

Hope in Uncertain Times

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Keeping a Higher Perspective

In times of uncertainty, God's people have faced the challenge of looking up, beyond the present circumstances. By faith they can see what others cannot. The things around them cannot shake their faith, because it is anchored in something secure.

However, that doesn't mean their enemy does not try to shake them. In various ways, and by different means, he makes a great effort to "deceive the very elect" (Matthew 24:24).

"I saw that Satan was at work... to distract, deceive, and draw away God's people, just now in this sealing time. I saw some who were not standing stiffly for present truth. Their knees were trembling, and their feet sliding, because they were not firmly planted on the truth, and the covering of Almighty God could not be drawn over them while they were thus trembling." *Early Writings*, p. 44.

Just hours before His arrest, trial and crucifixion, Jesus sought to establish the faith of His disciples in the promise of the Second Coming: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:1-3.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus could have had much to say about the state of the world, the problems in the government, the injustices perpetrated by the rulers, and the conspiracies and powerplays constantly seen among those who sought to gain more influence and more control. Instead, He had a different focus.

"The government under which Jesus lived was corrupt and oppressive; on every hand were crying abuses,—extortion, intolerance, and grinding cruelty. Yet the Saviour attempted no civil reforms. He attacked no national abuses, nor condemned the national enemies. He did not interfere with the authority or administration of those in power. He who was our example kept aloof from earthly governments. Not because He was indifferent to the woes of men, but because the remedy did not lie in merely human and external measures. To be efficient, the cure must reach men individually, and must regenerate the heart." *The Desire of Ages*, p. 509.

In the same way, Jesus' followers are called to reflect this higher perspective. This is why we should accept the challenge of the apostle, when he wrote: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Romans 12:2.

Careful What You See

The food that we choose for our mind is what will determine the channel of our thoughts. A good test of what is appropriate to focus on is found in Philippians 4:8 – "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

"Everything that can be done should be done to place ourselves and our children where we shall not see the iniquity that is practiced in the world. We should carefully guard the sight of our eyes and

the hearing of our ears so that these awful things shall not enter our minds. When the daily newspaper comes into the house, I feel as if I want to hide it, that the ridiculous, sensational things in it may not be seen. It seems as if the enemy is at the foundation of the publishing of many things that appear in newspapers. Every sinful thing that can be found is uncovered and laid bare before the world." *The Adventist Home*, pp. 403, 404.

"God does not wish us to hear all that is to be heard, or to see all that is to be seen. It is a great blessing to close the ears, that we hear not, and the eyes, that we see not. The greatest anxiety should be to have clear eyesight to discern our own shortcomings, and a quick ear to catch all needed reproof and instruction, lest by our inattention and carelessness we let them slip and become forgetful hearers and not doers of the work." *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 707, 708.

Looking Up to Jesus

Some of the most wonderful words said about Jesus came from John the Baptist, at the beginning of Christ's ministry. "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29.

Beholding Him, and meditating on His life and character, has a tremendous effect on our own character. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Corinthians 3:18.

When we lose sight of Jesus, and become absorbed and distracted, we start to fail. This is what Peter experienced in his famous experience out in the stormy sea. "And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me." Matthew 14:28-30.

John, another disciple, was a demonstration of the power of beholding. He was known as the disciple "whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23). "Such transformation of character as is seen in the life of John is ever the result of communion with Christ. There may be marked defects in the character of an individual, yet when he becomes a true disciple of Christ, the power of divine grace transforms and sanctifies him. Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, he is changed from glory to glory, until he is like Him whom he adores." *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 559.

Seeing More Clearly

What does Jesus do as we behold Him? "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:14, 15.

"We need to have **more distinct views of Jesus** and a fuller comprehension of the value of eternal realities. The beauty of holiness is to fill the hearts of God's children; and that this may be accomplished, we should seek for divine disclosures of heavenly things." *Steps to Christ*, p. 99.

What should we ask as we behold Him? "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:23, 24.

"So will it be with all who behold Christ. The **nearer** we come **to Jesus**, and the more **clearly** we **discern** the **purity** of His **character**, the **more clearly** shall we **see** the **exceeding sinfulness of sin**, and the **less shall we feel like exalting ourselves**. There will be a continual reaching out of the soul

after God, a continual, earnest, heartbreaking confession of sin and humbling of the heart before Him. At every advance step in our Christian experience our repentance will deepen." *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 561.

"If we thought and talked more of Jesus, and less of self, we should have far more of His presence." *Steps to Christ*, p. 102.

"The less we see to esteem in ourselves, the more we shall see to esteem in the infinite purity and loveliness of our Saviour. A view of our sinfulness drives us to Him who can pardon; and when the soul, realizing its helplessness, reaches out after Christ, He will reveal Himself in power. The more our sense of need drives us to Him and to the word of God, the more exalted views we shall have of His character, and the more fully we shall reflect His image." *Steps to Christ*, p. 65.

The Spirit's Fruit

What does the Spirit of God produce? "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Galatians 5:22, 23.

"At all times and in all places, in all sorrows and in all afflictions, when the outlook seems dark and the future perplexing, and we feel helpless and alone, the Comforter will be sent in answer to the prayer of faith. Circumstances may separate us from every earthly friend; but no circumstance, no distance, can separate us from the heavenly Comforter. Wherever we are, wherever we may go, He is always at our right hand to support, sustain, uphold, and cheer." *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 669, 670.

We desperately need this "early rain" experience, producing the fruit of Christian character. When this character is developed, then will come the time of the "latter rain."

"The Spirit of the Almighty is moving upon men's hearts, and those who respond to its influence become witnesses for God and His truth. In many places consecrated men and women may be seen communicating to others the light that has made plain to them the way of salvation through Christ. And as they continue to let their light shine, as did those who were baptized with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, they receive more and still more of the Spirit's power. Thus the earth is to be lightened with the glory of God." *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 53.

How did the early disciples receive power? "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Acts 2:1-4.

"What was the result of the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost? The glad tidings of a risen Saviour were carried to the uttermost parts of the inhabited world. As the disciples proclaimed the message of redeeming grace, hearts yielded to the power of this message. The church beheld converts flocking to her from all directions. Backsliders were reconverted. Sinners united with believers in seeking the pearl of great price. Some who had been the bitterest opponents of the gospel became its champions. The prophecy was fulfilled, 'He that is feeble ... shall be as David; and the house of David ... as the angel of the Lord.' Zechariah 12:8. **Every Christian saw in his brother a revelation of divine love and benevolence.** One interest prevailed; one subject of emulation swallowed up all others. The ambition of the believers was to reveal the likeness of Christ's character and to labor for the enlargement of His kingdom." *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 48.

This wonderful experience is what God can do when we open our hearts fully to His Spirit. And this is available to us today, no less than to the early church.

“To Jesus, who emptied Himself for the salvation of lost humanity, the Holy Spirit was given without measure. So it will be given to every follower of Christ when the whole heart is surrendered for His indwelling.” *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 20.

While You Wait

After describing the events before the Second Coming, what did Jesus say? “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” Matthew 24:44. In this connection, Jesus told a parable that is important for us.

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.” Matthew 25:1-4.

“The two classes of watchers represent the two classes who profess to be waiting for their Lord. They are called virgins because they profess a pure faith. By the lamps is represented the word of God.... The oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit.” *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 406, 407.

What happens when the cry is heard at midnight? “The ten maidens seize their lamps and begin to trim them, in haste to go forth. But five have neglected to fill their flasks with oil. They did not anticipate so long a delay, and they have not prepared for the emergency.” *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 405.

Today, when because of what is happening around us, the mind of each of us turns to the prophecies, we must find our hope and the anchor of our soul in the Present Truth, and our peace of mind from the precious presence of the Holy Spirit. Today, let’s pray that God will fill us with His peace and give to us this precious gift.

Let us See Him

The martyr Stephen, moments before his death, was granted a look right into heaven. “But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” Acts 7:55, 56.

Today, let us look higher, into heavenly places, for the source of our hope and strength. Like the Greeks outside the temple when Christ walked the earth, we may repeat the plea, “Sir, we would see Jesus.” John 12:21.

And surely, as we look beyond the troubles of earth, we shall certainly see Him.