:14, 15). [Emphasis added.]

**"The church will never as a whole receive the latter rain unless they shall put away all envy, evil surmising, and evil speaking.** Those who have cherished hatred in the heart until it has strengthened and become part of their character, **must** have a different experience if they would share in the latter rain."<sup>10</sup>

"The Lord bids us empty our hearts of the selfishness which is the root of alienation. He longs to pour upon us His Holy Spirit in rich measure, and He bids us clear the way by self-renunciation. When self is surrendered to God, our eyes will be opened to see the stumbling stones which our un-Christlikeness has placed in the way of others. All these God bids us remove. He says: 'Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.' James 5:16. Then we may have the assurance that David had when, after confession of his sin, he prayed: 'Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.' Psalm 51:12, 13.

"When the grace of God reigns within, the soul will be surrounded with an atmosphere of faith and

courage and Christlike love, an atmosphere invigorating to the spiritual life of all who inhale it."<sup>11</sup>

"Christ says: All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' (Matthew 28:18-20).

"Here is your commission. How will you account to Christ for your course, if instead of laboring to save your fellowmen, you have poured into their ears your troubles, and perplexities, and even complaints against your brethren? You may often find relief from your troubles if you will speak to others of Christ and talk to them about the precious truth. But do not speak words that are prompted by jealousy and evil surmising and suspicion. Do not circulate evil reports concerning your brethren. Because of such things the Lord cannot come into the church as He desires. Will you not clear the King's highway? Not all have had a part in this evil work, but let those who have now come into line."<sup>12</sup>

## CONCLUSION

God wants us to be happy, and He is still working for the restoration of happiness in us. While people may be an agent of our troubles, the root cause is the power of sin within people's hearts. However, no one is compelled to yield to this power. The pen of inspira-

tion clarifies the real problem. "The strongest temptation is no excuse for sin. No matter how severe the pressure brought to bear upon you, sin is your own act. The seat of the difficulty is the unrenewed heart."<sup>13</sup> God has done all He can do to make this matter clear, and through Jesus He has made salvation from slavery to sin possible. He wants us to take hold of this opportunity. Let's choose God's side because very soon, after the great tribulation, the initiator of sin and sin itself will be eliminated, and those who have decided to remain sinners will be destroyed together with sin. Very soon the time will come when troubles are ended forever. We are looking forward to the day as written in the book *The Great Controversy*:

"The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love."<sup>14</sup>

Amen! *R*

## References:

- <sup>1</sup> *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 52.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Review and Herald*, August 4, 1910.
- <sup>3</sup> *Steps to Christ*, p. 17.
- <sup>4</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 204.
- <sup>5</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 569.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 592.
- <sup>7</sup> *Evangelism*, p. 370.
- <sup>8</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 42.
- <sup>9</sup> *The Signs of the Times*, February 14, 1895.
- <sup>10</sup> *The Home Missionary*, August 1, 1896.
- <sup>11</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 43.
- <sup>12</sup> *Letters and Manuscripts*, vol. 22, Ms 71, 1907.
- <sup>13</sup> *The Adventist Home*, p. 331.
- <sup>14</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 678.



Friday, Dec. 8, 2023



# Meeting *THE* SAVIOUR

—BY ABU RUBEN BUDAU

*Elder, U.S.A.*

It was in the summer of 2021 that I met the happiest person I have ever seen in my life. I was visiting a newly formed group in McAllen, Texas, one of the southernmost cities in U.S., within minutes from the border with Mexico. A brother had started a radio ministry, sharing the Gospel at a local radio station, and many people called and asked to be visited or asked for Bible studies. One of them was Mr. Guadalupe, a man in his sixties of Mexican origin. At the time of my visit, Mr. Guadalupe had been attending our church services on a regular basis and had completely transformed his life. He had gladly accepted the Sabbath and his new lifestyle reflected his

new and deeper understanding of the scriptures. He had a constant smile on his face and his joy when talking about Jesus was contagious. I never heard from him a word of sadness or concern, and by all possible measures he was a truly happy man.

Now, in our day-to-day encounters, we see people who seem happy all the time, and we don't think there is anything unusual about it. It is not necessarily a spectacular thing to be happy when we are in good health, or when we have loving families, or when we make a comfortable living.

If we were to make a list of the happiest people, we might be

tempted to put the people who can have anything that money can buy, at the top of the list. Also, those who have seemingly perfect lives with no illness to struggle with, and no financial or family problems, or those whose lives seem perfect in every possible way.

However, Mr. Guadalupe's happiness did not come from having such a perfect life, but rather was happy in spite of his enormous trials and hardships. He was dying of cancer, and as the doctors had told him that he would be dead the year before, he was now living on borrowed time. He had a colostomy bag attached to his belly and a tumor the size of a grapefruit was pro-

truding from the side of his neck. He was breathing through his tracheostomy, a tube in his neck, which he had to cover with his finger in order to be able to talk. He was living by himself in a modest studio apartment and had no family to visit him. Unable to have a job, he depended on people's generosity to have food on the table and to pay his rent.

From a human point of view, he had absolutely nothing in this world that could give him comfort and security, and yet he was telling everyone that he is not sad, but he is happy. But he didn't have to mention it for anyone to know that he was a happy man. You could read it on his face, his conversations, his behavior.

Most people may have some kind of happiness when everything goes well in their life, but Brother Guadalupe had a happiness and peace which transcended his physical and earthly trials. Having a similar experience, the apostle Paul said, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

## HOW?

How is it possible to have such peace, in the midst of a storm of tribulation? How is it possible to "rejoice always" (1 Thessalonians 5:16), even when apparently bad things come our way? Brother Guadalupe had a secret, which he gladly told everyone. Like the apostle Paul, he had met the Saviour, and that was a turning point in his life, as he was never to be the same again.

## OUR GREATEST NEED

Before the glorious meeting with the Saviour, the apostle Paul had a journey of his own. The truth is, we all have our own journeys, and we look for happiness and fulfillment in various places. Some will turn to the world seeking worldly pleasures and trying everything that this world has to offer. The story of the prodigal son is being relived

all too often in so many youth who are tired of religion's "restrictions." Others, like the apostle Paul, may seek God in various doctrines and belief systems, but may find themselves just as far from God as the man drinking in the tavern. Which ever way we choose apart from God, in the end will have the same consequence. All the effort that we make in seeking earthly pleasures and satisfaction in self-designed ways will turn out to be nothing but a two-fold tragedy: "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13).

We were created to be filled with heavenly peace, as we live in perfect harmony with the Creator. When this connection is lost, nothing else in this world can satisfy the thirst of the soul. True peace and happiness cannot be obtained through anything this world has to offer. On the other hand, when we have met our Saviour and our connection with the Almighty is restored, nothing in this world can take away our heavenly peace, which passes all understanding. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8:35). And this makes God to be humanity's greatest need.

How badly do we need God, and what are we without Him? What is the best we can do on our own, without God, and how far does He have to stoop, to reach and restore us, and "establish our goings"? (Psalm 40:2.) The life and experience of the apostle Paul is a great example of before-and-after meeting the Saviour.

## WORKING FOR THE ENEMY

There are not many better examples of abuse of trust. Countries of this world have a severe punishment for those who commit acts of treason. The act of Judas in betraying Jesus has made the traitor's name to be received with repulsion everywhere in the world. When we think of people who are in the ser-

vice of Satan, we may be thinking of satanists, demoniacs and other openly evil beings. But whenever we act in opposition to the character of God, we are in the service of the enemy and are just as desperately lost as was Judas through the betrayal kiss. Before his conversion, the apostle Paul was working against the eternal Kingdom. More clearly yet, "in persecuting the followers of Jesus he had in reality been doing the work of Satan."<sup>1</sup>

If we are not marching in God's ranks, we are not on neutral ground, for there is no such thing in the spiritual kingdom. It is actually tantamount to fighting alongside the great archenemy and being among his subjects. After his conversion, the apostle Paul wrote about our previous walks of life: "And you, that were sometime **alienated and enemies** in your mind by wicked works . . ." (Colossians 1:21). [Emphasis added.]

Our condition is even more wretched if we, like Paul, do so while thinking we are serving God, because "**none are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free,**"<sup>2</sup> and the wretchedness of Laodicea is exponentially amplified by thinking that he is "rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," and **knows not** that in reality he is "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17).

Without God, all our work is in vain. Before meeting Jesus, Paul's best efforts in serving God was an abomination of which he was remorseful for the rest of his life: "And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Corinthians 15:8, 9).

Paul was honestly mistaken. He did not intentionally or knowingly, work against God; on the contrary, he thought he was doing God a service. But that did not change the fact that he was exactly where Satan wanted him to be and do. His zeal for his exacting and legalistic religion has led him to punish and

hurt people and to use force and intimidation as a supposed means of evangelism. Such methods come straight from Satan's tool box, and have no place in advancing God's kingdom.

### GIVING UP OUR "GAINS"

Saul of Tarsus was a devoted Jew who wanted to do that which is right. "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee. Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Philippians 3:5, 6). In his own eyes, he was in the right denomination, attending the right church, practicing the right rituals, having the right doctrine and being full of zeal. He had all the worldly reasons to be proud of his achievements, and yet relying on all these which were "gain" to him (Philippians 3:7) was incompatible with Christ. While these "gains" would have made any Jew to be proud, Paul understood later on that the only thing worthy of being boastful about is the cross of Jesus: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14).

While all those things were not necessarily bad things, as long as he trusted in them for his salvation, he could not have Christ. God only accepts service and obedience that is motivated by love—everything else is just "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Corinthians 13:1). If those things are hindering us from fully accepting and trusting in the Saviour, then by all means, let us

"count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord" (Philippians 3:8).

"Counting all these things as loss" was not considered a sacrifice by the apostle Paul. Once he had tasted and seen that the Lord is good, all his previous "gains" paled, in comparison; or to use Paul's words, they became to him as "dung" (Philippians 3:8). The man who found the treasure hidden in the field was not at all sorrowful for having to sell "all that he had" to buy that field, because his joy of finding the treasure was far too great (Matthew 13:44).

What do we ever have to give up for Christ? Only those things that make us "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17), and our own "righteousness," as valuable as "filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6).

### WANTING TO DO GOOD

Wanting to do good is important. But "wanting" is not enough, for there is a natural law within us that keeps us slaves to sin just as the law of gravitation keeps us down on earth: "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me" (Romans 7:21).

I vividly remember an experience I had as a teenager. I was visiting my grandparents in northeastern Romania, and I was sent to the neighbors to borrow a gardening tool. When I arrived at the neighbor's gate, it was morning, and the neighbor was just releasing their two piglets from the stables and into the big yard full of green grass. As soon as they got out, the piglets started to run in one direction, as fast as they could, and didn't stop

until they reached the small puddle of mud that was in one corner of the yard. They started to lie in that puddle and turn all around in it with an indescribable excitement and until they were full of mud all over! All this didn't take more than 20 seconds and when it was over, fully satisfied with their achievement, they went to eat.

Sin is as deeply rooted in our nature as was the desire for mud in these two little piglets. The Bible invites us to ponder, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Jeremiah 13:23). Sin has so much invaded our whole being, that escaping from its bounding chains takes much more than human strength—it takes the very power of God Himself. And this is what Paul found in the gospel: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the **power of God** unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16). [Emphasis added.]

### THE MEETING

The beauty of the gospel is that God knows our condition, and He still wants us. He sent His Son in this world so that both the drug addict and the self-righteous churchgoer can be rescued from their deadly entanglements and brought into the kingdom of grace, where God "worketh all in all" (1 Corinthians 12:6). Despite our enmity against Him, and "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). Jesus did not just die for us when we started to get better, or at least when He saw that we were making efforts to obey Him, but "when we were

“God makes not just the good things to work together for our good, but all things, and that includes the “bad” things....While completely blind, [Paul] had the best vision he had ever had in his life.”

enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:10).

Meeting Jesus is more than a simple random encounter. It is intentional on God's part. He seeks us, He finds us, and He knocks at the door of our heart, trying to get our attention. Sometimes He talks to us through a Bible verse, or a friend, or a pamphlet. Other times, maybe through an event, whether we perceive it good or bad. He spoke to Saul of Tarsus in an audible voice on the way to Damascus, and the Lord spoke to him through his blindness, and this is what he learned:

## ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER

"And we know that **all things** work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). It is easy to understand and accept that good things work together for our good. But there is nothing extraordinary in that, while our God is an extraordinary God, who can do extraordinary things. The apostle Paul wrote here that God makes not just the good things to work together for our good, but all things, and that includes the "bad" things. When he first met the Saviour, he became blind. What a tragedy—to have been able to see, and then to be in complete darkness. And yet while completely blind, he had the best vision he had ever had in his life. He saw that he was not self-sufficient, he saw that he was "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). Despite his external "obedience," he saw that he was in desperate need of a Saviour. Notice the transformation this experience brought him. He was not anymore that ferocious persecutor of the church, but a gentle student, willing to learn and to know God in His true magnificence.

Sometimes Christians will experience events perceived as "bad." But from a simple flat tire to a life-threatening disease, God can make all things work together for our eternal good. What remains for us

is to thank Him for ALL things He allows to happen in our lives, and to trust that He has everything under control. "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Meeting the Saviour is a process of sanctification, performed by God, as we open our hearts to the warming rays of His love. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). It is a daily surrender and submission of our entire being to the sovereignty of love. It is discovering every day more and more of the magnitude of God's love, which is His very nature (1 John 4:7). It is learning to trust in Him through our daily toils and difficulties, knowing that if we have entrusted ourselves in His arms, He has full control of all events in our lives. Meeting the Saviour is knowing Him more and more to the point where we can receive peace and joy even in difficulties. "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10).

"For the disheartened there is a sure remedy—faith, prayer, work. Faith and activity will impart assurance and satisfaction that will increase day by day. Are you tempted to give way to feelings of anxious foreboding or utter despondency? In the darkest days, when appearances seem most forbidding, fear not. Have faith in God. He knows your need. He has all power. His infinite love and compassion never weary. Fear not that He will fail of fulfilling His promise. He is eternal truth. Never will He change the covenant He has made with those who love Him. And He will bestow upon His faithful servants the measure of efficiency that their need demands."<sup>3</sup>

"In the darkest days, when appearances seem so forbidding, fear not. Have faith in God. He is working out His will, doing all things well in behalf of His people. The strength of those who love and

serve Him will be renewed day by day. His understanding will be placed at their service, that they may not err in the carrying out of His purposes.

"There is to be no despondency in God's service. Our faith is to endure the pressure brought to bear upon it. God is able and willing to bestow upon His servants all the strength they need. He will more than fulfill the highest expectations of those who put their trust in Him."<sup>4</sup>

Whatever it is that we go through, we have His assurance: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5), and "the trial of [our] faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7).

It is our privilege today to meet our Saviour. He is accessible to each and every one of us, no matter how far we are from Him in our rebellion. Today He extends His hand to us, having already paid in full the ransom for our iniquity. If we accept it, He will uproot every trace of sin from us, and replace our heart of stone with a heart filled with His love. Our lives will never be the same, and we will be every day of our saved life, happy in the service of the King.

"It is peace that you need—Heaven's forgiveness and peace and love in the soul. Money cannot buy it, intellect cannot procure it, wisdom cannot attain to it; you can never hope, by your own efforts, to secure it. But God offers it to you as a gift, "without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1). It is yours if you will but reach out your hand and grasp it. The Lord says, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isaiah 1:18. 'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.' Ezekiel 36:26."<sup>5</sup> *R*

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- <sup>3</sup> *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 164, 165.
- <sup>4</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 10, 11.
- <sup>5</sup> *Steps to Christ*, p. 49.



Sabbath, Dec. 9, 2023

# Knowing God HERE AND NOW

—BY ELI TENORIO

*President, General Conference*

## CAN WE KNOW GOD?

It is part of human nature to seek a deeper understanding and connection with a higher power. For Christians, this means seeking God. This craving isn't new, something reserved for postmodern humanity. It is a desire that has been present in us since Creation. Even as Christ walked the earth, those around Him yearned to come closer to God.

In his desire to know God more intimately, Philip said to Jesus: "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us" (John 14:8).

But how do we go about knowing God, and is it even possible to know Him here and now, just as we are? Don't we have to wait to be changed from mortal to immortal beings?

One of Job's friends, called Zophar, asked: "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find

out the Almighty unto perfection?" (Job 11:7).

Inspiration answers, "We cannot by searching find out God, but He has revealed Himself in His Son, who is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person. If we desire a knowledge of God we must be Christlike. . . . Living a pure life through faith in Christ as a personal Saviour will bring to the believer a clearer, higher conception of God."<sup>1</sup>

To Phillip, Jesus answered: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" (John 14:8).

We could search our entire lives and never find Him, but He has disclosed Himself to us. God wants to be found. So much so, that He has provided numerous ways for us to encounter Him.

## WAYS TO KNOW GOD

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God gives us the condition necessary before we know Him here and now: "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).

Our search for God shouldn't be limited to theory. We need to actively search for Him daily. In His mercy God has provided means by which we can come closer to Him and know Him more intimately:

### 1. THE BIBLE

If a person you've never heard of before is mentioned in conversation and your curiosity is piqued, you will likely dedicate some time to re-searching that person to know more about them. Unsatisfied with only the brief mention you heard, perhaps you will Google them to read



what others have said about them or what they have said about themselves. You will ask those around you, what they have heard or what they think.

God has prepared a buffet of information for those who seek to know more about Him. We must not be satisfied with superficial knowledge only. Christ has told us to “search the Scriptures” (John 5:39). He wants us to know Him personally; therefore, He has provided the Bible as a revelation of Himself:

“The blessed Bible gives us a knowledge of the great plan of salvation and shows us how every individual may have eternal life. Who is the author of the Book?—Jesus Christ. He is the True Witness, and He says to His own, ‘I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.’ The Bible shows us the way to Christ, and in Christ eternal life is revealed.”<sup>2</sup>

Our attitude and intention when we open the Bible determines what we will glean from its pages. The Word of God will lead us to know Him more intimately if we study it with an open heart. We can know God more intimately if we allow the Holy Spirit to impress us with the pure truths of the Holy Scriptures.

“The Jews had the Scriptures which testified of Christ, but they were not able to discern Christ in the Scriptures. The truths of the Old Testament they had so mingled with human opinions that its teachings were mystified, and the will of God to man covered up. Christ’s sermon on the mount virtually contradicted the doctrines of the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees. They had so misrepresented God that He was looked upon as a stern judge, incapable of compassion, mercy, or love. They presented to the people endless maxims and traditions that had

not a ‘Thus saith the Lord’ for their authority. Though they professed to know and to worship the true and living God, they wholly misrepresented Him and His character as revealed in His Son. Christ labored constantly to sweep away those misrepresentations, that the confidence of men in the love of God might be restored. He taught man to address the supreme Ruler by the new name ‘Our Father.’ This name represents our true relation to Him, and when spoken sincerely by human lips, it is music in the ears of God. Christ leads us to the throne of God by a new and living way.”<sup>3</sup>

Are you willing to read and study your Bible with an open heart, to learn, and to be transformed? Then you will know God and experience His power in your life as never before. You will see changes in yourself as well as those around you.

## 2. PRAYER

If the person you were researching on Google is even mildly famous, it is unlikely you will be able to reach them via email or telephone. Maybe there’s a number for their office, but you won’t be able to reach them personally.

But we can reach God by bowing our heads and folding our hands. Prayer is a direct channel to God. It deepens our relationship with Him, and thus we gain a greater understanding of our heavenly Father. Prayer helps us become aware of God’s presence in our lives and strengthens our connection with Him.

Through prayer, we can express gratitude, seek God’s guidance, confess sins, and ask for forgiveness. Prayer also provides an opportunity for quiet reflection, allowing us to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit,

giving us a deeper understanding of our own needs and God’s willingness to bless us and give us the power to overcome.

“The Bible shows us God in His high and holy place, not in a state of inactivity, not in silence and solitude, but surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of holy intelligences, all waiting to do His will. Through channels which we cannot discern He is in active communication with every part of His dominion. But it is in this speck of a world, in the souls that He gave His only-begotten Son to save, that His interest and the interest of all heaven is centered. God is bending from His throne to hear the cry of the oppressed. To every sincere prayer He answers, ‘Here am I.’ He uplifts the distressed and downtrodden. In all our afflictions He is afflicted. In every temptation and every trial the angel of His presence is near to deliver.

“Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father’s notice. Satan’s hatred against God leads him to hate every object of the Saviour’s care. He seeks to mar the handiwork of God, and he delights in destroying even the dumb creatures. It is only through God’s protecting care that the birds are preserved to gladden us with their songs of joy. But He does not forget even the sparrows. ‘Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.’ ”<sup>4</sup>

“Daily prayer is as essential to growth in grace, and even to spiritual life itself, as is temporal food to physical well-being. We should accustom ourselves to often lift the thoughts to God in prayer. If the mind wanders, we must bring it back; by persevering effort, habit will finally make it easy. We cannot for one moment separate ourselves

**“Although there may be a tainted, corrupted atmosphere around us, we need not breathe its miasma, but may live in the pure air of heaven.”**



from Christ with safety. We may have His presence to attend us at every step, but only by observing the conditions which He has Himself laid down.”<sup>5</sup>

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matthew 7:7).

“What can the angels of heaven think of poor helpless human beings, who are subject to temptation, when God’s heart of infinite love yearns toward them, ready to give them more than they can ask or think, and yet they pray so little and have so little faith? The angels love to bow before God; they love to be near Him. They regard communion with God as their highest joy; and yet the children of earth, who need so much the help that God only can give, seem satisfied to walk without the light of His Spirit, the companionship of His presence.”<sup>6</sup>

“We should have the door of the heart open continually and our invitation going up that Jesus may come and abide as a heavenly guest in the soul.

“Although there may be a tainted, corrupted atmosphere around us, we need not breathe its miasma, but may live in the pure air of heaven. We may close every door to impure imaginings and unholy thoughts by lifting the soul into the presence of God through sincere prayer. Those whose hearts are open to receive the support and blessing of God will walk in a holier atmosphere than that of earth and will have constant communion with heaven.”<sup>7</sup>

“We can talk with Jesus. We can talk with Jesus as Enoch talked with God. He could tell his Lord all about his trials. Here was the way Enoch walked with God, and when the light shone out upon his pathway, he did not expect to say, ‘Why, what will my friends and relatives say of me if I take this course?’ No, he did that which was right whatever the consequence.

“Now Enoch sought to have a connection with God, and those who do not have a connection with God have a connection with someone else who will lead them away from everything good. All of us have a character to form. Enoch formed a righteous character and the result was that he was translated to heaven without seeing death. When the Lord shall come the second time there will be some who will be translated without seeing death, and we want to know if we will be among that number. We want to know if we are wholly on the Lord’s side—partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust—not by trying to make a clear path for our feet where we shall have no trials or difficulties to meet, but by placing ourselves in right relation to God, and letting Him take care of the consequences.”<sup>8</sup>

Will you pray more from now on?

### 3. RELATIONSHIPS

Maybe in your search to know more about the elusive famous per-

son you researched, you meet with someone who has met them personally. You hear their experience and combine it with the experience that someone else had, and soon you are forming a fuller and richer picture of that person’s character.

Worshipping God in community enriches our relationship with Him. Through shared experiences, we discover facets of God’s grace and character that we can combine with our own experiences for a more complete picture of who God is.

Being part of the family of God allows us opportunities to develop traits of God’s character in our own lives, giving us deeper insight into His love and grace toward us:

Scripture explains that each of us should use whatever gift we have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. We are to bear with one another and forgive if we have a grievance against anyone, even as the Lord has forgiven us. (1 Peter 4:10; Colossians 3:13.)

“A machine may be perfect in all its parts, and yet there be much friction and wear in its movements; but apply oil, and it performs its work quietly and well. So with us. It is necessary to have the oil of grace in our hearts, in order to prevent the friction that may arise between us and those for whom we labor. Then, having not only the arguments of truth but the oil of grace, we can bear the message with power. Prejudice will be broken down, and a great work will be accomplished. . . .

“Those who are engaged in the great and solemn work of warning the world, should not only have an individual experience in the things of God, but they should cultivate love for one another, and should labor to be of one mind, of one judgment, to see eye to eye. The absence of this love greatly pleases our wily foe. He is the author of envy, jealousy, hatred, and dissension; and he rejoices to see these vile weeds choke out love, that tender plant of heavenly growth. . . .

“The reputation of a fellow-laborer is to be sacredly guarded. If one sees faults in another, he is not to magnify them before others,

and make them grievous sins. They may be errors of judgment, that God will give divine grace to overcome. If He had seen that angels, who are perfect, would have done the work for the fallen race better than men, He would have committed it to them. But instead of this He sent the needed assistance by poor, weak, erring mortals, who, having like infirmities as their fellowmen, are best prepared to help them.”<sup>9</sup>

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 John 4:7, 8).

#### 4. RELIGION

The religion that Christ showed us by example is a practical one. It doesn’t reside in books and bylaws so much as in active labor and servitude.

“The apostle showed that religion does not consist in rites and ceremonies, creeds and theories. If it did, the natural man could understand it by investigation, as he understands worldly things. Paul taught that religion is a practical, saving energy, a principle wholly from God, a personal experience of God’s renewing power upon the soul.”<sup>10</sup>

Humans are naturally petty. We count how many deeds we have performed for others to know how much they’re supposedly indebted to us. We keep mental records of the trespasses trespassed against us. Looking to ourselves, we spiral into thoughts of “Look how much I’ve done. Poor me. I have to do everything for everyone.” These thoughts only draw us further from Christ.

To truly know God, we must be like Him. Through His grace and Holy Spirit, we must serve our fellowman without consideration of what they do or do not deserve. We are to forgive without limit and help unwearingly: “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9).

When we do this, we begin to understand God’s character. We attain a glimpse of His love for us

and how He forgives and blesses us without measure, despite our unworthiness. This is a powerful way of truly knowing God in the here and now.

#### WHY KNOW GOD?

One time a boy was playing with his friends. They decided to play in another field, and while walking there, they came to a stream and had to cross it by going over a log. Everyone crossed to the other side except for that one boy. His friends called to him: “Come on, cross it!” But the boy refused to cross.

One of his friends came back over the log and offered his hand: “Hold my hand. I won’t let you fall.” Still, the boy wouldn’t budge.

At that moment, the boy’s father arrived and asked: “Why don’t you want to cross the river?”

“I’m scared, Dad,” said the boy.

The father held his hand and said: “Let’s go!” Holding his father’s hand, the boy crossed the stream without fear.

At some point over the next year, you may have to cross over a stream on an unsteady log. My brothers and sisters, knowing your heavenly Father will enable you to trust in His providence and enjoy peace in His care, despite the difficulties and trials ahead.

“Then let us not forget the mercies of God but let us preserve them as precious jewels. When the powers of darkness surround us, and whisper doubts as to God’s love and care for us, let us take confidence from the light that has been permitted to shine upon us in our life experience.”<sup>11</sup>

We don’t need to know all the details about the future; we only need to know God here and now. Then we, by faith, can hold His hand. He knows the future, and He won’t let us go.

“For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee” (Isaiah 41:13).

#### CONCLUSION

Knowing God is not about learn-

ing a set of beliefs or rules. It is about understanding God’s great love revealed to us in Jesus Christ and thus developing a deeper connection with Him through spiritual practices. It is about keeping an open heart and mind to learn and recognize God’s presence in our lives and the world around us.

“The sum and substance of the whole matter of Christian grace and experience is contained in believing on Christ, in knowing God and His Son whom He hath sent. But here is where many fail, for they lack faith in God. Instead of desiring to be brought into fellowship with Christ in His self-denial and humiliation, they are ever seeking for the supremacy of self. . . . O if we did but appreciate the love of God, how our hearts would be expanded, our limited sympathies would be enlarged, and break away from the icy barriers of selfishness, and our comprehension would be deeper than it now is. . . .

“It is because we do not know God, we do not have faith in Christ, that we are not deeply impressed with the humiliation He endured in our behalf, that His abasement does not lead us to the humbling of self, to the exalting of Jesus.”<sup>12</sup>

Whether you are a seasoned spiritual believer or just beginning your journey, my prayer is that you come to know God here and now.

Following are some questions for interacting among the congregation during this Week of Prayer meeting:

1. Is it possible to find God?
2. How does God reveal Himself to us?
3. What are some blessings God has bestowed upon you this year, whether you deserved them or not?
4. How do relationships with others help us to know God more intimately? *R*

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- <sup>4</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 356, 357.
- <sup>5</sup> *Messages to Young People*, p. 115.
- <sup>6</sup> *Steps to Christ*, p. 94.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.
- <sup>8</sup> *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 9, pp. 256, 257.
- <sup>9</sup> *Historical Sketches*, pp. 119, 120.
- <sup>10</sup> *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 451.
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Sunday, Dec. 10, 2023



# Knowing GOD ETERNAL

—BY TEVITA BATIWALE

*Elder, South Pacific Union Mission, Fiji*

Not long ago, there was a young man who grew up in a small island village surrounded by the vast Pacific Ocean. He became a highly skilled carpenter and soon established his carpentry business, doing work ranging from crafting furniture to constructing modest houses. The young man also had a hardworking younger brother who trained and later graduated as a school teacher. They both became very successful in their professions and were a great source of pride and joy to their family. Their success, however, became a source of envy in the hearts of their fellow villagers. A jealous few propagated malicious rumors throughout the village that the siblings' source of success allegedly stemmed from their father's involvement in some form of witchcraft.

During this conundrum, the

young man's life was exposed to sinister demonic influences. He would be continuously harassed and haunted by a conspicuous "man" dressed in dark clothes who constantly followed him—day and night. Simultaneously, a strange disease began to afflict him which caused him to lose all vision in his left eye. Feeling justified by the predicament—that the young man's suffering was an obvious punishment from God (and because of an overflowing sense of prior jealousy, bitterness and envy), the villagers mobbed them and burnt their family house to the ground. They lost everything and the young man was banished from the village. Despite being exiled, he was followed by that baleful spirit wherever he went.

In his desperation to be free from that satanic spirit, the young man cried to the Lord for deliverance.

It just so happened that he became reacquainted with an old associate whom he later knew as a church elder for one of the oldest Seventh-day Adventist churches in the main city. His friend shared the Sabbath truth and other biblical doctrines with the young man. The Bible-based explanations of these topics convicted him and led to deep soul-searching regarding the Christian beliefs he had previously held. This led to his eventual baptism and regular attendance at his friend's church in the city.

In what could only be attributed to fury and deeply rooted antagonism towards this development, the demonic spirit doubled its attacks on the young man and now toward his family, too. This persisted despite his being a member of the church for 5 years and even becoming a deacon. His situation was so

dire that the demon would, at times, be sitting in the last church pew, observing every single thing he did while he ministered from the front. No one could see the ominous visitor except him. This draining experience further deepened a heartfelt desire for deliverance from these demonic encounters and drove the young man deeper into a relationship with God. His time was deeply spent in regular fasting, praying, and studying the Bible.

As a result, he gradually started changing various habits in his life. A notable one was changing his typical diet to being fully plant-based after being instructed by a missionary in a dream. Crediting nothing else but divine providence, the young man heard that there happened to be a similar church just a five-minute walk away from his house. The only catch was that they called themselves the “Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement” (SDARM), and that some of their fundamental beliefs were not 100% aligned to the current positions of the church in which he was a deacon. Yet he decided that he would try and visit it the next Sabbath.

Sensing this decision, the demonic attacks increased in severity and regularity during Preparation Day (Friday) and Sabbath morning. What was supposed to be a mere five-minute walk to this church was one of the most trying times of this man’s life as the demon did all in its finite power to drive him into a mental breakdown, to relinquish his purpose. However, the main gate of the church appeared in the young man’s impaired vision and with Jacob-like prayer, he made it through. . . .

An unfamiliar feeling of freedom flooded his heart as he saw the path leading to the open church door with the Sabbath school class going underway. The sight of the little ones and the youth in their own separate classrooms and the familiar sing-along songs gave this particular Sabbath day a different experience. As he walked forward, an ever-so-familiar voice called his name. Hearing the words as cold as a heart absent of the love of Christ

and as sinister as a murderous being, the young man turned to face the source of this voice. It was that sinister being. His words were cold; his words were simple. Standing outside the gate like a restrained dog but with dark eyes that gave a piercing glare into the young man’s soul, the evil spirit said, “This is a true church. I will leave from here and should you ever leave this church, I will meet you again.” Disregarding what that spirit said, the young man walked into the church. The young man did not take this seriously as he was always followed by that demonic spirit, even into his previous church. A few minutes later, being curious as to where his unwelcome companion was, he turned to view the back area of the small SDARM church. Sure enough, that spirit was nowhere to be found.

From that day on, he decided to leave his previous congregation and join the SDARM church. Even after returning home after the Close of Sabbath services, there was no sign of the demonic spirit. After so many years, he was able to enjoy the most refreshing sleep—free from demonic harassment. After further Bible study, acquainting himself with the fundamental beliefs of the church, he got baptized and is now a deacon in his local SDARM church. This life experience, he says, has led him to appreciate a bit more the love and Providence of God and to know more of Him. It led him to see how it is only through a closer relationship with Christ and a surrender to His Providence that one can overcome. That it is only through Christ, that one can have life—both in this world and the world to come. All this, he believes, is embodied into one particular verse: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

This article will dive into the significance of this verse to the believer and what it means “To Know God Eternal”:

## TO KNOW

The phrase “to know” is used

in a train of thought or a sentence to show or express the idea that there is a certain idea or truth that is highly applicable to a particular situation. For instance, “to know” how to chop onions without crying is a handy skill to have—especially if you don’t want a vegetable to be the reason for your tears. We see here that that particular knowledge is highly applicable to that particular situation.

With this in mind, we can ask ourselves the following two-part question: “What does Christ want us to know?” and “To what does it apply?”

Based on John 17:3, the answer is quite simple.

Knowledge Aspect: Know God and Jesus Christ.

Result Aspect: Gain eternal life.

Understanding now the result of gaining that knowledge, *i.e.*, know God, we then must focus on the commentary from the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy.

## GOD ETERNAL

When we know someone, we are expected to be familiar with everything possible regarding that person apart from commonplace things. For example, what are their preferences, what are their stances regarding particular issues; what are their “pet peeves” and what are their temperaments. Essentially, we are expected to be more familiar with the heart issues of that person compared to the superficial knowledge someone else may have.

So many are the errors and misconceptions surrounding the correct understanding of God and Who He is that many have gone astray. Nevertheless, disregarding the inundation of error regarding this essential knowledge, the Bible gives us the “black and white” of the matter.

What knowledge then can the Bible reveal to us regarding the intimate affairs of God?

One of the very first instances of the Bible making this plain to us comes from the very mouth of God in Exodus Chapter 34. It tells us:

“And the Lord passed by before [Moses], and proclaimed, The Lord,

The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation" (Exodus 34:6, 7).

We see here the character traits of God—the intimate aspects of God's life that sets Him apart from any other god. Come to think of it, it is amazing and yet intellectually unfair that the Infinite, Eternal Creator of the universe summarizes all there is to know about Him in a few lines and yet He did this so that finite, evil man could even come, at best, to a superficial knowledge of Him.

It is also interesting that to gain the proper knowledge of God and Who He is, we, like Moses, are to be hidden in the "cleft of the Rock" (Exodus 34:5).

It is said of Christ regarding that specific imagery of the "Rock" in another experience of Moses that "that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). Thus we see here that a "not-so-obvious" requirement to knowing and appreciating God is to first be led to Christ. It is only then that we can truly "see" God.

Christ Himself comments on this in John 14:6 where He plainly states: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). He also plainly states while talking to the self-righteous Jews who were going about trying to make their way to Heaven by their misguided interpretation of God's Word: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).

The Spirit of Prophecy tells us: "It was when Moses was hidden

in the cleft of the rock that he beheld the glory of God. It is when we hide in the riven Rock that Christ will cover us with His own pierced hand, and we shall hear what the Lord saith unto His servants. To us as to Moses, God will reveal Himself as 'merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.' Exodus 34:6, 7."<sup>1</sup>

As mentioned before, obtaining this knowledge of God is something that truly would take eternity to unravel. Yet, God, in His mercy, gives us what we need right now for our salvation in His Word. He plainly tells us: "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29)—most particularly in the example of Christ.

### THE WRITING IN THE SAND

A particular instance, I believe, that encapsulates this is the experience of Christ and the woman brought before Him by the Pharisees for condemnation as found in John 8.

The chapter starts off by stating that Christ, after going to the Mount of Olives, returned to the temple only to be met by the scheming Pharisees with what they were hoping to be a "gotcha!" question.

"And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?" (John 8:3-5).

Compared to other situations where He encountered these defamation attempts, the response of Christ was rather telling.

"This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not" (John 8:6).

Possibly growing irate, the accusers pressed Him again with their line of questions until Christ responded with a simple, yet soul-searching question before stooping down again to continue His mysterious writing.

"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7). The effect of Christ's words and actions deeply convicted and rebuked all those present as John writes that "they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst" (John 8:9).

At last, Christ, upon finishing His Masterful Authorship of sheets of sand "lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" (John 8:10).

What must He have written? That we may never know until we reach eternity with His grace. But what we do know next summarizes this whole experience for us.

Responding to His question, "She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:11).

I believe that this story is one of many that shows all we need to know about God and Christ with regard to life eternal (John 17:3).

"... as the crowning blessing of salvation, 'the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Romans 6:23)."



## LIFE ETERNAL

Ever since the fall of humanity, we have had a constant hope promised to us for our deliverance. The deception of the serpent was rebuked in the words, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15).

This "seed" referred to here—Christ, carried out that work in His earthly ministry and it is here that we see the redeeming love that, as undeserving as we are, God freely gave.

In a direct sense, all of humanity is represented by the condemned woman of John 8. Accused of sin by the devil of sin, we rightly deserve to pay its penalty—death (Romans 6:23), and yet, God made a way. It is only by obtaining a knowledge of His plan of redemption that one can make the choice to either accept and be saved or reject and ultimately be lost.

However, knowing God's expressed will from His Word, He does not want anyone to be lost.

Pleading with the Israelites, God says, "Cast away all your transgressions . . . for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye" (Ezekiel 18:31, 32).

It was to give us a knowledge of God and His infinite love for us that Christ came to this world, died, and rose again. It is through the ministry of the Holy Spirit that we are equipped to be led into all the truth—that we then may have a chance to make the choice to live.

"This is life eternal," Christ said, "that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3). And the prophet Jeremiah declared: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteous-

ness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 9:23, 24). Scarcely can the human mind comprehend the breadth and depth and height of the spiritual attainments of him who gains this knowledge."<sup>2</sup>

"In giving us His word, God has put us in possession of every truth essential for our salvation. Thousands have drawn water from these wells of life, yet there is no diminishing of the supply. Thousands have set the Lord before them, and by beholding have been changed into the same image. Their spirit burns within them as they speak of His character, telling what Christ is to them, and what they are to Christ. But these searchers have not exhausted these grand and holy themes. Thousands more may engage in the work of searching out the mysteries of salvation. As the life of Christ and the character of His mission are dwelt upon, rays of light will shine forth more distinctly at every attempt to discover truth. Each fresh search will reveal something more deeply interesting than has yet been unfolded. The subject is inexhaustible. The study of the incarnation of Christ, His atoning sacrifice and mediatorial work, will employ the mind of the diligent student as long as time shall last; and looking to heaven with its unnumbered years he will exclaim, 'Great is the mystery of godliness.'"<sup>3</sup>

We note that we are to understand and know the Lord who exercises loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness, is eternal. In light of this we must teach the knowledge of God and His standard to our children. As we compete with the cares of this life for time to teach our children, we need to seek God's guidance to intervene in a divine manner so we can duly carry out the task.

**"Teach the Knowledge of God.**—To know God is eternal life. Are you teaching this to your children, or are you teaching them to meet the world's standard? Are you getting ready for the home that God is preparing for you? . . . Teach your children of the Saviour's life, death, and resurrection. Teach

them to study the Bible. . . . Teach them to form characters that will live through the eternal ages. We must pray as we never have before that God will keep and bless our children."<sup>4</sup>

## CONCLUSION

David considered the faithfulness of the Lord to all generation and exclaimed in Psalm 100:5, NIV: "For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations." And again as last books in the Bible, Revelation we are reminded again of the eternity of God. "I am Alpha and Omega," says the Lord God, "which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8). Through Jesus, we are able to have eternal life. He died, His blood cleansed our sins and through this gift by knowing Him we may have eternal life. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

"Had silver and gold been sufficient to purchase the salvation of men, how easily might it have been accomplished by Him who says, 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine' (Haggai 2:8). But only by the precious blood of the Son of God could the transgressor be redeemed. The plan of salvation was laid in sacrifice. The apostle Paul wrote, 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich' (2 Corinthians 8:9). Christ gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity. And as the crowning blessing of salvation, 'the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Romans 6:23)."<sup>5</sup>

"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever" (1 Timothy 1:17). Amen. *R*

### References:

- <sup>1</sup> Christ's Object Lessons, p. 162.
- <sup>2</sup> The Acts of the Apostles, p. 531.
- <sup>3</sup> Christ's Object Lessons, p. 133.
- <sup>4</sup> Child Guidance, p. 494.
- <sup>5</sup> The Acts of the Apostles, p. 519.

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MOVING? Please let us know.

# We Have *NOT KNOWN* **THEE**

*Reformation Hymnal #315*

We have not known Thee as we ought,  
Nor learned Thy wisdom, grace, and power;  
The things of earth have filled our thought,  
And trifles of the passing hour,  
Lord, give us light Thy truth to see,  
And make us wise in knowing Thee.

We have not feared Thee as we ought,  
Nor bowed beneath Thine awful eye,  
Nor guarded deed, and word, and thought,  
Remembering that God was nigh.  
Lord, give us faith to know Thee near,  
And grant the grace of holy fear.

We have not loved Thee as we ought,  
Nor cared that we are loved by Thee;  
Thy presence we have coldly sought,  
And feebly longed Thy face to see,  
Lord, give a pure and loving heart  
To feel and own the love Thou art.

We have not served Thee as we ought,  
Alas! the duties left undone,  
The work with little fervor wrought,  
The battles lost, or scarcely won!  
Lord, give the zeal, and give the might,  
For Thee to toil, for Thee to fight.

— *Thomas B. Pollack*