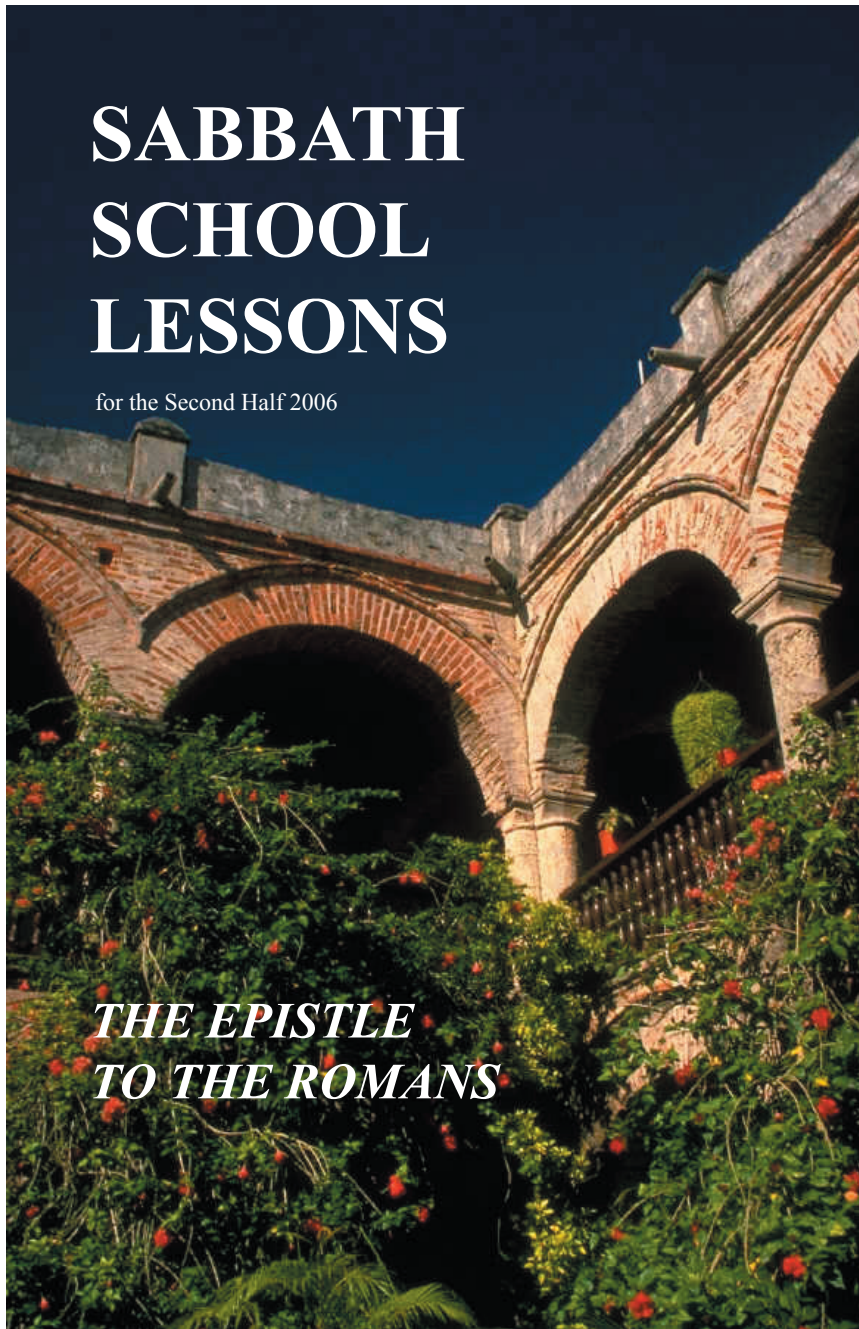


SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

for the Second Half 2006

*THE EPISTLE
TO THE ROMANS*



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Revision and Supervision of Contents
by the Ministerial Department of the General Conference

Design, Edition and Translation
by the Publishing Department of the General Conference

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

for the Second Half 2006

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

Issued by the
General Conference
International Missionary Society
of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
Reform Movement

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INTRODUCTION

A man struggled day after day to gain the victory over his shortcomings and sins. Still, every battle there was setbacks, which greatly discouraged him. One day he received some encouraging advice, which seemed to be the solution to his problem. It was recommended that he take a trip to Rome, where he could climb “Pilate’s staircase” and there he would find forgiveness. With the burning desire in his heart to reach his destination, he set out on the trip; and with a heart full of hope he arrived in the famous city.

As he was there something special happened. The promise from the Word of God resounded in his mind: “The just shall live by faith”. To remember and understand this wonderful message from the Letter to the Romans, was the great experience in his life. It is a message by which each of us will be enabled to maintain a constant experience with God.

The author of this letter to the Romans is the Apostle Paul. He wrote it on his third missionary journey, during his stay at Corinth. This was between the years 57 and 58 A.D. In the pages of this letter he expressed his fullness of joy in the hope-filled message of the gospel, and sent this good news to the church members in the city of Rome as well to us.

It is our sincerest wish that during the second half of 2006, through the study of this letter the Lord may enable us to achieve a deeper and more intimate experience in justification by faith based on the immeasurable grace of God.

—The Brethren of the General Conference

**The Special Sabbath School Offering
is dedicated to Uganda**

*Remember to give your offering as an expression
of love and gratitude.*

1

Sabbath, July 1, 2006

PAUL AND THE CHURCH IN ROME

INTRODUCTION

“But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God...” 2 Corinthians 6:4.

“Gain courage from the experience of the apostle Paul. He had many trials. He was an unwearied worker, and travelled constantly, sometimes through inhospitable regions, sometimes on the water, in storm and tempest. Far harder than ours was his lot, for travelling then had not the conveniences that it has now. But Paul allowed nothing to hinder him from his work (Letter 107, 1904).” –*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1106.

PAUL PLANS TO VISIT ROME

- 1. During his stay in Corinth, what longing filled Paul’s heart? Romans 1:11, 15.**

“During his sojourn at Corinth, Paul found time to look forward to new and wider fields of service. His contemplated journey to Rome especially occupied his thoughts.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 373.

2. Had Paul ever visited Rome before? Romans 1:13; 15:22.

GROUNDED ON THE SURE FOUNDATION

3. What three things did Paul want the Christians in Rome to know? Romans 1:1.

“Paul regarded the occasion of his formal ordination as marking the beginning of a new and important epoch in his lifework. It was from the time of this solemn ceremony, when, just before he was to depart on his first missionary journey, he was ‘separated unto the gospel of God,’ that he afterward dated the beginning of his apostleship in the Christian church. (RH, May 11, 1911)”
–*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1067.

4. To what authority did Paul refer as the foundation of his message? Romans 1:2.

“The Bible is God’s great lesson book, His great educator. The foundation of all true science is contained in the Bible. Every branch of knowledge may be found by searching the word of God. And above all else it contains the science of all sciences, the science of salvation. The Bible is the mine of the unsearchable riches of Christ.” –*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 107.

STRONG IN CHRIST

5. What prophetic fulfilment is revealed in the Scriptures? Romans 1:3, 4.

“Like the rejected stone, Christ in His earthly mission had borne neglect and abuse. He was ‘despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: . . . He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.’ Isa. 53:3. But the time was near when He would be glorified. By the resurrection

from the dead He would be declared ‘the Son of God with power.’ Rom. 1:4. At His second coming He would be revealed as Lord of heaven and earth.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 600.

6. What is said in this letter about the church at Rome? Romans 1:8.

“...notwithstanding the opposition, twenty years after the crucifixion of Christ there was a live, earnest church in Rome. This church was strong and zealous, and the Lord worked for it. (RH, March 6, 1900)” –*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1063.

HELP AND READINESS

7. What selfless task did Paul want to settle before his visit to Rome? Romans 15:25, 26; Acts 19:21.

“All were to share in this work of imparting of their carnal things to those who ministered unto them in spiritual things. They were also taught that the widows and fatherless had a claim upon their charity. Pure and undefiled religion is defined, ‘To visit the widows and fatherless in their affliction, and to keep unspotted from the world.’” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 190.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- Is the work of God one of my heart’s desires?
- Am I only useful to God in coincidental opportunities?
- How do I use my talents in the support of church life?

2

Sabbath, July 8, 2006

THE GOSPEL, THE POWER OF GOD FOR MANKIND

INTRODUCTION

“The gospel is the power of God and the wisdom of God. The character of Christ on earth revealed divinity, and the gospel which He has given is to be the study of His human heritage...” –*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 245.

- 1. How was Paul connected to the church in Rome before his visit? Romans 1:9.**

MUTUAL STRENGTHENING

- 2. What did Paul want to achieve in Rome? What do we discover about his humbleness? Romans 1:11, 12.**

- 3. Why did a visit to Rome fit into Paul’s long-term plans? Romans 15:24.**

“To see the Christian faith firmly established at the great center of the known world was one of his dearest hopes and most cherished plans. A church had already been established in Rome, and the apostle desired to secure the co-operation of the believers there in the work to be accomplished in Italy and in other countries. To prepare the way for his labors among these brethren, many of whom were as yet strangers to him, he sent them a letter announcing his purpose of visiting Rome and his hope of planting the standard of the cross in Spain.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 373.

NO REASON TO BE ASHAMED

4. **What did it mean for a Christian at that time to preach Christ in the public centers of the world? 1 Corinthians 1:23, 24.**

“But in Paul’s day the cross was regarded with feelings of repulsion and horror. To uphold as the Saviour of mankind one who had met death on the cross, would naturally call forth ridicule and opposition.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 245.

5. **What position would some Christians tend to take under these conditions? Mark 8:38.**

“Never hide your colours, never put your light under a bushel or under a bed, but set it on a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house. Did you and the teachers who were with you at —— watch for opportunities to enlighten others? Did you seek in wisdom to do all the good you possibly could? Did you try to call the attention of those whose acquaintance you formed, to Bible truths? Did you not drag your colours behind you because you were ashamed to be regarded as God’s peculiar people? ‘Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words; . . . of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father.’” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 588.

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

6. **How did Paul proclaim the gospel? Why was he able to spread the message with such conviction? Romans 1:16.**

“The disciples were to carry their work forward in Christ’s name. Their every word and act was to fasten attention on His name, as possessing that vital power by which sinners may be saved. Their faith was

to center in Him who is the source of mercy and power. In His name they were to present their petitions to the Father, and they would receive answer. They were to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Christ's name was to be their watchword, their badge of distinction, their bond of union, the authority for their course of action, and the source of their success. Nothing was to be recognized in His kingdom that did not bear His name and superscription." –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 28.

7. What can man contribute to his salvation? Ephesians 2:8, 9.

“We must learn in the school of Christ. Nothing but his righteousness can entitle us to one of the blessings of the covenant of grace. We have long desired and tried to obtain these blessings, but have not received them, because we have cherished the idea that we could do something to make ourselves worthy of them. We have not looked away from ourselves, believing that Jesus is a living Saviour. We must not think that our own grace and merits will save us; the grace of Christ is our only hope of salvation. Through his prophet the Lord promises, ‘Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon’ (Isa. 55:7). We must believe the naked promise, and not accept feeling for faith. When we trust God fully, when we rely upon the merits of Jesus as a sin-pardoning, Saviour, we shall receive all the help that we can desire.” –*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 351.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- What does it mean to me to be a Christian?
- Why am I ashamed to admit my belief in the gospel to other people?
- How have I experienced the power of God in my life?

3

Sabbath, July 15, 2006

RESULTS OF REJECTING THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION

INTRODUCTION

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23.

“Many are deceived concerning the condition of their hearts. They do not realize that the natural heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” –*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 320.

THE POWER OF GOD IN THE GOSPEL

- 1. From what great event does all this power flow? 1 Corinthians 1:18.**

“The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light which streams from the cross of Calvary, and in connection with the wondrous, central truth of the Saviour’s atonement. Those who study the Redeemer’s wonderful sacrifice grow in grace and knowledge.” –*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 221.

- 2. What powerful truth is revealed when the gospel is faithfully preached? What happens when people who are searching hear this wonderful message? Romans 1:17, first part.**

“...as we behold the Lamb of God upon the cross of Calvary, the mystery of redemption begins to unfold to our minds, and the goodness of God leads us to repentance. In dying for sinners, Christ manifested a love that is incomprehensible; and as the sinner beholds this love, it softens the heart, impresses the mind, and inspires contrition in the soul.” —*Steps to Christ*, pp. 26, 27.

DIVINE RIGHTEOUSNESS

3. How is this godly righteousness revealed in the believer? Romans 1:17, last part.

“The righteousness of Christ is revealed from faith to faith; that is, from your present faith to an increased understanding of that faith which works by love and purifies the soul.” —*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1067.

“When you turn away from the broken cisterns that can hold no water, and in the name of Jesus your Advocate come directly to God, asking for the things you need, the righteousness of Christ will be revealed as your righteousness, the virtue of Christ as your virtue. You will then understand that justification will come alone through faith in Christ; for in Jesus is revealed the perfection of the character of God; in His life is manifested the outworking of the principles of holiness.” —*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 330.

4. What is absolutely necessary for growth in faith? Colossians 2:6; John 15:5.

“Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness,—all depend upon our union with Christ. It is by communion with Him, daily, hourly,—by abiding in Him, —that we are to grow in grace. He is not only the Author, but the Finisher of our faith. It is Christ first and last and always. He is to be with us, not only at the beginning and the end of our course, but at every step of the way. David says, ‘I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.’ Psalm 16:8.

“Do you ask, ‘How am I to abide in Christ?’ –In the same way as you received Him at first. ‘As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.’ ‘The just shall live by faith.’ Colossians 2:6; Hebrews 10:38. You gave yourself to God, to be His wholly, to serve and obey Him, and you took Christ as your Saviour. You could not yourself atone for your sins or change your heart; but having given yourself to God, you believe that He for Christ’s sake did all this for you.” –*Steps to Christ*, pp. 69, 70.

THE POWERFUL EFFECTS ON THE LIFE

5. How was Martin Luther moved at the discovery of this powerful doctrine?

“Luther was one day devoutly climbing these steps, when suddenly a voice like thunder seemed to say to him, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ Romans 1:17. He sprung upon his feet, and hastened from the place, in shame and horror. That text never lost its power upon his soul. From that time he saw more clearly than ever before the fallacy of trusting to human works for salvation, and the necessity of constant faith in the merits of Christ.” –*The Great Controversy*, p. 125.

6. What incomprehensible position do people take with respect to sin? How do they react when others commit sin? Romans 1:32.

“From John Wesley’s Journal, May 1738: ‘In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change, which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: And an assurance was given me, that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.’” – John Wesley, *Works*, vol. 1, p. 103.

MANY SUPPRESS THE TRUTH

7. What does the Lord reveal upon those who push the truth away from them? Romans 1:18.

“The reason that the Lord can do so little for those who are handling weighty truths is that so many hold these truths apart from their life. They hold them in unrighteousness. Their hands are not clean, their hearts are defiled with sin, and should the Lord work for them in the power of His Spirit corresponding with the magnitude of the truth which He has opened to the understanding, it would be as though the Lord sanctioned sin” –*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 81.

“By faith apply the blood of Christ to your heart, for that alone can make you whiter than snow. But you say, ‘This surrender of all my idols will break my heart.’ This giving up of all for God is represented by your falling upon the Rock and being broken. Then give up all for Him; for unless you are broken, you are worthless.” –*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 329.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- Do I do something which I know positively that I should not do?
- Do I excuse others who do the same thing?
- What effect does the truth of the gospel have on my life?
- Who will discover the righteousness of God in the Gospel?

DEBTORS BEFORE GOD

INTRODUCTION

“Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same thing.” Romans 2:1.

“The time spent in criticizing the motives and works of Christ’s servants might better be spent in prayer. Often if those who find fault knew the truth in regard to those with whom they find fault, they would have an altogether different opinion of them. How much better it would be if, instead of criticizing and condemning others, everyone would say: ‘I must work out my own salvation...’” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 83, 84.

1. How do many people treat the truth which God has revealed? Romans 1:18.

“...many hold these truths apart from their life. They hold them in unrighteousness. Their hands are not clean, their hearts are defiled with sin...” –*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 81.

DIVINE REVELATION AND HUMAN IMAGINATION

2. Can these people excuse themselves by saying that the revelation of God had been hidden from them? Romans 1:19, 20.

“The things of nature are the Lord’s silent ministers, given to us to teach us spiritual truths. They speak to us of the love of God and declare the wisdom of the great Master Artist.” –*The Adventist Home*, p. 146.

3. In not recognizing God's existence through His created works, what has man failed to do? Romans 1:21, 22.

“In the varied scenes of nature also are lessons of divine wisdom for all who have learned to commune with God. The pages that opened in undimmed brightness to the gaze of the first pair in Eden bear now a shadow. A blight has fallen upon the fair creation. And yet, wherever we turn, we see traces of the primal loveliness; wherever we turn, we hear the voice of God and behold His handiwork....

“Shall we, then, in the enjoyment of His gifts, forget the Giver? Let them rather lead us to contemplate His goodness and His love.” –*Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, pp. 54, 55.

WITHDRAW FROM GOD – FALL INTO THE CULTS OF MAN

4. How have people gone astray? Romans 1:23.

5. What are the results of continual disrespect for divine authority? Romans 1:24, 26, 28.

“When God lets man have his own way, it is the darkest hour of his life. For a willful, disobedient child to be left to have his own way, to follow the bent of his own mind and gather the dark clouds of God's judgment about him, is a terrible thing.” –*Faith and Works*, p. 46.

PASSIONS EXPOSED

6. What horrible exchange did people make who did not want to recognize God? How is this perpetuated today? Romans 1:25.

“Millions of years, it is claimed, were required for the evolution of the earth from chaos...

“Akin to the theory concerning the evolution of the earth is that which attributes to an ascending line of germs, mollusks, and quadrupeds the evolution of man, the crowning glory of the creation.

“Shall we reject that genealogical record,—prouder than any treasured in the courts of kings,—‘which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God?’ Luke 3:38.” —*Education*, pp. 128, 130.

7. What degenerate practices did man, left to his own lusts, pursue? Romans 1:26, 27.

MAN’S CONDITION WITHOUT CHRIST

8. What difficult condition do people fall into when they do not observe God’s guideposts? Romans 1:28-31.

“With every rejection of truth the minds of the people will become darker, their hearts more stubborn, until they are entrenched in an infidel hardihood.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 603.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- Can I say that I am spotless?
- Do I have the right to judge or condemn others?
- Do I practice self-righteousness in any way?
- Is not the judgment I would pass on others more applicable to myself?
- How often have I been in a situation where I could have done good and have neglected to do so?

THE LAW AND OUR CONSCIENCE

INTRODUCTION

“For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 4:4.

“It is not enough for a man to think himself safe in following the dictates of his conscience. ... The question to be settled is, Is the conscience in harmony with the Word of God? If not, it cannot safely be followed, for it will deceive. The conscience must be enlightened by God. Time must be given to a study of the Scriptures and to prayer. Thus the mind will be established, strengthened, and settled.” *–Mind, Character and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 324.

NONE IS INNOCENT

- 1. What did Jesus say to the hypocritical Jews who, after accusing a woman of adultery, demanded the death sentence for her? John 8:7.**

“He read the heart, and knew the character and life history of every one in His presence. These would be guardians of justice had themselves led their victim into sin, that they might lay a snare for Jesus.” *–The Desire of Ages*, p. 461.

- 2. What warning did Jesus give to those listening to His sermon on the mount? Matthew 7:1-5.**

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HUMAN JUDGMENT

3. How would the Pharisee have answered if he had heard the argument given by Paul? Luke 18:11; Romans 1:18-32.

“He judges his character, not by the holy character of God, but by the character of other men. His mind is turned away from God to humanity. This is the secret of his self-satisfaction.

“Whoever trusts in himself that he is righteous, will despise others. As the Pharisee judges himself by other men, so he judges other men by himself. His righteousness is estimated by theirs, and the worse they are the more righteous by contrast he appears. His self-righteousness leads to accusing. ‘Other men’ he condemns as transgressors of God’s law. Thus he is making manifest the very spirit of Satan, the accuser of the brethren. With this spirit it is impossible for him to enter into communion with God. He goes down to his house destitute of the divine blessing.” –*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 151.

4. Knowing that some people tended to consider themselves righteous, how did Paul begin the second chapter of Romans? Romans 2:1-3.

“We cannot read the heart. Ourselves faulty, we are not qualified to sit in judgment upon others. Finite men can judge only from outward appearance. To Him alone who knows the secret springs of action, and who deals tenderly and compassionately, is it given to decide the case of every soul.

“‘Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.’ Romans 2:1. Thus those who condemn or criticize others, proclaim themselves guilty, for they do the same things. In condemning others, they are passing sentence upon themselves, and God declares that this sentence is just. He accepts their own verdict against themselves.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 124.

GOD'S CALL AND THE RESULTS OF STUBBORNNESS

5. In what way does the Great Saviour lead the sinner to repentance? Romans 2:4.

“The great Searcher of hearts knoweth every sin committed in secret by the workers of iniquity. These persons come to feel secure in their deceptions and, because of His long-suffering, say that the Lord seeth not, and then act as though He had forsaken the earth.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 211, 212.

“Oh, fearful histories will be opened to the world at the judgment--histories of sins never confessed, of sins not blotted out! Oh, that these poor souls might see that they are heaping up wrath against the day of wrath! Then the thoughts of the heart, as well as the actions, will be revealed.” –*Testimonies for Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 146.

ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES

6. Will works which were done in love have an influence on the destiny of the faithful on the day of judgment? Romans 2:6; Ephesians 2:10; Malachi 3:16.

“In the book of God’s remembrance every deed of righteousness is immortalized. There every temptation resisted, every evil overcome, every word of tender pity expressed, is faithfully chronicled. And every act of sacrifice, every suffering and sorrow endured for Christ’s sake, is recorded. Says the psalmist: ‘Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?’ Psalm 56:8.” –*The Great Controversy*, p. 481.

7. Describe the deeds of the truly repentant and his reward. Romans 2:7, 10.

8. What are the works of the unrepentant and their serious consequences? Romans 2:8, 9.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- How am I influenced by my conscience?
- What relationship do I see between my conscience and God's law?
- Do I listen to the voice of my conscience?
- Am I aware that my conscience can be wrong?
- Am I always ready to submit myself to the supreme and certain guidelines of God's law?

6

Sabbath, August 5, 2006

LAW AND RESPONSIBILITY

INTRODUCTION

“If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin.” John 15:22.

“None will be condemned for not heeding light and knowledge that they never had, and they could not obtain. But many refuse to obey the truth that is presented to them by Christ's ambassadors, because they wish to conform to the world's standard; and the truth that has reached their understanding, the light that has shone in the soul, will condemn them in the judgment.” –*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1145.

CALLED TO DO GOOD

- 1. What did James say about this? How completely does God judge our behaviour? James 4:17.**

“Said the angel: ‘Ye shall understand, but not yet, not yet.’ Said the angel: ‘If light come, and that light is set aside or rejected, then comes condemnation and the frown of God; but before the light comes, there is no sin, for there is no light for them to reject.’” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 116.

- 2. Where is the righteousness of God revealed? Romans 3:21; 1 Peter 1:9, 10.**

DOING GOD'S WILL

- 3. When did Peter come to fully realize the far-reaching significance of preaching the gospel? Acts 10:34, 35.**

- 4. How does God deal with the heathen world which does not have the written “word” and therefore cannot fathom the true God? Acts 17:30.**

“In the ages of darkness that had preceded the advent of Christ, the divine Ruler had passed lightly over the idolatry of the heathen; but now, through His Son, He had sent men the light of truth; and He expected from all repentance unto salvation, not only from the poor and humble, but from the proud philosopher and the princes of the earth” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 239.

“Knowledge is power, either for good or for evil. Bible religion is the only safeguard for human beings.” –*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 111.

UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONSIBILITY

- 5. How does our conscience work? John 8:9.**

6. How does knowledge relate to accountability? Acts 17:30, last part; John 15:22.

“When secret prayer and reading of the Scriptures are neglected today, tomorrow they can be omitted with less remonstrance of conscience. There will be a long list of omissions, all for a single grain sown in the soil of the heart. On the other hand, every ray of light cherished will yield a harvest of light. Temptation once resisted will give power to more firmly resist the second time; every new victory gained over self will smooth the way for higher and nobler triumphs. Every victory is a seed sown to eternal life.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 120.

THE BASIS FOR GOD’S JUDGMENT

7. How will those who do not know God’s law be judged? Romans 2:14, 15.

“Those whom Christ commends in the judgment may have known little of theology, but they have cherished His principles. Through the influence of the divine Spirit they have been a blessing to those about them. Even among the heathen are those who have cherished the spirit of kindness; before the words of life had fallen upon their ears, they have befriended the missionaries, even ministering to them at the peril of their own lives. Among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly, those to whom the light is never brought by human instrumentality, yet they will not perish. Though ignorant of the written law of God, they have heard His voice speaking to them in nature, and have done the things that the law required. Their works are evidence that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts, and they are recognized as the children of God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 638.

8. What historical example did Jesus use to show how God judges? Matthew 11:20-24.

“Adam and Eve, at their creation, had a knowledge of the law of God; they were acquainted with its claims upon them; its precepts were written upon their hearts.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 363.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- Do I cherish with humility the richness of knowledge concerning God’s will?
- Have my actions made me a blind leader or a divine educator of others?
- Is God’s name praised or ridiculed because of me?
- In what ways does my character need to be trained or tamed?

7

Sabbath, August 12, 2006

THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION

INTRODUCTION

“In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.” Colossians 2:11.

“These lessons Christ gave in His teaching, showing that the ritual service was passing away, and possessed no virtue... True circumcision is the worship of Christ in spirit and truth, not in forms and ceremonies, with hypocritical pretense.” –*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 399.

OUR CONSCIENCE AT WORK

1. **What task is performed by our God-given conscience? Job 27:6; John 8:8, 9.**

“God has lent men talents—an intellect to originate, a heart to be the place of His throne, affection to flow out in blessings to others, a conscience to convict of sin.” —*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 114.

“It is not enough to be conscientious in your belief and practice: a man may be conscientious in bending his footsteps in a path that does not lead to heaven. That he is sincere does not prove that he is right. The sincere motives of his heart will not serve to change error into truth. Paul was conscientious in his persecution of the early Christians; but his conscientious zeal in a bad cause did not sanctify his actions, and bring him into favor with God. He believed that he was doing God service. But ‘he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.’ We must test our conscience by the word of God.” —*The Review and Herald*, February 10, 1891.

2. What happens when our conscience is resisted too long? 1 Timothy 4:2.

“When a person once neglects to heed the invitations, reproofs, and warnings of the Spirit of God, his conscience becomes seared, and the next time he is admonished, it will be more difficult to yield obedience than before. And thus with every repetition. Conscience is the voice of God, heard amid the conflict of human passions; when it is resisted, the Spirit of God is grieved.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 120.

THE STANDARD OF OUR CONSCIENCE

3. When will be revealed whether a person has heeded his conscience or resisted it? Romans 2:16; 1 Corinthians 4:5.

4. What is the only true standard to which our conscience may be oriented? Romans 7:7.

“The idea is entertained by many that a man may practice anything that he conscientiously believes to be right. But the question is: Has the man a well-instructed, good conscience, or is it biased and warped by his own preconceived opinions? Conscience is not to take the place of ‘Thus saith the Lord.’ Consciences do not all harmonize and are not all inspired alike. Some consciences are dead, seared as with a hot iron. Men may be conscientiously wrong as well as conscientiously right. Paul did not believe in Jesus of Nazareth, and he hunted the Christians from city to city, verily believing that he was doing service to God. (Letter 4, 1889)”
–*Mind, Character and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 322.

A PRIVILEGE NOT VALUED

5. What advantage did the Jews have over those of other nations? Romans 3:1, 2.

“There is no respect of persons with God,’ declared Paul. The apostle regarded himself as ‘debtor both to the Greeks, and to the barbarians,’ as well as to the Jews; but he never lost sight of the decided advantages possessed by the Jews over others, ‘chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.’” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 380.

6. Who are the preservers of God’s law today? Matthew 21:42, 43; 1 Timothy 3:15.

“That which God purposed to do for the world through Israel, the chosen nation, He will finally accomplish through His church on earth today.

“Those who have been made free in Christ through a knowledge of precious truth, are regarded by the Lord Jesus as His chosen ones, favored above all other people on the face of the earth; and He is counting on them to show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into marvellous light.” –*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 713, 716.

ARROGANCE INSTEAD OF HUMILITY

7. **As the custodians of divine revelation, what position did the Jews have in respect to the written word? Romans 2:17-20.**

8. **Did they assume this responsibility with humility? Matthew 23:5-7.**

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- How can I be clean from sin?
- Do I hold a doctrine, attitude or erroneous opinion, similar to that of the Jews who misunderstood circumcision?
- What daily experiences do I make, that enable me to be a new creature?
- What do I constantly learn from Jesus, who transforms my nature to the likeness of His character?

PRIVILEGES AND UNFAITHFULNESS OF ISRAEL

INTRODUCTION

“And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth.” Deuteronomy 28:1.

“To every promise of God there are conditions. If we are willing to do His will, all His strength is ours.” –*Education*, p. 253.

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HYPOCRISY

1. **What complaints did the apostle Paul have against those who alleged to know the law and wanted to be teachers? Romans 2:21-23.**

2. **How did Jesus call such dealings? Luke 12:1-3.**

“Sin may be concealed, denied, covered up from father, mother, wife, children, and associates. No one but the guilty actors may cherish the least suspicion of the wrong; but it is laid bare before the intelligences of Heaven. The darkness of the darkest night, the secrecy of all deceptive arts, is not sufficient to veil one thought from the knowledge of the Eternal. God has an exact record of every unjust account and every unfair dealing. He is not deceived by appearances of piety. He makes no mistakes in his estimation of character. Men may be deceived by those who are corrupt in heart, but God pierces all disguises, and reads the inner life.” –*The Great Controversy*, p. 486.

DO NOT BE NEGATIVE

- 3. What advice did Jesus give to His listeners? How should they have acted with respect to the instructions of their hypocritical teachers? Matthew 23:3.**

- 4. What is the sad result when the professed people of God neglect to live in accordance with their confession of faith? Romans 2:24; Ezekiel 36:20; 2 Samuel 12:14.**

“There are many who hear the sayings of Christ, but do them not. They make a profession, but their fruits are such as to disgust unbelievers. They are boastful, and pray and talk in a self-righteous manner, exalting themselves, recounting their good deeds, and, like the Pharisee, virtually thanking God that they are not as other men.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 416.

EXAMPLES IN ALL THINGS

- 5. What can unbelievers justifiably expect from Sabbath keepers? What is our responsibility as those who know the law? Titus 2:7.**

“Unbelievers have a right to expect that those who profess to be keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, will do more than any other class to promote and honor, by their consistent lives, by their godly example and their active influence, the cause which they represent. But how often have the professed advocates of the truth proved the greatest obstacle to its advancement! The unbelief indulged, the doubts expressed, the darkness cherished, encourage the presence of evil angels, and open the way for the accomplishment of Satan’s devices.” —*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 122.

6. What high goal did the apostle Paul set for himself? 1 Corinthians 9:27.

MAKING A DISTINCTION

7. What external sign distinguished Abraham's male descendants? Genesis 17:10, 11.

“It was to be observed by the patriarch and his descendants as a token that they were devoted to the service of God and thus separated from idolaters, and that God accepted them as His peculiar treasure. By this rite they were pledged to fulfill, on their part, the conditions of the covenant made with Abraham. They were not to contract marriages with the heathen; for by so doing they would lose their reverence for God and His holy law; they would be tempted to engage in the sinful practices of other nations, and would be seduced into idolatry.” *—Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 138.

8. Did circumcision make Abraham righteous before God? If not, what did? Romans 4:11; Genesis 15:6.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- What privilege have we received from the Lord as members of the Reform Movement?
- Are there Biblical truths that I am not pleased to hear?
- Could I present myself to the Lord as a faithful servant in my present condition?

9

Sabbath, August 26, 2006

ARE WE ALL GUILTY BEFORE GOD?

INTRODUCTION

“As it is written. There is none righteous, no, not one.” Romans 3:10.

“Many are deceived concerning the condition of their hearts. They do not realize that the natural heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” –*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 320.

A SIGN MISUNDERSTOOD

1. How was circumcision considered by some Jewish Christians? Acts 15:1.

“At Jerusalem the delegates from Antioch met the brethren of the various churches, who had gathered for a general meeting, and to them they related the success that had attended their ministry among the Gentiles. They then gave a clear outline of the confusion that had resulted because certain converted Pharisees had gone to Antioch declaring that, in order to be saved, the Gentile converts must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 191.

2. What did the apostles decide in the assembly dealing with this matter? Acts 15:7-9, 28, 29.

“This yoke was not the law of Ten Commandments, as some who oppose the binding claims of the law assert; Peter here referred to the law of ceremonies, which was made null and void by the crucifixion of Christ.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 193.

CIRCUMCISION AND RIGHTEOUSNESS BY WORKS

- 3. How did Moses remind Abraham's descendants of the true meaning of circumcision? Deuteronomy 10:16.**

CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART

- 4. How did Paul state this truth to the Christians at Rome? Romans 2:25-27.**

- 5. Who, then, is a true Israelite? Romans 2:28, 29; Ezekiel 36:26, 27.**

“The great truth of the conversion of the heart by the Holy Spirit is presented in Christ's words to Nicodemus: ‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born from above, he can not see the kingdom of God. ...

“The leaven hidden in the flour works invisibly to bring the whole mass under its leavening process; so the leaven of truth works secretly, silently, steadily, to transform the soul. The natural inclinations are softened and subdued. New thoughts, new feelings, new motives, are implanted. A new standard of character is set up--the life of Christ. The mind is changed; the faculties are roused to action in new lines. Man is not endowed with new faculties, but the faculties he has are sanctified. The conscience is awakened. We are endowed with traits of character that enable us to do service for God.” –*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 98, 99.

PURITY IN CHRIST

- 6. How is this truth explained elsewhere? Galatians 6:15, 16.**

7. Through what action would one who wants to follow Jesus today make a covenant with God? Colossians 2:10-12.

“The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, powers infinite and omniscient, receive those who truly enter into covenant relation with God. They are present at every baptism, to receive the candidates who have renounced the world and have received Christ into the soul temple.” –*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 143.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- Do I bear in mind that I can also be in apostasy?
- Do I recognize my weakness and need of Christ’s blood?
- Do I apply the law of God to others or to myself?
- How much time do I devote to the personal study of God’s Word?

JUSTIFICATION BY GRACE - I

INTRODUCTION

“Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Romans 3:24.

“The Lord saw our fallen condition; He saw our need of grace, and because He loved our souls, He has given us grace and peace. Grace means favor to one who is undeserving, to one who is lost. The fact that we are sinners, instead of shutting us away from the mercy and love of God, makes the exercise of His love to us a positive necessity in order that we may be saved.” –*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1117.

ADVANTAGES OF THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

- 1. What special oracles were entrusted to the Jews over other nations? Romans 3:1; 9:4; Psalm 78:5; Deuteronomy 4:8.**

“To this people were committed the oracles of God. They were hedged about by the precepts of His law, the everlasting principles of truth, justice, and purity. Obedience to these principles was to be their protection, for it would save them from destroying themselves by sinful practices. And as the tower in the vineyard, God placed in the midst of the land His holy temple.” –*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 287, 288.

- 2. What should we do with the advantages God has given to us? John 12:36; Ephesians 5:8, second part.**

“The great light and privileges bestowed require returns of virtue and holiness corresponding to the light given. Anything short of this, God cannot accept. Great blessings or privileges should never lull to security or carelessness. They should never give license to sin or cause the recipients to feel that God will not be exact with them. All the advantages which God has given are His means to throw ardor into the spirit, zeal into effort, and vigor into the carrying out of His holy will.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 359.

REFUSING THE LIGHT

3. How did the Jew treat the entrusted treasure revealed in the plan of salvation? Isaiah 53:1; John 1:11.

“The angels had wondered at the glorious plan of redemption. They watched to see how the people of God would receive His Son, clothed in the garb of humanity. Angels came to the land of the chosen people. Other nations were dealing in fables and worshiping false gods. To the land where the glory of God had been revealed, and the light of prophecy had shone, the angels came. They came unseen to Jerusalem, to the appointed expositors of the Sacred Oracles, and the ministers of God’s house... Yet Jerusalem was not preparing to welcome her Redeemer.

“With amazement the heavenly messengers beheld the indifference of that people whom God had called to communicate to the world the light of sacred truth.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 43, 44.

4. Why did Jesus lament over Jerusalem? What did God long to do for the Jewish nation, and what hindered Him from doing it? Luke 13:34, 35.

“If Jerusalem had known what it was her privilege to know, and had heeded the light which Heaven had sent her, she might have stood forth in the pride of prosperity, the queen of kingdoms, free in the strength of her God-given power. There would have been no armed soldiers standing at her gates, no Roman banners waving from her walls. The glorious destiny that might have blessed Jerusalem had she accepted her Redeemer

rose before the Son of God. He saw that she might through Him have been healed of her grievous malady, liberated from bondage, and established as the mighty metropolis of the earth. From her walls the dove of peace would have gone forth to all nations. She would have been the world's diadem of glory." *-The Desire of Ages*, p. 576.

5. What should we learn about the promises of God on the basis of this experience? Deuteronomy 28:1, 2, 15.

"It should be remembered that the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional.

"For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years." *-Selected Messages*, vol. 1, pp. 67, 69.

6. Nevertheless, what did the apostle lament? Was God's faithfulness negated because of the infidelity of certain Jews? Romans 3:3, 4, first part.

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

7. What should the Jewish people have learned about God's character? Romans 3:3, 4.

8. Is God's righteousness exalted by our missteps? What human objections did Paul anticipate? Romans 3:5-8.

“But if our unrighteousness brings out God’s righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.)

“Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world? Someone might argue, ‘If my falsehood enhances God’s truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?’” Romans 3:5-7, New International Version.

“Faith claims God’s promises, and brings forth fruit in obedience. Pre-
sumption also claims the promises, but uses them as Satan did, to excuse transgression.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 126.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- Do I try to reach the ideal of divine justice by my own human capacities?
- Do I expect any reward for my obedience?
- Do I always remember that justice is found only in God and not in me?

JUSTIFICATION BY GRACE - II

INTRODUCTION

“What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.” Romans 3: 9-10.

- 1. What words of the apostle Paul did certain persons misuse? What is the destiny of those that live this way? Romans 3:8, last part.**

“Wherever the divine precepts are rejected, sin ceases to appear sinful, or righteousness desirable. Those who refuse to submit to the government of God are wholly unfitted to govern themselves. Through their pernicious teachings, the spirit of insubordination is implanted in the hearts of children and youth, who are naturally impatient of control; and a lawless, licentious state of society results. While scoffing at the credulity of those who obey the requirements of God, the multitudes eagerly accept the delusions of Satan. They give the rein to lust, and practice the sins which have called down judgments upon the heathen.” *—The Great Controversy*, pp. 584, 585.

- 2. What was the apostolic doctrine regarding works? Ephesians 2:8-10; 2 Timothy 1:9; James 2:17, 18.**

“Our acceptance with God is sure only through His beloved Son, and good works are but the result of the working of His sin-pardoning love. They are no credit to us, and we have nothing accorded to us for our good works by which we may claim a part in the salvation of our souls. Salva-

tion is God's free gift to the believer, given to him for Christ's sake alone. The troubled soul may find peace through faith in Christ, and his peace will be in proportion to his faith and trust. He cannot present his good works as a plea for the salvation of his soul." —*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1122.

THE HUMAN CONDITION

- 3. Despite their privileged position, from what were the Jews not exempt? Under what power must Jews and pagans both suffer? Romans 3:9.**

“Are we better than they” could mean: “Are we (who are in the church) better than they (who are not)?”

“The one who has been brought up within the sound of church bells and who hears the Scriptures read every day, has the same sinful nature and the same need of a Saviour, that the savage has.” —E. J. Waggoner, *Studies on Romans*, p. 64.

- 4. What words from the Old Testament did Paul quote to prove that everyone is under the power of sin? Psalm 14:1-3; Proverbs 20:9; Romans 3:10-12.**

RECOGNITION

- 5. Of what does man become aware when he finds himself in this hopeless situation? Psalms 51:5.**

“As your conscience has been quickened by the Holy Spirit, you have seen something of the evil of sin, of its power, its guilt, its woe; and you look upon it with abhorrence. You feel that sin has separated you from God, that you are in bondage to the power of evil. The more you struggle to escape, the more you realize your helplessness. Your motives are impure; your heart is unclean.” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 49.

SYMPTOMS OF THE FALLEN CONDITION

- 6. What talent, given to man by the Creator, has been degraded by sin? Proverbs 10:19; Romans 3:13, 14.**

- 7. Are Christians immune to this effect of sin? Why should they be especially concerned about slander? James 4:11; Proverbs 11:13; Psalm 15:1-3.**

“Evil speaking is a twofold curse, falling more heavily upon the speaker than upon the hearer. He who scatters the seeds of dissension and strife reaps in his own soul the deadly fruits. The very act of looking for evil in others develops evil in those who look. By dwelling upon the faults of others, we are changed into the same image.” –*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 492.

- 8. How does this sin lead to the transgression of the sixth commandment? When can Satan gather a great harvest? 1 John 2:11; Romans 3:15-18.**

“He who abides in darkness will at last lose the power of vision. He is shut in by a deeper than midnight blackness; and to him the brightest noontide can bring no light. He ‘walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.’ 1 John 2:11. Through persistently cherishing evil, willfully disregarding the pleadings of divine love, the sinner loses the love for good, the desire for God, the very capacity to receive the light of heaven” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 92.

“Satan delights in war; for it excites the worst passions of the soul, and then sweeps into eternity its victims steeped in vice and blood. It is his object to incite the nations to war against one another; for he can thus divert the minds of the people from the work of preparation to stand in the day of God.” –*The Great Controversy*, p. 589.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- What is sin?
- What is my position or attitude before falling in sin?
- How do I define myself in this sense?

12

Sabbath, September 16, 2006

PERSONAL EXAMINATION

INTRODUCTION

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” Ecclesiastes 12:13.

MEANS FOR A BETTER PERSONAL EXAMINATION

1. **To whom does the law speak? According to the inspired word, is there anyone who is not guilty before God? Romans 3:19; Psalm 53:3; Ecclesiastes 12:13 [v. 15 in some versions].**

“The whole world stands condemned before the great moral standard of righteousness. In the great day of judgment every soul that has lived on the earth will receive sentence in accordance as to whether his deeds have been good or evil in the light of the law of God. ... Sinners will stand condemned before the cross, with its mysterious Victim bowing beneath the infinite burden of human transgression. How quickly will be swept away every subterfuge, every lying excuse.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1069.

2. **To what extent can the law help us, and what are its limitations? Romans 3:20; James 1:23-25.**

“The law has no power to pardon the transgressor, but it points him to Christ Jesus, who says to him, I will take your sin and bear it Myself, if you will accept Me as your substitute and surety. Return to your allegiance, and I will impute to you My righteousness.” –*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1109.

APPLICATION OF THE WORD

3. What benefit does the psalmist see in one’s constantly meditating upon the law? Psalms 1:1-3.

“The word describes the blessed man as one meditating day and night upon the truths of God’s word. We all are to feast upon the word of God. The relation of the word to the believer is a vital matter. Appropriating the word to our spiritual necessities is the eating of the leaves of the tree of life that are for the healing of the nations. Study the word, and practice the word, for it is your life.” –*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 44.

“The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with scripture. The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts.” –*Education*, p. 190.

4. What should always follow the study of God’s word? Luke 11:28.

“The Bible is the best book in the world for giving intellectual culture. Its study taxes the mind, strengthens the memory, and sharpens the intellect more than the study of all the subjects that human philosophy embraces. ...

“Guard jealously your hours for prayer, Bible study, and self-examination. Set aside a portion of each day for a study of the Scriptures and communion with God. Thus you will obtain spiritual strength, and will grow in favor with God.” –*Gospel Workers*, p. 100.

HUMAN INCAPACITY TO OBEY GOD

5. What did the nation of Israel promise to God at the foot of Mount Sinai? Exodus 19:8; 24:3, 7.

6. Yet what happened just a few weeks later? What did they fail to realize when they promised to be faithful to God’s commandments? Exodus 32:1, 4.

“The people did not realize the sinfulness of their own hearts, and that without Christ it was impossible for them to keep God’s law; and they readily entered into covenant with God. Feeling that they were able to establish their own righteousness, they declared, ‘All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.’ Exodus 24:7. They had witnessed the proclamation of the law in awful majesty, and had trembled with terror before the mount; and yet only a few weeks passed before they broke their covenant with God, and bowed down to worship a graven image.” *—Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 371, 372.

JUSTIFICATION NOT OBTAINED BY THE LAW

7. Although one may have good intentions, what is the inevitable result when a person tries to obey God’s holy requirements in his own strength? Romans 8:7; 3:20.

“The law reveals to man his sins, but it provides no remedy. While it promises life to the obedient, it declares that death is the portion of the transgressor. The gospel of Christ alone can free him from the condemnation or the defilement of sin. He must exercise repentance toward God, whose law has been transgressed, and faith in Christ, his atoning sacrifice. Thus he obtains ‘remission of sins that are past,’ and becomes a partaker of the divine nature.” *—The Great Controversy*, pp. 467, 468.

8. How is this failure called in the Scriptures? 1 John 3:4.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- How often do I go with repentant heart to the feet of Jesus, to confess Him my sins calling them by their name and to be justified by the blood of Jesus?
- What in me the thought that I am justified by faith and by grace?

ABRAHAM – JUSTIFIED BY GRACE

INTRODUCTION

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”
John 3:16.

- 1. Why was it absolutely necessary for God to send His Son to be the propitiation before He could forgive the sins of the past? Romans 3: 24-26.**

“In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, he declared, that the law could not be obeyed; man could not be forgiven.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 761.

FAITH CONFIRMS THE LAW

- 2. What does this show about our own efforts to be righteous? Through what is man justified before God? Romans 3:27-30.**

“The law requires righteousness,—a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God’s holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins

that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can 'be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.' Rom. 3:26." –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 762.

3. Does the gospel strengthen or weaken the claims of the law? Romans 3:31.

"The great standard of righteousness presented in the Old Testament is not lowered in the New. It is not the work of the gospel to weaken the claims of God's holy law but to bring men up where they can keep its precepts." –*Faith and Works*, p. 52.

FAITH IN GOD'S PROMISE

4. What prominent Old Testament personage experienced justification by faith? Romans 4:1-3.

5. In what promise did Abraham believe? How did the Lord respond to this faith? Genesis 15:1-6.

EXTENT OF THE DIVINE PROMISE

6. How far did this promise reach? Did it merely concern Isaac's birth, or was it to be something even more significant? Genesis 12:1-3.

"There was given to Abraham the promise, especially dear to the people of that age, of a numerous posterity and of national greatness: 'I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.' And to this was added the assurance, precious above every other to the inheritor of faith, that of his line the Redeemer of the world should come: 'In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.'" –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 125.

7. What did Jesus say about this patriarch, who lived on earth almost nineteen hundred years before He did? John 8:56.

“The command came to him, ‘Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, . . . and offer him . . . for a burnt offering.’ Gen. 22:2. Upon the altar of sacrifice he laid the son of promise, the son in whom his hopes were centered. Then as he waited beside the altar with knife upraised to obey God, he heard a voice from heaven saying, ‘Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me.’ Gen. 22:12. This terrible ordeal was imposed upon Abraham that he might see the day of Christ, and realize the great love of God for the world, so great that to raise it from its degradation, He gave His only-begotten Son to a most shameful death.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 468, 469.

REWARD BY GRACE

8. Through what means was Abraham justified? Romans 4:2, 4, 5.

“When the sinner believes that Christ is his personal Saviour, then, according to His unfailing promises, God pardons his sin, and justifies him freely.” –*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 367.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- Do I believe in God’s promises?
- To what extent do I depend upon His promises, although reality may seem different?
- Is outward appearance valuable to me, as circumcision was to the Jews?
- How am I a child of Abraham?
- What experiences of faith have I had that are similar to Abraham’s?

**Please,
read the Report from Seychelles on page 51.**

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Sabbath, September 30, 2006

ABRAHAM'S FAITH AND OUR FAITH

INTRODUCTION

“Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.” Romans 4:18.

“Through faith in Christ, every deficiency of character may be supplied, every defilement cleansed, every fault corrected, every excellence developed.” *—Education*, p. 257.

“Faith is the condition upon which God has seen fit to promise pardon to sinners; not that there is any virtue in faith whereby salvation is merited, but because faith can lay hold of the merits of Christ, the remedy provided for sin.” *—Selected Messages*, vol. 1, pp. 366, 367.

THE PROMISED BLESSING

- 1. How far should the blessing from Abraham's descendants have extended? Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:16, 18.**

“The gift to Abraham and his seed included not merely the land of Canaan, but the whole earth. So says the apostle, ‘The promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.’ Romans 4:13. And the Bible plainly teaches that the promises made to Abraham are to

be fulfilled through Christ. All that are Christ's are 'Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise'—heirs to 'an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away'—the earth freed from the curse of sin. Galatians 3:29; 1 Peter 1:4." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 170.

- 2. Could Abraham receive this promised inheritance? Hebrews 11:9, 10, 13.**

BLESSING FOR ALL

- 3. When will these wonderful promises be fulfilled for the true, spiritual children of Abraham? 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52.**

- 4. Who will share the inheritance with Abraham? Romans 4:16, 17.**

“The true children of Abraham would live, as he did, a life of obedience to God. They would not try to kill One who was speaking the truth that was given Him from God. In plotting against Christ, the rabbis were not doing the works of Abraham. A mere lineal descent from Abraham was of no value. Without a spiritual connection with him, which would be manifested in possessing the same spirit, and doing the same works, they were not his children.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 466, 467.

FAITH FILLED WITH HOPE

- 5. How strong was Abraham's faith? Romans 4:18-21.**

- 6. What did Abraham believe God was capable of doing when he was commanded to sacrifice Isaac? Hebrews 11:17-19.**

“It was to impress Abraham’s mind with the reality of the gospel, as well as to test his faith, that God commanded him to slay his son. The agony, which he endured during the dark days of that fearful trial, was permitted that he might understand from his own experience something of the greatness of the sacrifice made by the infinite God for man’s redemption. No other test could have caused Abraham such torture of soul as did the offering of his son. God gave His Son to a death of agony and shame.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 154.

IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

- 7. Why did the Apostle Paul stress Abraham’s faith and the marvellous way in which God honored it? Romans 4:22-25.**

- 8. Did Abraham obtain the promise because he kept the law, or was it a result of his faith? Romans 4:2-4, 13-15. Does this mean that faith without obedience is sufficient, or are works the proof that one has true faith? James 2:21, 22.**

“But while God can be just, and yet justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ’s righteousness while practicing known sins, or neglecting known duties. God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul.” –*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 366.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- Is my faith built on the same foundation as Abraham’s?
- How can I, being a child in faith, grow to maturity?
- Is faith for me an idea, a feeling, or something more productive?
- Are the fruits of active faith noticeable in me—repentance, obedience, humbleness, and self-denial?

MISSIONARY REPORT FROM SEYCHELLES ISLANDS

To be read on Sabbath, September 30, 2006

The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered on Sabbath, October 7, 2006

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world as a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” Matthew 24:14.

In April 2003, I was commissioned by the General Conference to visit Seychelles Islands in the Indian Ocean, off the East African coast, to attend to a missionary call by one interested soul, Sr. Jemma Simeon. She had visited our IMS General Conference website on the internet and became interested in knowing more about IMS, SDA Reform Movement, our basic beliefs and Church history. After several e-mail contacts with Bro. Henry Dering of USA, she requested a personal visit by a missionary. It was in this connection that I was sent there.

Upon my arrival, I had an opportunity to meet several others who belonged to a group of Adventist believers. They wished to know the facts about our history and basic beliefs. We spent a week on these issues. Three among them took an immediate stand for IMS, SDA Reform Movement. Within a period of one year three others joined our Church through baptism, while several others are keenly pursuing Bible instructions.

Seychelles comprises a nucleus of 41 granitic islands, the cultural hub of the nation, and 74 sparkling sand cays and out-of-the-way atolls. Together, these form six distinct groups: the Inner Islands, the Amirantes, Southern Coral, Alphonse, Farquhar, and Aldabra, all lying between 300 miles and 1000 miles from the east African coast. The 81,000-strong population is essentially a *mélange* of the descendants of the first settlers, their slaves, oriental traders, *émigrés*, political exiles and adventurers. There are three official languages in Seychelles, namely Creole (a lilting French-based patois), English, and French. Many Seychellois also speak fluent Italian and German. The average annual income per person is about \$800. Cost of living here is very high, for nearly all commodities and foodstuffs are imported. Although paganism exists here to a small degree, Christianity is dominant with Roman Catholicism taking the lead. Sabbath keepers are also very popular in this island.

In June 2004, our Church was officially registered with the government. This offers us the privilege of having permanent, established head office and a church building. People here are accustomed to worship in established church buildings, and therefore are reluctant to meet in private houses for worship services. For this reason there is an urgent need for a church property.

May God inspire you to serve Him through your offering in this quarter. Just recall the words of Jesus: "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour." John 12:26.

-P. N. Shirima
Regional Representative

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

for the Second Half 2006

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

Fourth Quarter

**The Special Sabbath School Offering
is dedicated to Seychelles**

*Remember to give your offering as an expression
of love and gratitude*

1

Sabbath, October 7, 2006

**JUSTIFICATION
AND PEACE WITH GOD**

INTRODUCTION

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 5:1.

“Whoever consents to renounce sin and open his heart to the love of Christ, becomes a partaker of this heavenly peace.” *—Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 27.

AT PEACE WITH GOD

- 1. What is the relationship between man and God when man has not been born again? Romans 8:7; James 4:4.**

“The peace of Christ is born of truth. It is harmony with God. The world is at enmity with the law of God; sinners are at enmity with their Maker; and as a result they are at enmity with one another. But the psalmist declares, ‘Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall

offend them.' Ps. 119:165. Men cannot manufacture peace. Human plans for the purification and uplifting of individuals or of society will fail of producing peace, because they do not reach the heart. The only power that can create or perpetuate true peace is the grace of Christ. When this is implanted in the heart, it will cast out the evil passions that cause strife and dissension." -*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 302, 305.

2. What wonderful relationship with God is established when we have been justified by faith? Romans 5:1, 2.

"There is no other ground of peace than this. The grace of Christ received into the heart, subdues enmity; it allays strife and fills the soul with love. He who is at peace with God and his fellow men cannot be made miserable. Envy will not be in his heart; evil surmisings will find no room there; hatred cannot exist. The heart that is in harmony with God is a partaker of the peace of heaven and will diffuse its blessed influence on all around. The spirit of peace will rest like dew upon hearts weary and troubled with worldly strife." -*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 27, 28.

TRIBULATION-A FOUNTAIN OF BLESSINGS

3. Who gives us this peace? John 14:27.

"Sin has destroyed our peace. While self is unsubdued, we can find no rest. The masterful passions of the heart no human power can control. We are as helpless here as were the disciples to quiet the raging storm. But He who spoke peace to the billows of Galilee has spoken the word of peace for every soul. However fierce the tempest, those who turn to Jesus with the cry, 'Lord, save us,' will find deliverance. His grace, that reconciles the soul to God, quiets the strife of human passion, and in His love the heart is at rest." -*The Desire of Ages*, p. 336.

4. Can this peace which God gives us be easily destroyed? Romans 5:3-5, first part.

“Now that you have given yourself to Jesus, do not draw back, do not take yourself away from Him, but day by day say, ‘I am Christ’s; I have given myself to Him;’ and ask Him to give you His Spirit and keep you by His grace. As it is by giving yourself to God, and believing Him, that you become His child, so you are to live in Him. The apostle says, ‘As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.’ Colossians 2:6.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 52.

5. What purpose do the trials of faith serve? James 1:12.

“No greater evidence need be asked that a person is at a great distance from Jesus, and living in neglect of secret prayer, neglecting personal piety, than the fact that he thus talks doubts and unbelief because his surroundings are not favorable. Such persons have not the pure, true, undefiled religion of Christ. They have a spurious article which the refining process will utterly consume as dross. As soon as God proves them, and tests their faith, they waver, they stand feebly, swaying first one way, then the other. They have not the genuine article that Paul possessed, that could glory in tribulation because ‘tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.’ They have a religion of circumstance.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 514, 515.

IMMESURABLE LOVE OF GOD

6. What foundation do those Christians possess who, even under tribulation, remain firm in faith? Romans 5:5, last part.

“In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the principle of action. It modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and ennobles the affections. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the life and sheds a refining influence on all around.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 59.

7. Where is the fountain of this love? 1 John 4:16.

THE GREATEST SACRIFICE

8. What are the results of God's incomprehensible love toward us? Romans 5:6, 8, 10.

“All the paternal love which has come down from generation to generation through the channel of human hearts, all the springs of tenderness which have opened in the souls of men, are but as a tiny rill to the boundless ocean when compared with the infinite, exhaustless love of God. Tongue cannot utter it; pen cannot portray it. You may meditate upon it every day of your life; you may search the Scriptures diligently in order to understand it; you may summon every power and capability that God has given you, in the endeavor to comprehend the love and compassion of the heavenly Father; and yet there is an infinity beyond. You may study that love for ages; yet you can never fully comprehend the length and the breadth, the depth and the height, of the love of God in giving His Son to die for the world.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 740.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

- Have I experienced the wonderful peace with God which also brings peace with my fellowmen?
- What results have trials and difficulties produced in me?
- Can I truly say that I love people as Jesus loves them?
- What would I do for a person? To what point would I be willing to sacrifice for someone?
- Is it possible for me to lose my peace with God? How can I preserve it?

ADAM AND CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

“Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Acts 13:38, 39.

“Through the Saviour’s sacrifice, communion with God is again made possible. We may not in person approach into His presence; in our sin we may not look upon His face; but we can behold Him and commune with Him in Jesus, the Saviour.” *—Education*, p. 28.

CONSEQUENCE OF TRANSGRESSION

- 1. How did sin enter the world, and what are its consequences? Romans 5:12.**

“In consequence of Adam’s sin, death passed upon the whole human race. All alike go down into the grave.” *—The Great Controversy*, p. 544.

- 2. What may be said about Adam’s disobedience to God’s explicit command? If he was not deceived, what caused him to fall? 1 Timothy 2:14.**

“Adam understood that his companion had transgressed the command of God, disregarded the only prohibition laid upon them as a test of their fidelity and love. There was a terrible struggle in his mind. ... Love, gratitude, loyalty to the Creator—all were overborne by love to Eve. ... He resolved to share her fate; if she must die, he would die with her.” *—Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 56.

OUR PUNISHMENT FELL UPON HIM

3. With whom is Adam contrasted? 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, 45-47.

“Immortality, promised to man on condition of obedience, had been forfeited by transgression. Adam could not transmit to his posterity that which he did not possess; and there could have been no hope for the fallen race, had not God, by the sacrifice of his Son, brought immortality within their reach. While ‘death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,’ Christ ‘hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.’ Romans 5:12; 2 Timothy 1:10. And only through Christ can immortality be obtained.” –*The Great Controversy*, p. 533.

“The first Adam fell; the second Adam held fast to God and His Word under the most trying circumstances, and His faith in His Father’s goodness, mercy, and love did not waver for one moment. (Letter 8, 1895).” –*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1129.

“All that was lost by the first Adam will be restored by the second.” –*The Adventist Home*, p. 540.

4. How was this contrast explained further in Paul’s letter to the Romans? Romans 5:15, 16, 18, 19.

“The apostle contrasts the disobedience of Adam and the full, entire obedience of Christ. Think of what Christ’s obedience means to us! It means that in His strength we too may obey. Christ was a human being. He served His heavenly Father with all the strength of His human nature. He has a twofold nature, at once human and divine. He is both God and man.” –*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1074.

THE EXISTENCE OF THE LAW BEFORE SIN

5. What must have already existed since Adam’s sin brought calamity to all mankind? Romans 5:13; 1 John 3:4.

“Before this earth was called into being, God’s law existed.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 48.

“Adam and Eve, at their creation, had a knowledge of the law of God; they were acquainted with its claims upon them; its precepts were written upon their hearts.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 363.

“God made man upright; He gave him noble traits of character, with no bias toward evil. He endowed him with high intellectual powers, and presented before him the strongest possible inducements to be true to his allegiance. Obedience, perfect and perpetual, was the condition of eternal happiness. On this condition he was to have access to the tree of life.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 49.

6. What did the death of mankind from Adam to Moses prove? Romans 5:14.

“Adam taught his descendants the law of God, and it was handed down from father to son through successive generations.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 363.

THE POWER OF SIN

7. What effect does the law have upon sin? Romans 5:20, first part.

8. Regardless of whether men consider it big or small, to what does every sin lead? James 2:10; Matthew 5:19.

“Had some great test been appointed Adam, then those whose hearts incline to evil would have excused themselves by saying, ‘This is a trivial matter, and God is not so particular about little things.’ And there would be continual transgression in things looked upon as small, and which pass unrebuked among men. But the Lord has made it evident that sin in any degree is offensive to Him.

“To Eve it seemed a small thing to disobey God by tasting the fruit of the forbidden tree, and to tempt her husband also to transgress; but their

sin opened the floodgates of woe upon the world. Who can know, in the moment of temptation, the terrible consequences that will result from one wrong step?" *-Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 61.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- Am I aware of the result of only one transgression?
- Do I recognize, as Paul did, the magnitude of sin in light of the cross and, even more so, the power of grace?
- Do I let the weight of sin oppress me, or do I accept the offer of grace from God?

3

Sabbath, October 21, 2006

BAPTISM AND THE NEW LIFE

INTRODUCTION

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” Hebrews 10:22.

“So it is only through the life from God that spiritual life is begotten in the hearts of men. Unless a man is ‘born from above,’ he cannot become a partaker of the life which Christ came to give.” *-Steps to Christ*, p. 67.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

- 1. Chapters five and six of Romans speak of righteousness. While chapter five emphasizes our justification before God, what does chapter six stress? How do these two expressions differ? Romans 6:19, 22.**

“The righteousness by which we are justified is imputed; the righteousness by which we are sanctified is imparted. The first is our title to heaven, the second is our fitness for heaven. (RH, June 4, 1895).” –*Messages to Young People*, p. 35.

- 2. With what question did Paul seek to protect his readers from a wrong understanding concerning sin and grace? Romans 6:1.**

DEATH AND RESURRECTION

- 3. How did Paul answer this question? Romans 6:2; Colossians 3:1-3.**

“In the new birth the heart is brought into harmony with God, as it is brought into accord with his law. When this mighty change has taken place in the sinner, he has passed from death unto life, from sin unto holiness, from transgression and rebellion to obedience and loyalty.” –*The Great Controversy*, p. 468.

- 4. How does the converted man declare that he has forsaken the service of Satan and has entered the service of Jesus? Romans 6:3-5.**
- 5. What is connected with baptism? Colossians 2:12, 13; Galatians 3:27.**

SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF GOD

- 6. What is ratified by baptism? What follows this? 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18; 7:1.**

“Christ enjoins those who receive this ordinance to remember that they are bound by a solemn covenant to live to the Lord.”—*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 143.

“If we are true to our vow, there is opened to us a door of communication with heaven—a door that no human hand or satanic agency can close. (RH May 17, 1906).” —*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1075.

7. What happens when our human nature is linked with the crucified and resurrected Christ? Romans 6:6, 7.

“In baptism we are given to the Lord as a vessel to be used. Baptism is a most solemn renunciation of the world. Self is by profession dead to a life of sin. The waters cover the candidate, and in the presence of the whole heavenly universe the mutual pledge is made.” —*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1074.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- Does my life belong fully to the Lord?
- Can Christ live totally in me?
- Can I recognize in my life the steps to a new birth and a new life in Christ?

FREEDOM FROM SIN AND THE FRUIT OF JUSTICE

INTRODUCTION

“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.” John 15:5.

“You are to give all,—your heart, your will, your service,—give yourself to Him to obey all His requirements; and you must take all,—Christ, the fullness of all blessing, to abide in your heart, to be your strength, your righteousness, your everlasting helper,—to give you power to obey.”
—*Steps to Christ*, p. 69.

UNDER DIVINE CONTROL

- 1. Over what does sin have dominion? Romans 6:12.**

- 2. What change occurs when a person has died and been resurrected with Christ? Romans 6:17-19.**

“The leaven hidden in the flour works invisibly to bring the whole mass under its leavening process; so the leaven of truth works secretly, silently, steadily, to transform the soul. The natural inclinations are softened and subdued. New thoughts, new feelings, new motives, are implanted. A new standard of character is set up—the life of Christ. The mind is changed; the faculties are roused to action in new lines. Man is not endowed with new faculties, but the faculties he has are sanctified. The conscience is awakened. We are endowed with traits of character that enable us to do service for God.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 98, 99.

THE LAW EXALTED BY GRACE

3. Can the law free men from the guilt of sin? What only can bring help? Romans 3:20.

“The law reveals to man his sins, but it provides no remedy. While it promises life to the obedient, it declares that death is the portion of the transgressor. The gospel of Christ alone can free him from the condemnation or the defilement of sin. He must exercise repentance toward God, whose law has been transgressed, and faith in Christ, his atoning sacrifice. Thus he obtains ‘remission of sins that are past,’ and becomes a partaker of the divine nature. He is a child of God, having received the spirit of adoption, whereby he cries, ‘Abba, Father!’” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 467, 468.

4. Does the apostle preach a gospel free from the law? Romans 3:31; 7:12.

“In the new birth the heart is brought into harmony with God, as it is brought into accord with his law. When this mighty change has taken place in the sinner, he has passed from death unto life, from sin unto holiness, from transgression and rebellion to obedience and loyalty.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 468.

A LIFE DEDICATED TO SERVICE

5. What happens to our relationship with the law when we are under grace? Romans 6:15.

“Paul had ever exalted the divine law. He had shown that in the law there is no power to save men from the penalty of disobedience. Wrongdoers must repent of their sins and humble themselves before God, whose just wrath they have incurred by breaking His law, and they must also exercise faith in the blood of Christ as their only means of pardon. The

Son of God had died as their sacrifice and had ascended to heaven to stand before the Father as their advocate. By repentance and faith they might be freed from the condemnation of sin and through the grace of Christ be enabled henceforth to render obedience to the law of God.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 393.

THE WORK OF THE LAW UPON HUMANITY

- 6. Is there a significant difference between being under the law and being under grace? Romans 6:14. When does the believer pass from being under the law to being under grace? Galatians 3:23.**

“We have transgressed the law of God, and by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified. The best efforts that man in his own strength can make, are valueless to meet the holy and just law that he has transgressed; but through faith in Christ he may claim the righteousness of the Son of God as all-sufficient.” —*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 363.

- 7. With what metaphor did the apostle Paul illustrate the position of one who is under the law? What holds this woman under dominion? Romans 7:1, 2.**

“Paul had ever exalted the divine law. He had shown that in the law there is no power to save men from the penalty of disobedience. Wrongdoers must repent of their sins and humble themselves before God, whose just wrath they have incurred by breaking His law, and they must also exercise faith in the blood of Christ as their only means of pardon. The Son of God had died as their sacrifice and had ascended to heaven to stand before the Father as their advocate. By repentance and faith they might be freed from the condemnation of sin and through the grace of Christ be enabled henceforth to render obedience to the law of God.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 393.

DEATH TO SIN

8. **According to the metaphor, when will this woman be free? Romans 7:2. How is this spiritual death accomplished? With whom is a new, intimate relationship now begun? Romans 7:3-6.**

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

- Is it my duty to consecrate myself to God every day?
- Today, by whom am I allowing myself to be controlled?
- What does the law of God mean to me?

THE ROLE OF THE LAW

INTRODUCTION

“I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart.”
Psalm 40:8.

“When Christ abides in the heart, the whole nature is transformed. Christ’s Spirit, His love, softens the heart, subdues the soul, and raises the thoughts and desires toward God and heaven.” –*Steps to Christ*, p. 73.

THE NEW CREATION

- 1. What wonderful transformation does this death bring about?
Romans 7:5, 6; 2 Corinthians 5:17, 18; Galatians 2:20.**

“It is not a small matter to transform an earthly, sin-loving mind and bring it to understand the unspeakable love of Christ, the charms of His grace, and the excellency of God, so that the soul shall be imbued with divine love and captivated with the heavenly mysteries. When he understands these things, his former life appears disgusting and hateful. He hates sin, and, breaking his heart before God, he embraces Christ as the life and joy of the soul. He renounces his former pleasures. He has a new mind, new affections, new interest, new will; his sorrows, and desires, and love are all new. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, which have heretofore been preferred before Christ, are now turned from, and Christ is the charm of his life, the crown of his rejoicing. Heaven, which once possessed no charms, is now viewed in its riches and glory; and he contemplates it as his future home, where he shall see, love, and praise the One who hath redeemed him by His precious blood.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 294.

“The ‘new covenant’ was established upon ‘better promises’—the promise of forgiveness of sins and of the grace of God to renew the heart and bring it into harmony with the principles of God’s law.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 372.

2. Who have we to be thankful for taking us out from our miserable condition? Romans 7: 24, 25.

“The very first and most important thing is to melt and subdue the soul by presenting our Lord Jesus Christ as the sin-pardoning Saviour. Never should a sermon be preached, or Bible instruction in any line be given, without pointing the hearers to the ‘Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ John 1:29. Every true doctrine makes Christ the center, every precept receives force from His words.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 53, 54.

RECOGNITION OF SIN THROUGH THE LAW

3. What important conclusion did Paul reach? Romans 7:7.

“Those who profess to cling to Christ, centering their hopes on Him, while they pour contempt upon the moral law, and the prophecies, are in no safer position than were the unbelieving Jews. They cannot understandingly call sinners to repentance, for they are unable to properly explain what they are to repent of. The sinner, upon being exhorted to forsake his sins, has a right to ask, What is sin? Those who respect the law of God can answer, Sin is the transgression of the law. In confirmation of this the apostle Paul says, I had not known sin but by the law.”–*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 229.

4. How did Paul go on to explain the function of the law? Romans 7:8; 3:20; Galatians 3:24.

“Man cannot hope to stand innocent before God, and at peace with Him through the merits of Christ, while he continues in sin. He must cease to transgress, and become loyal and true. As the sinner looks into the great moral looking glass, he sees his defects of character. He sees himself just as he is, spotted, defiled, and condemned. But he knows that the law cannot in any way remove the guilt or pardon the transgressor. He must go farther than this. The law is but the schoolmaster to

bring him to Christ. He must look to his sin-bearing Saviour. And as Christ is revealed to him upon the cross of Calvary, dying beneath the weight of the sins of the whole world, the Holy Spirit shows him the attitude of God to all who repent of their transgressions. 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life' (John 3:16)." –*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 213.

5. How did he describe man's experience? Romans 7:9-11.

"The ministration of the law, written and engraved in stone, was a ministration of death. Without Christ, the transgressor was left under its curse, with no hope of pardon." –*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 237.

THE SUPREMACY OF THE FLESH

6. When is it impossible to obey the law? What holds this person in slavery? Romans 7:14.

"His nature became so weakened through transgression that it was impossible for him, in his own strength, to resist the power of evil. He was made captive by Satan..." –*Steps to Christ*, p. 17.

7. Where does sin find a place to impose its rule? Romans 6:12, 20.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- Do I try, by great exertion, to become just before the law?
- Do I take the opportunity to see myself in the character mirror of God's law?
- Am I aware that the law is the expression of God's character?

6

Sabbath, November 11, 2006

CONVICTED, BUT NOT CONVERTED

INTRODUCTION

“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.” Ephesians 2:13-16.

LIBERATION FROM SLAVERY

- 1. Only through what can such a slave be liberated? Romans 6:18, 7, 8.**

- 2. Had Paul experienced this liberation? Galatians 2:20.**

“When human agents choose the will of God and are conformed to the character of Christ, Jesus acts through their organs and faculties. They put aside all selfish pride, all manifestation of superiority, all arbitrary exactions, and manifest the meekness and lowliness of Christ. It is no more themselves that live and act, but it is Christ that lives and acts through them. They understand the precious words of the Saviour’s prayer, ‘I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me.’” –*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 215.

HUMAN EFFORTS TO FULFIL THE LAW

- 3. What is the condition of a carnal man? Romans 7:15; 8:7.**
- 4. Nevertheless, what does this person helplessly recognize about the law? Romans 7:16-22.**

“Not only intellectual but spiritual power, a perception of right, a desire for goodness, exists in every heart. But against these principles there is struggling an antagonistic power. The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man’s experience. There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist.” –*Education*, p. 29.

- 5. Is this condition of defeat normal for a truly converted Christian? Romans 8:13.**

“Through the power of Christ, men and women have broken the chains of sinful habit. They have renounced selfishness. The profane have become reverent, the drunken sober, the profligate pure. Souls that have borne the likeness of Satan have become transformed into the image of God. This change is in itself the miracle of miracles. A change wrought by the Word, it is one of the deepest mysteries of the Word.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 476.

SAVED FROM CONDEMNATION

- 6. What great act of love took place on Calvary? Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24; 2 Corinthians 5:21.**

“As man’s substitute and surety, the iniquity of men was laid upon Christ; He was counted a transgressor that He might redeem them from the curse of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam of every age

was pressing upon His heart; and the wrath of God and the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. Every pang endured by the Son of God upon the cross, the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands and feet, the convulsions of agony which racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father's face from Him, speak to man, saying, It is for love of thee that the Son of God consents to have these heinous crimes laid upon Him; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise and immortal life. He who stilled the angry waves by His word and walked the foam-capped billows, who made devils tremble and disease flee from His touch, who raised the dead to life and opened the eyes of the blind, offers Himself upon the cross as the last sacrifice for man. He, the sin-bearer, endures judicial punishment for iniquity and becomes sin itself for man." *—The Story of Redemption*, p. 225.

7. What is the joyful result of Christ's sacrifice for us? Romans 8:1.

"They will no longer fashion themselves according to the former lusts, but by the faith of the Son of God they will follow in His steps, reflect His character, and purify themselves even as He is pure. The things they once hated they now love, and the things they once loved they hate. The proud and self-assertive become meek and lowly in heart. The vain and supercilious become serious and unobtrusive. The drunken become sober, and the profligate pure. The vain customs and fashions of the world are laid aside. Christians will seek not the 'outward adorning,' but 'the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.' 1 Peter 3:3, 4." *—Steps to Christ*, pp. 58, 59.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

- In what situations do I attempt to overcome sin in my strength? Do I obtain victory?
- Do I grasp the Lord's hand in daily trials?
- What are the requirements for living a life in harmony with God?
- In whom do I place my hope in my helpless situation?

Sabbath, November 18, 2006

A NEW LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

INTRODUCTION

“The same law that was engraved upon the tables of stone is written by the Holy Spirit upon the tables of the heart. Instead of going about to establish our own righteousness we accept the righteousness of Christ. His blood atones for our sins. His obedience is accepted for us. Then the heart renewed by the Holy Spirit will bring forth ‘the fruits of the Spirit.’ Through the grace of Christ we shall live in obedience to the law of God written upon our hearts.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 372.

FREEDOM FROM SLAVERY OF SIN—ONLY BY GRACE CAN WE OBEY

- 1. From which terrible slavery have we been released thanks to the great sacrifice of Jesus Christ? Romans 8:2.**

“Christ declares that even now the power which gives life to the dead is among them, and they are to behold its manifestation. This same resurrection power is that which gives life to the soul ‘dead in trespasses and sins.’ Eph. 2:1. That spirit of life in Christ Jesus, ‘the power of His resurrection,’ ‘sets men free from the law of sin and death.’ Phil. 3:10; Rom. 8:2. The dominion of evil is broken, and through faith the soul is kept from sin. He who opens his heart to the Spirit of Christ becomes a partaker of that mighty power which shall bring forth his body from the grave.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 209, 210.

- 2. Why cannot people in the old condition obtain the righteousness required by the law? Romans 8:3, first part; 7:14.**

“The law of God is as holy as He is holy, as perfect as He is perfect. It presents to men the righteousness of God. It is impossible for man, of himself, to keep this law; for the nature of man is depraved, deformed, and wholly unlike the character of God. The works of the selfish heart are ‘as an unclean thing;’ and ‘all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.’ Isaiah 64:6.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 54.

THE SECRET OF JESUS CHRIST AS MAN

3. What did God do to impart righteousness to man? What nature did Christ have when He lived with humanity? Romans 8:3; Hebrews 2:14; 4:15.

“For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in physical strength, in mental power, and in moral worth; and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity. Only thus could He rescue man from the lowest depths of his degradation. ...

“If we have in any sense a more trying conflict than had Christ, then He would not be able to succor us. But our Saviour took humanity, with all its liabilities. He took the nature of man, with the possibility of yielding to temptation. We have nothing to bear which He has not endured.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 117.

“Clad in the vestments of humanity, the Son of God came down to the level of those he wished to save. In him was no guile or sinfulness; he was ever pure and undefiled; yet he took upon him our sinful nature. Clothing his divinity with humanity, that he might associate with fallen humanity, he sought to redeem for man that which by disobedience Adam had lost, for himself and for the world.” –*The Review and Herald*, August 22, 1907.

“But Christ came in the form of humanity, and by His perfect obedience He proved that humanity and divinity combined can obey every one of God’s precepts.” –*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 314.

4. What is the secret of true success? Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; 6:12.

“As a man He supplicated the throne of God till His humanity was charged with a heavenly current that should connect humanity with divinity. Through continual communion He received life from God, that He might impart life to the world. His experience is to be ours.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 363.

LIFE AND PEACE THROUGH THE NEW BIRTH

5. **How can this victory over sin, which Christ won while in the likeness of sinful flesh, occur in the life of a Christian? John 3:3, 5, 7.**

6. **Of what victory may we be assured if we are in Christ? Romans 8:4, 6.**

“Every child lives by the life of his father. If you are God’s children, begotten by His Spirit, you live by the life of God. In Christ dwells ‘all the fullness of the Godhead bodily’ (Colossians 2:9); and the life of Jesus is made manifest ‘in our mortal flesh’ (2 Corinthians 4:11). That life in you will produce the same character and manifest the same works as it did in Him. Thus you will be in harmony with every precept of His law; for ‘the law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul.’ Psalm 19:7, margin. Through love ‘the righteousness of the law’ will be ‘fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.’ Romans 8:4.” *—Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 78.*

LONGING FOR HEAVEN

7. **In chapter six, Paul emphasized the battle against the flesh, with which Christ dealt. What relationship is there between this struggle and future glory? Romans 8:18; 1 Corinthians 2:9.**

8. **What do mankind and the animal kingdom long for? Romans 8:22, 23.**

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

- How do I express my gratitude for liberation from death?
- Is communion with God a fountain of blessing for me?
- Do love and gratitude to Christ cause me to obey His commandments with joy, or do I keep them out of a sense of obligation?

8

Sabbath, November 25, 2006

HOPE AND SECURITY

INTRODUCTION

“My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation [is] from him. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us.” Psalm 62:5-8.

SUFFERING CREATURES AND THEIR LIBERATION

1. **When did nature fall under the terrible blight in which it finds itself? Genesis 3:17, 18; Romans 8:20.**
2. **When will this earth, subdued in misery by the prince of this world, be completely restored? Romans 8:19, 21.**

INTERCESSION FOR THE SINNER

3. **Who understands our weakness? How does He help? Romans 8:26.**

“We must not only pray in Christ’s name, but by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This explains what is meant when it is said that the Spirit ‘maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.’ Rom. 8:26. Such prayer God delights to answer.” –*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 147.

4. How is this intercession made for the saints? Romans 8:27.

“We need grace, we need divine enlightenment, that through the Spirit we may know how to ask for such things as we need. If our petitions are indited by the Lord they will be answered.” –*Counsels on Health*, p. 380.

5. How can we compare the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit and the intercession of Jesus for the sinner? Romans 8:34.

“Christ, our Mediator, and the Holy Spirit are constantly interceding in man’s behalf, but the Spirit pleads not for us as does Christ who presents His blood, shed from the foundation of the world; the Spirit works upon our hearts, drawing out prayers and penitence, praise and thanksgiving. The gratitude which flows from our lips is the result of the Spirit striking the cords of the soul in holy memories, awakening the music of the heart.” –*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 1077, 1078.

CALLED, BUT REFUSING THE OPPORTUNITY

6. What privilege did Israel enjoy? Romans 9:4, 5.

“The Jews were God’s chosen people, through whom He had purposed to bless the entire race. From among them God had raised up many prophets. These had foretold the advent of a Redeemer. ...” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 374.

7. What did Israel-according-to-the-flesh fail to obtain? Who joyfully accepted the message of salvation? Romans 9:30, 31.

“The prophet Isaiah, looking down through the centuries and witnessing the rejection of prophet after prophet and finally of the Son of God, was inspired to write concerning the acceptance of the Redeemer by those who had never before been numbered among the children of Israel. Referring to this prophecy, Paul declares: ‘Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me. But to Israel He saith, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.’” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 375.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

- How may I cooperate so the longing of the creatures may be satisfied?
- Does the Holy Spirit influence my life and behavior?
- Do I complain of my weakness, or do I rejoice in the promised help of my Saviour?

CARNAL AND SPIRITUAL ISRAEL

INTRODUCTION

“But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Titus 3:4-7.

HUMAN JUSTICE

- 1. What was the difference between the Jews and the converted Gentiles? Romans 9:32, 33.**

“The principle that man can save himself by his own works lay at the foundation of every heathen religion; it had now become the principle of the Jewish religion. Satan had implanted this principle. Wherever it is held, men have no barrier against sin.” *—The Desire of Ages*, pp. 35, 36.

- 2. Why did Israel fail, while the Gentiles found righteousness? Romans 10:2, 3, 16; Hosea 4:6.**

THE GOAL OF THE LAW FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

- 3. To whom should Israel have been directed from the law? Romans 10:4.**

“Abundant grace has been provided that the believing soul may be kept free from sin; for all heaven, with its limitless resources, has been placed at our command. We are to draw from the well of salvation. Christ is the end of law for righteousness to everyone who believeth. In ourselves we are sinners; but in Christ we are righteous. Having made us righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ, God pronounces us just, and treats us as just. He looks upon us as His dear children. Christ works against the power of sin, and where sin abounded, grace much more abounds.” –*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 394.

In the different versions this verse is translated in two ways. Some Bibles have the word “end” and others have the term “goal.” This is due to the Greek “télōs,” which may be translated as “end” as well as “goal,” depending on the context. That the goal of the law is Christ in righteousness is clearly written in Galatians 3:23, 24.

4. According to what characteristic does God choose His elect, if not by nationality or works? Romans 11:5-7.

“If we comply with the conditions the Lord has made, we shall secure our election to salvation. Perfect obedience to His commandments is the evidence that we love God, and are not hardened in sin.

“Christ has a church in every age. There are in the church those who are not made any better by their connection with it. They themselves break the terms of their election. Obedience to the commandments of God gives us a right to the privileges of His church.” –*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1079.

GRAFTED INTO CHRIST

5. What happened to the Jews who rejected their Messiah? What did that mean to the heathen? What was this to provoke in the Jews? Romans 11:11, 12.

6. With what illustration did Paul explain this phenomenon? Romans 11:16-18.

“Paul likens the remnant in Israel to a noble olive tree, some of whose branches have been broken off. He compares the Gentiles to branches from a wild olive tree, grafted into the parent stock. ...

“Through unbelief and the rejection of Heaven’s purpose for her, Israel as a nation had lost her connection with God. But the branches that had been separated from the parent stock God was able to reunite with the true stock of Israel –the remnant who had remained true to the God of their fathers.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 377, 378.

GLORY TO THE REDEEMER

7. With what words of praise did Paul finish his doctrinal exposition in the Epistle to the Romans? Romans 11:33-36.

“We can so far comprehend His dealing with us, and the motives by which He is actuated, that we may discern boundless love and mercy united to infinite power. We can understand as much of His purposes as it is for our good to know; and beyond this we must still trust the might of the Omnipotent, the love and wisdom of the Father and Sovereign of all.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 699.

8. What sacrifice would a Christian be willing to make when he has experienced the mercy of God and his heart is filled with love? Romans 12:1, 2.

“In order to answer life’s great ends you must avoid the example of those who are seeking for their own pleasure and enjoyment, and who have not the fear of God before them. God has made provisions for you that are ample. He has provided that if you comply with the conditions laid down in His word, and separate from the world, you may receive strength from Him to repress every debasing influence and to develop that which is noble, good, and elevating. Christ will be in you ‘a well of water springing up into everlasting life.’ The will, the intellect, and every emotion, when controlled by religion, have a transforming power.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 83, 84.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

- What advantage does the Lord give me to aid my spiritual progress?
- Do I accept the offering of grace?
- How do I express the love of my Saviour to my fellowmen?
- Do I “play” with grace?

10

Sabbath, December 9, 2006

LIFE IN BROTHERLY FELLOWSHIP

INTRODUCTION

“The principles of the gospel cannot be disconnected from any department of practical life. Every line of Christian experience and labor is to be a representation of the life of Christ...

“It is not possible for the heart in which Christ abides to be destitute of love. If we love God because He first loved us, we shall love all for whom Christ died.” –*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 384.

THE PRACTICAL RESULTS OF A CHANGED MIND

- 1. What counsel would we heed if we had a clear conception of our human nature? How will a Christian think of himself? Romans 12:3, 10; Philippians 2:3.**

“Every good impulse or aspiration is the gift of God; faith receives from God the life that alone can produce true growth and efficiency...

“Faith that enables us to receive God’s gifts is itself a gift, of which some measure is imparted to every human being. It grows as exercised in appropriating the word of God.” –*Education*, pp. 253, 254.

“The habit of petty criticism should not be indulged, for it perplexes and confuses minds, and shrouds in mystery the things that are most plain and simple. If there is that love among brethren which will lead them to esteem others better than themselves, there will be a giving up of their own ways and wishes to others. It is our duty to study, daily and hourly, how we may answer the prayer of Christ, that His disciples may be one, as He and the Father are one. Precious lessons may be learned by keeping our Saviour’s prayer before the mind, and by acting our part to fulfil His desire.” –*Gospel Workers*, p. 447.

- 2. As what will the true Christian consider himself among like-minded believers? Romans 12:4, 5; 1 Corinthians 12:21, 26.**

CORRECT USE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

- 3. What should be our attitude in the use of our various gifts? Romans 12:6-8.**

“God’s servants are to work together, blending in kindly, courteous order, ‘in honor preferring one another.’ Romans 12:10. There is to be no unkind criticism, no pulling to pieces of another’s work; and there are to be no separate parties. Every man to whom the Lord has entrusted a message has his specific work.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 275.

- 4. What intention does God have in lending His gifts to us? 1 Corinthians 12:7.**

EXERCISE BROTHERLY LOVE

- 5. How should this affect our relationship with others? Romans 12:10, 15.**

“You need to cultivate love and affection for your parents and for your brothers and sisters. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 224.

6. Who is the Lord of heaven and earth? To whom has He entrusted the government of the world in which we live? Daniel 2:20, 21; Romans 13:1.

“We are to recognize human government as an ordinance of divine appointment, and teach obedience to it as a sacred duty, within its legitimate sphere.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 69.

7. How will those who oppose the government be considered? Romans 13:2.

“We are not required to defy authorities. Our words, whether spoken or written, should be carefully considered, lest we place ourselves on record as uttering that which would make us appear antagonistic to law and order. We are not to say or do anything that would unnecessarily close up our way.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 69.

“We have men placed over us for rulers, and laws to govern the people. Were it not for these laws, the condition of the world would be worse than it is now. Some of these laws are good, others are bad. The bad have been increasing, and we are yet to be brought into strait places. But God will sustain His people in being firm and living up to the principles of His word. When the laws of men conflict with the word and law of God, we are to obey the latter, whatever the consequences may be.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 201, 202.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- Do I only speak of love among the brethren, or do I practice it toward every church member?
- Do I consider myself more advanced in spiritual life than others?
- Permit each word in Romans 12:1, 2, to work within you.

Sabbath, December 16, 2006

THE RIGHT OF CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP

INTRODUCTION

“It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness. Righteous lips are the delight of kings; and they love him that speaketh right.” Proverbs 16:12, 13.

“Through observing our lives, the people of the world form their opinion of God and of the religion of Christ.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 258.

GOVERNMENTS ARE ESTABLISHED BY GOD

1. How do the authorities fulfil their duties as “servants of God”? Romans 13:3, 4.

“We should act with great caution. ‘If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.’ We can obey this admonition, and not sacrifice one principle of our faith.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 356.

“The ten precepts of Jehovah are the foundation of all righteous and good laws. Those who love God’s commandments will conform to every good law of the land. But if the requirements of the rulers are such as conflict with the laws of God, the only question to be settled is: Shall we obey God, or man?” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 361, 362.

“There is a prospect before us of a continued struggle, at the risk of imprisonment, loss of property, and even of life itself, to defend the law of God, which is made void by the laws of men. In this situation worldly policy will urge an outward compliance with the laws of the land, for the sake of peace and harmony. And there are some who will even urge such a course from the Scripture: ‘Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. ... The powers that be are ordained of God.’” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 712.

FULFILLMENT OF OUR DUTY

2. What should be our motive in rendering obedience? What else does this entail? Romans 13:5-7.

“I saw that it is our duty in every case to obey the laws of our land, unless they conflict with the higher law which God spoke with an audible voice from Sinai, and afterward engraved on stone with His own finger. ‘I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people.’ He who has God’s law written in the heart will obey God rather than men, and will sooner disobey all men than deviate in the least from the commandment of God. God’s people, taught by the inspiration of truth, and led by a good conscience to live by every word of God, will take His law, written in their hearts, as the only authority which they can acknowledge or consent to obey. The wisdom and authority of the divine law are supreme.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 361.

3. How did Christ respond when asked about paying taxes? Matthew 22:17-21.

“Christ’s reply was no evasion, but a candid answer to the question. Holding in His hand the Roman coin, upon which were stamped the name and image of Caesar, He declared that since they were living under the protection of the Roman power, they should render to that power the support it claimed, so long as this did not conflict with a higher duty. But while peaceably subject to the laws of the land, they should at all times give their first allegiance to God.

“The Saviour’s words, ‘Render . . . unto God the things that are God’s,’ were a severe rebuke to the intriguing Jews. Had they faithfully fulfilled their obligations to God, they would not have become a broken nation, subject to a foreign power. No Roman ensign would have waved over Jerusalem, no Roman sentinel would have stood at her gates, no Roman governor would have ruled within her walls. The Jewish nation was then paying the penalty of its apostasy from God.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 602.

4. What position did Peter take with respect to this question? 1 Peter 2:13.

As we may see, here “the apostle plainly outlined the attitude that believers should sustain toward the civil authorities...” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 522.

OUR ACTIONS IN HARMONY WITH THE WILL OF GOD

5. Is this applicable to every situation, without exception? With what words did this same apostle answer the authorities of his day? Acts 5:27-29.

“But when its claims conflict with the claims of God, we must obey God rather than men. God’s word must be recognized as above all human legislation. A ‘Thus saith the Lord’ is not to be set aside for a ‘Thus saith the church’ or a ‘Thus saith the state.’ The crown of Christ is to be lifted above the diadems of earthly potentates.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 69.

DUTY TOWARD OUR NEIGHBOUR

6. What responsibility did Paul enjoin upon all believers? Romans 13:8, first part; Psalm 37:21.

“Be determined never to incur another debt. Deny yourself a thousand things rather than run in debt. This has been the curse of your life, getting into debt. Avoid it as you would the smallpox.

“Make a solemn covenant with God that by His blessing you will pay your debts and then owe no man anything if you live on porridge and bread. It is so easy in preparing your table to throw out of your pocket twenty-five cents for extras. Take care of the pennies, and the dollars will take care of themselves. It is the mites here and the mites there that are spent for this, that, and the other, that soon run up into dollars. Deny self at least while you are walled in with debts. ... Do not falter, be discouraged, or turn back. Deny your taste, deny the indulgence of appetite, save your pence and pay your debts. Work them off as fast as possible. When you can stand forth a free man again, owing no man anything, you will have achieved a great victory. (Letter 4, 1877).” –*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 257.

7. What duty does the Lord also enjoin upon us? What do we fulfil in this manner? Romans 13:8, second and last parts.

“One of the strongest evidences of true conversion is love to God and man. Those who accept Jesus as their Redeemer have a deep, sincere love for others of like precious faith.” *–The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 262.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- In my daily life, do I observe the laws of the state? Am I an example in this?
- Is my relationship with the Lord so strong that it will never falter before a law which opposes the divine law?
- What is the only thing that can protect me from unfaithfulness to God?

12

Sabbath, December 23, 2006

LOVE, FOR THE DAY DRAWS NIGH

INTRODUCTION

“Wherever there is an impulse of love and sympathy, wherever the heart reaches out to bless and uplift others, there is revealed the working of God’s Holy Spirit.” *–Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 385.

“Every Christian saw in his brother the divine similitude of benevolence and love. One interest prevailed. One object swallowed up all others. All hearts beat in harmony. The only ambition of the believers was to reveal the likeness of Christ’s character, and to labor for the enlargement of His kingdom. ...

“These scenes are to be repeated, and with greater power.” *–Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 120, 121.

LET US LOVE AS HE LOVES

- 1. In what position were we when God, the fountain of love, revealed His compassion to us? Romans 5:8, 10.**

“All the paternal love which has come down from generation to generation through the channel of human hearts, all the springs of tenderness which have opened in the souls of men, are but as a tiny rill to the boundless ocean when compared with the infinite, exhaustless love of God. Tongue cannot utter it; pen cannot portray it. You may meditate upon it every day of your life; you may search the Scriptures diligently in order to understand it; you may summon every power and capability that God has given you, in the endeavor to comprehend the love and compassion of the heavenly Father; and yet there is an infinity beyond. You may study that love for ages; yet you can never fully comprehend the length and the breadth, the depth and the height, of the love of God in giving His Son to die for the world.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 740.

- 2. What law does Paul say will be fulfilled through deeds of love? Is this a difficult commandment to observe for those who have been born again? Romans 13:8, last part, 10; 1 John 5:3.**

“The precepts of the Decalogue are adapted to all mankind, and they were given for the instruction and government of all. Ten precepts, brief, comprehensive, and authoritative, cover the duty of man to God and to his fellow man; and all based upon the great fundamental principle of love. ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.’ Luke 10:27. See also Deuteronomy 6:4, 5; Leviticus 19:18. In the Ten Commandments these principles are carried out in detail, and made applicable to the condition and circumstances of man.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 305.

- 3. How did Jesus summarize the Ten Commandments? Matthew 22:37-40.**

“The divine law requires us to love God supremely, and our neighbor as ourselves. Without the exercise of this love, the highest profession of faith is

mere hypocrisy. ... "The second principle of the law is like unto the first, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' 'This do and thou shalt live.' These are the words of Jesus Christ from which there can be no departure on the part of any man, woman, or youth who would be a true Christian. It is obedience to the principles of the commandments of God, that molds the character after the divine similitude. ...

"To leave a suffering neighbor unrelieved is a breach of the law of God... He who loves God will not only love his fellow men, but will regard with tender compassion the creatures which God has made. When the Spirit of God is in man it leads him to relieve rather than to create suffering..." –*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 52.

4. What is another Christian motive for keeping the law of God? Romans 13:11.

"The Lord is coming. We hear the footsteps of an approaching God. ...

"The rapidly diminishing space of time between us and eternity should more deeply impress us. Every day that passes makes one less left us to complete our work of perfecting character. ..." –*Maranatha*, p. 220.

LOVE POURED INTO THE HEART

5. How is this fruit of the Spirit completely ripened? Romans 5:5, last part.

"God's law is fulfilled only as men love Him with heart, mind, soul, and strength, and their neighbor as themselves. It is the manifestation of this love that brings glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will to men. The Lord is glorified when the great end of His law is attained. It is the work of the Holy Spirit from age to age to impart love to human hearts, for love is the living principle of brotherhood." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 139.

"They will no longer fashion themselves according to the former lusts, but by the faith of the Son of God they will follow in His steps, reflect His character, and purify themselves even as He is pure." –*Steps to Christ*, p. 58.

6. What actions will a Christian reject? Romans 13:13; Galatians 5:19-21.

“Every hour’s work passes in review before God and is registered for faithfulness or unfaithfulness. The record of wasted moments and unimproved opportunities must be met when the judgment shall sit and the books shall be opened and everyone shall be judged according to the things written in the books. Selfishness, envy, pride, jealousy, idleness, or any other sin which is cherished in the heart, will exclude one from the blessedness of heaven. ‘To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are.’” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 453.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

7. What will a Spirit-filled Christian produce? Galatians 5:22, 23.

“The things they once hated they now love, and the things they once loved they hate. ...

“In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the principle of action. It modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and ennoble the affections. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the life and sheds a refining influence on all around.” —*Steps to Christ*, pp. 58, 59.

8. What is the next step in the development of a Christian character? Galatians 5:25; Romans 13:14.

“The lower passions have their seat in the body and work through it. The words ‘flesh’ or ‘fleshly’ or ‘carnal lusts’ embrace the lower, corrupt nature; the flesh of itself cannot act contrary to the will of God. We are commanded to crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts. How shall we do it? Shall we inflict pain on the body? No; but put to death the temptation to sin. The corrupt thought is to be expelled. Every thought is to be brought into captivity to Jesus Christ. All animal propensities are to be subjected to the higher powers of the soul. The love of God must reign supreme; Christ must occupy an undivided throne. Our bodies are to be regarded as His purchased possession. The members of the body are to become the instruments of righteousness.” —*Adventist Home*, pp. 127, 128.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- Do I owe something to my fellowman, whether materially or in my showing him love?
- How great is my love towards those who still walk in darkness?
- Do I live in such a manner that I do not displease God or my brethren?

**Please,
read the Report from
Nigeria and Chad on page 97.**

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Sabbath, December 30, 2006

CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOUR IN PERSONAL MATTERS

INTRODUCTION

“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” Philippians 2:1-3.

HOW TO TREAT THE WEAK

- 1. What counsel should Christians follow in their relationship with one another? Romans 14:1-3.**

“Many of the Jews who had accepted the gospel still cherished a regard for the ceremonial law...

“...many of those who had been converted to the faith of Christ still felt that since God had once clearly outlined the Hebrew manner of worship, it was improbable that He would ever authorize a change in any of its specifications. They insisted that the Jewish laws and ceremonies should be incorporated into the rites of the Christian religion.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 405, 189.

Believers who were still weak in the faith became uncertain and fearful. Their consciences were burdened.

The apostolic council made the decision under the leading of the Holy Spirit. Acts 15.

“With great assurance these Judaizing teachers asserted that in order to be saved, one must be circumcised and must keep the entire ceremonial law.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 188, 189.

“Not all, however, were pleased with the decision; there was a faction of ambitious and self-confident brethren who disagreed with it. These men assumed to engage in the work on their own responsibility. They indulged in much murmuring and faultfinding, proposing new plans and seeking to pull down the work of the men whom God had ordained to teach the gospel message.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 196.

2. What should be our attitude in such cases of personal scruples or personal opinions?

Chapter 14 of Romans is not dealing with the Ten Commandments in general or with any one in particular. It has to do with opinions, personal convictions or scruples of Jews Christians on points regarding Jewish customs.

“In matters of conscience the soul must be left untrammelled. No one is to control another’s mind, to judge for another, or to prescribe his duty. God gives to every soul freedom to think, and to follow his own convictions. ‘Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.’ No one has a right to merge his own individuality in that of another. In all matters where principle is involved, ‘let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.’ Rom. 14:12, 5. In Christ’s kingdom there is no lordly oppression, no compulsion of manner. The angels of heaven do not come to the earth to rule, and to exact homage, but as messengers of mercy, to co-operate with men in uplifting humanity.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 550, 551.

3. What serious admonition did the author give to those who believe it their prerogative to judge? Romans 14:4, 10, 13.

“Do not think yourself better than other men, and set yourself up as their judge. Since you cannot discern motive, you are incapable of judging another. In criticizing him, you are passing sentence upon yourself; for you show that you are a participant with Satan, the accuser of the brethren.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 314.

4. What should we consider when a brother or a sister does not share our ideas? Romans 14:6.

DO NOT BE A STUMBLING BLOCK

5. How are we to behave in such cases? Romans 14:21, 22; 1 Corinthians 8:13. (Read Romans 12:18 again.)

“We should act with great caution. ‘If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.’ We can obey this admonition, and not sacrifice one principle of our faith. Satan and his host are at war with commandment keepers, and will work to bring them into trying positions. They should not by lack of discretion bring themselves there.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 356.

6. What advice did the apostle give? Romans 14:15-17.

“We are to be guided by true theology and common sense. Our souls are to be surrounded by the atmosphere of heaven. Men and women are to watch themselves; they are to be constantly on guard, allowing no word or act that would cause their good to be evil spoken of. He who professes to be a follower of Christ is to watch himself, keeping himself pure and undefiled in thought, word, and deed. His influence upon others is to be uplifting. His life is to reflect the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness.”—*Counsels to Teachers, Parents, and Students*, pp. 257, 258.

BE LIKE-MINDED

7. What are stronger Christians obligated to do? Romans 15:1-3, first part .

“As Christ has pitied and helped us in our weakness and sinfulness, so should we pity and help others. Many are perplexed with doubt, burdened with infirmities, weak in faith, and unable to grasp the unseen; but a friend whom they can see, coming to them in Christ’s stead, can be as a connecting link to fasten their trembling faith upon God. Oh, this is a blessed work! Let not pride and selfishness prevent us from doing the good which we may do if we will work in Christ’s name and with a loving, tender spirit.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 246.

8. What should always be our goal? Romans 15:5, 6.

“The Lord has given us in His word definite, unmistakable instructions, by obedience to which we may preserve union and harmony in the church. Brethren and sisters, are you giving heed to these inspired injunctions? Are you Bible readers and doers of the word? Are you striving to fulfill the prayer of Christ that His followers might be one? ‘The God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God.’ ‘Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.’” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 248.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- Do I discourage the weak member by criticizing and judging, or do I help him through my example?
- Am I contributing to the re-establishment of the unity of Christ in God’s church?
- Are envious thoughts found in me, hindering me from wishing my brother well?

MISSIONARY REPORT FROM NIGERIA AND CHAD

To be read on Sabbath, December 30, 2006

The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered on Sabbath, January 6, 2007

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Mark 16:15, 16.

In the bid to achieve the long-term objectives of the General Conference Committee to reach new missions in Africa, we have planned to enter as many new territories as possible. Among the foremost countries targeted are Nigeria, which is located in West Africa, and Chad, which is located in the heart of Africa.

Nigeria is the most densely populated country in Africa, with over 180 million people. From this country we have several calls coming from individuals who are interested to learn the Reformation Truth. In Chad, also, we have received calls from interested persons who wish to know more about the IMS SDA Reform truth. A decided and well determined action is needed urgently to answer these calls. This will hasten our bid to enter North Africa, where Islam is dominant. It is interesting to mention here that nearly all African countries below the Equator have been reached by the Reformation message and now we are forging our way toward North African countries, of which only few have being entered.

By your generous gift through the special Sabbath School offering it will be possible to enter and work in these new territories, so that new souls may be won for the present truth.

May God inspire your heart to give bountifully with the clear view of the Bible promise: “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:6, 7.

—*Parmenas N. Shirima*
Regional Representative