

# The Golden Ladder and the Character of the Wise

By  
David H. Thiele

The importance of understanding the prophecies given in God's Word regarding the signal events heralding the approach of Christ's promised and soon return for His people cannot be diminished, nor disputed. Yet the purpose for the prophecies may be misunderstood to the extent that having a correct understanding of how the prophecies are to be fulfilled could lead many astray regarding their preparedness for the second advent of Christ that will catch the unprepared by the sudden surprise likened to a thief breaking and entering one's home to steal valuables thought to be properly secured.<sup>1</sup> None think it could happen to themselves. Only to others could it possibly happen. However, only the wise will recognize the danger of self-deception leading to over confidence that results in surprise and defeat. The wise are those who do the will of God. They will know the doctrine [teachings], of which prophecy is a portion. Jesus contrasts the wise from those who seek their own glory in that the wise seek only God's will, His purpose, His righteousness for His glory.<sup>2</sup>

The apostle Paul, like Daniel, being one of the wise, acknowledged his self awareness of potential weakness needing constant, diligent labor so that he would not be a castaway though preaching the truth. To the Corinthians Paul wrote of the need for temperance in all things—moderation in all things—that demonstrates sanctified self-control.<sup>3</sup> He encouraged them, and those of us who take his words to heart, to press on as over-comers to an incorruptible crown of victory that denotes the strength of character needed to overcome as Christ overcame temptation, sin, and the world. Paul, like “Daniel ever kept before him the glory of God, and you should also say, Lord, I desire knowledge, not for the glorification of self, but to meet the expectation of Jesus, that I may perfect an intelligent Christian character, through the grace he has given unto me.... But if you are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, if you are filled with levity, if you allow the golden opportunities to pass without acquiring knowledge, without placing solid timbers in your character building, you will be dwarfed and crippled in any line of occupation you may undertake.”<sup>4</sup>

Amos had a message for Israel that echoes through the hallways of history to our time regarding an urgent need to prepare to meet God because He was about to pass judgment.<sup>5</sup> Many may be self deceived, thinking that because they are members in the church there will be no mistake about their final destiny. However, mere profession of Christianity does not make one a Christian. The judgment, now under way, to determine the validity of one's claim to the Kingdom of Heaven will be decided by the words and works extruded from the character. “The fact that men are in the church does not prove them Christians.... Christ Himself will decide who are worthy to dwell with the family of heaven. He will judge every man according to his words and his works. Profession is as nothing in the scale. It is character that

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 7:21-23; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-11; 2 Peter 3:1-14; John 7:17, 18

<sup>2</sup> John 7:17, 18

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:27, 25

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, *Christian Education* (Battle Creek, MI: International Tract Society, 1894), 90.

<sup>5</sup> Amos 4:12

decides destiny.”<sup>6</sup> If it is character that decides our eternal destiny, then it is character formation, development, and perfection that drives a wholistic approach to preparation for our appointment at the judgment bar even as we study the prophecies that mark the point in time in which we live to the proximity of Christ’s soon appearing.

In 2017, Hugo Leon submitted a document, and made a presentation to this conference, on the subject of wisdom connected with the theme of the wise, or the *Maskilim*, found in Daniel, Matthew, and Revelation. One quote of importance located in the footnotes to which he refers us as it relates to the Daniel 11 Conference, is found in the compilation of Ellen White’s writings on the flow of events preceding Christ’s second advent. “Let us read and study the twelfth chapter of Daniel. It is a warning that we shall all need to understand before the time of the end.”<sup>7</sup> Satisfied to inform us of our need to study Daniel 12, Leon rested his case without providing us with further context which aids us in being even better informed on why Daniel 12 assists in our preparation to meet God. That context further explains the connection of wisdom with character.

The backstory of this context alludes to the condition of the Seventh-day Adventist reeling from the events of the Battle Creek Sanitarium fire, the Review and Herald Publishing Association fire, the threat of pantheism related to the apostasy of key ministers and doctors who had once marched point in the Christ our righteousness messages of 1888, and the reformation of the health movement so slowly accepted and implemented, if not outright rejected by the denomination in general. Ellen White wrote of her great concern for the unprepared condition of our churches, recommending a thorough study of Colossian chapters 1 and 2 as the goals and objectives they need to reach. Then, she addresses the needs of the individuals, and especially the ministers, within the church, penning:

*The people of God need to study what characters they must form in order to pass through the test and proving of the last days. Many are living in spiritual weakness and backsliding. They know not what they believe. Let us read and study the twelfth chapter of Daniel. It is a warning that we shall all need to understand before the time of the end. There are ministers claiming to believe the truth who are not sanctified through the truth. Unless a change comes in their lives, they will say, “My Lord delayeth His coming.”*

Read the 21st chapter of Luke. In it Christ gives the warning, “Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:34-36).

The signs of the times are fulfilling in our world, yet the churches generally are represented as slumbering. Shall we not take warning from the experience of the foolish virgins, who when the call came, “Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him,” found that they had no oil in their lamps? And while they went to buy oil, the bridegroom went in to the marriage supper with the wise virgins, and the door was shut. When the foolish virgins reached the banqueting hall, they received an unexpected denial. The master of the feast declared, “I know you not.” They were left standing without in the empty street, in the blackness of the night. —Letter 161, 1903.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1900), 74.

<sup>7</sup> Hugo Leon, *The Theme of the Maskilim and the Danielic Calls to Wisdom in the Olivet Discourse and the Book of Revelation: Read, Understand, and Obey*, 9. Cited: Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1992), 15.

<sup>8</sup> Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 15 (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 228, 229, emphasis added.

As important it is to accurately and properly preach about those Bible prophecies indicating where we are positioned in time as it relates to the soon coming of Christ, it is far, far more important that we demonstrate Christlike characters to those who stand in opposition to the truths of the Scripture. Consider the coated skillet containing a label on its center advertising the different benefits of its non-stick surface. The new owner has unsuccessfully attempted to peel off the sticker adhering to the non-stick pan with a tenacity that defies definition. If the owner hasn't developed trust issues with the pan, he or she would absolutely be certain to have trust issues with the marketing and customer service departments should a refund be refused upon request! Similarly, professors of Christianity should be just as concerned about reputations of God and church, if not their own personal integrity, that are at stake when lifting up Christ in order to draw all men to Him. Ellen White warned us, writing:

*We should remember that the world will judge us by what we appear to be. Let those who are seeking to represent Christ be careful not to exhibit inconsistent features of character. Before we come fully to the front, let us see to it that the Holy Spirit is poured upon us from on high. When this is the case, we shall give a decided message, but it will be of a far less condemnatory character than that which some have been giving; and all who believe will be far more earnest for the salvation of our opponents.... In meekness and love let us as faithful sentinels defend the principles of truth as it is in Jesus.*<sup>9</sup>

Our religion will be of little worth to our fellow-men, if it is only theoretical, and not practical. We must be steadfast in the faith; we must not be movable. We have our work before us, which is to cause the light of truth, as revealed in the law of God, to shine in upon other minds, and lead them out of darkness. This work requires determined, persevering energy, and a fixed purpose to succeed.<sup>10</sup>

We are to pray for the Holy Spirit before we come fully to the frontlines of spiritual battle. The Holy Spirit is given to those who obey. The Holy Spirit is sent to sanctify those who believe the truth.<sup>11</sup> If we are not praying for the perfecting of our characters after the similitude of the Lord Jesus Christ, we should not be surprised if we do not receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the power of the early or latter rains. We would find ourselves to be no better off than King Zedekiah who had not the strength of character to prevent national ruin predicted by Jeremiah.

Near the end of Zedekiah's reign, God worked mightily to convince him of his need to obey the prophet's calls to repentance and submission to the truth. But, he did not demonstrate consistent features of character for the purpose of properly representing Christ. Still, God desired to show mercy if the conditions by which mercy should be obtained were met. Spirit of Prophecy reveals what lengths God went to in order to save Zedekiah from himself, and to save the nation despite the destructive policies of those princes who wished to control the king's will and influence.

Thus even to the last hour, God made plain His willingness to show mercy to those who would choose to submit to His just requirements. Had the king chosen to obey, the lives of the people might have been spared, and the city saved from conflagration; but he thought he had gone too far to retrace his steps. He was afraid of the Jews, afraid of ridicule, afraid for his life. After years of rebellion against God, Zedekiah thought it too humiliating to say to his people, I accept the word of the Lord, as spoken through the prophet Jeremiah; I dare not venture to war against the enemy in the face of all these warnings.

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<sup>9</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1901), 397.

<sup>10</sup> Ellen G. White, "Intelligent Faith," *The Signs of the Times*, December 30, 1886.

<sup>11</sup> Acts 5:32; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2

With tears Jeremiah entreated Zedekiah to save himself and his people. With anguish of spirit he assured him that unless he should heed the counsel of God, he could not escape with his life, and all his possessions would fall to the Babylonians. But the king had started on the wrong course, and he would not retrace his steps. He decided to follow the counsel of the false prophets, and of the men whom he really despised, and who ridiculed his weakness in yielding so readily to their wishes. *He sacrificed the noble freedom of his manhood and became a cringing slave to public opinion. With no fixed purpose to do evil, he was also without resolution to stand boldly for the right.* Convicted though he was of the value of the counsel given by Jeremiah, *he had not the moral stamina to obey; and as a consequence he advanced steadily in the wrong direction.*<sup>12</sup>

As we observe the evils trending in society today, ought we to take notice that the final fall of Jerusalem to Babylon, as well as the final fall of Jerusalem to Rome, are microcosms of the national ruin, yeah the global demise, threatening us even now? What was God's remedy then? What is it now?

The purpose which God seeks to accomplish through His people today is the same that He desired to accomplish through Israel when He brought them forth out of Egypt. *By beholding the goodness, the mercy, the justice, and the love of God revealed in the church, the world is to have a representation of His character. And when the law of God is thus exemplified in the life, even the world will recognize the superiority of those who love and fear and serve God above every other people on the earth.* The Lord has His eye upon every one of His people; He has His plans concerning each. It is His purpose that those who practice His holy precepts shall be a distinguished people....

A great work is to be accomplished in setting before men the saving truths of the gospel. This is the means ordained by God to stem the tide of moral corruption. This is His means of restoring His moral image in man. It is His remedy for universal disorganization. It is the power that draws men together in unity. To present these truths is the work of the third angel's message. The Lord designs that the presentation of this message shall be the highest, greatest work carried on in the world at this time.

Satan is constantly urging men to accept his principles. Thus he seeks to counterwork the work of God. He is constantly representing the chosen people of God as a deluded people. He is an accuser of the brethren, and his accusing power he is constantly using against those who work righteousness. *The Lord desires through His people to answer Satan's charges by showing the result of obedience to right principles.*<sup>13</sup>

If man lays hold of the divine nature, working upon the plan of addition, adding grace to grace in perfecting a Christian character, God will work upon the plan of multiplication.<sup>14</sup>

Now, grace and peace are to be multiplied to the one who works upon the plan of addition. And with such a one there is an earnest pressing forward to obtain more grace, which is necessary for good works.<sup>15</sup>

To proceed any further without taking a moment to refresh the mind of the rules of mathematics would be a mistake. The principles of addition are straightforward. Whether we add by whole numbers or by

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<sup>12</sup> Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1917), 457. Emphasis added.

<sup>13</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, 12, 11. Emphasis added.

<sup>14</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, 148.

<sup>15</sup> Ellen G. White, "The Church at Ephesus," *The Review and Herald*, May 31, 1887.

fractions of numbers the result is always an increase. However, the principles of multiplication are not the same as those of addition. Depending upon the operation, the results may increase, decrease, or simply remain the same. For example, the rule of multiplying any number by one will not result in either an increase or decrease. However, multiplying by zero will always result in nil. Multiplying by fraction will always result in a reduction. The spiritual lesson to be learned is that we must always add wholeheartedly, for if we work half-heartedly, or if we do no work at all, the result will never be an increase. Such an approach to character development and perfection will result in the turning of light into darkness of which Christ warned against. We must take special care then to be singleminded of purpose so that the light doesn't become darkness.<sup>16</sup> We must heed the call to repentance given by Ezekiel to God's people: "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."<sup>17</sup>

How, then, are we to prepare in a manner that goes beyond the theoretical realm all the right principles and then consistently demonstrate what are the practical applications consistent with repentance from sin and resulting in Christ-like characters? Such a study will produce the very dependable fixation of purpose that will stand for right though the heavens fall, resolutely fixed as the needle to the pole to boldly obey the truth of the gospel. Such a person will be Christ-like in character. Such a person will be called wise, and found turning many to righteousness.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, if we are not wise, then we will be found scattering when Christ is gathering. God will not work to bring souls into the church operating on defective character.

To lose one's own soul is a terrible thing; but to cause the loss of other souls is still more terrible. That our influence should be a savor of death unto death is a fearful thought; yet this is possible. *Many who profess to gather with Christ are scattering from Him. This is why the church is so weak.* Many indulge freely in criticism and accusing. By giving expression to suspicion, jealousy, and discontent, they yield themselves as instruments to Satan. Before they realize what they are doing, the adversary has through them accomplished his purpose. The impression of evil has been made, the shadow has been cast, the arrows of Satan have found their mark. *Distrust, unbelief, and downright infidelity have fastened upon those who otherwise might have accepted Christ.* Meanwhile the workers for Satan look complacently upon those whom they have driven to skepticism, and who are now hardened against reproof and entreaty. They flatter themselves that in comparison with these souls they are virtuous and righteous. *They do not realize that these sad wrecks of character are the work of their own unbridled tongues and rebellious hearts. It is through their influence that these tempted ones have fallen.*<sup>19</sup>

*A holy God will not bring out souls to the truth to come under such an influence as has existed in the church. Our heavenly Father is too wise to bring souls into the truth to be molded by the influence of these men who are unconsecrated in heart and life.* These men are not in harmony with the truth. They are not in union with the body, but are drawing off from the church. They are working at cross purposes with those whom God is using to bring souls into the truth.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Matthew 6:22, 23; Luke 11:34-36.

<sup>17</sup> Ezekiel 18:31, 32, KJV

<sup>18</sup> Daniel 12:3

<sup>19</sup> White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 340. Emphasis added.

<sup>20</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1881), 238. Emphasis added.

If the churches expect strength, they must live the truth which God has given them. If the members of our churches disregard the light on this subject, they will reap the sure result in both spiritual and physical degeneracy. And the influence of these older church members will leaven those newly come to the faith. *The Lord does not now work to bring many souls into the truth, because of the church members who have never been converted and those who were once converted but who have backslidden.* What influence would these unconsecrated members have on new converts? Would they not make of no effect the God-given message which His people are to bear?<sup>21</sup>

The answer to this most important question regarding practical application of right principles is found in those passages of Scripture communicating the fruit of the Spirit for which we must unceasing pray, the Beatitudes of Christ for which we must tirelessly ask, and the character traits of the Spiritual Ladder in 2nd Peter for which we must be diligently seeking to add to ourselves. By comparing these fruits/ blessings/traits, and accepting the challenge to work on the principles of addition, we will have the confidence of strong faith combined with the knowledge of meeting the expressed conditions of the promise that God will work on the principles of multiplication in starting and finishing the work of our salvation.

There can be no growth or fruitfulness in the life that is centered in self. If you have accepted Christ as a personal Saviour, you are to forget yourself, and try to help others. Talk of the love of Christ, tell of His goodness. Do every duty that presents itself. Carry the burden of souls upon your heart, and by every means in your power seek to save the lost. As you receive the Spirit of Christ—the Spirit of unselfish love and labor for others—you will grow and bring forth fruit. The graces of the Spirit will ripen in your character. Your faith will increase, your convictions deepen, your love be made perfect. More and more you will reflect the likeness of Christ in all that is pure, noble, and lovely.... This fruit can never perish, but will produce after its kind a harvest unto eternal life.<sup>22</sup>

A study of Christ's wonderful sermon on the mount will teach the believer what must be the characteristics of those whom the Lord calls "Blessed." [Matthew 5:1-12 quoted.] ....

I thank the Lord that such plain directions are given to believers. If we had no other instruction than is contained in these few words, here is sufficient, so that none need become bewildered. But we have a whole Bible full of precious instruction. None need be in darkness and uncertainty. Those who will seek by faith and prayer and earnest study of the Scriptures to obtain the virtues here brought to view, will easily be distinguished from those who walk not in the light. Those who refuse to follow a "Thus saith the Lord" will have no excuse to render for their persistent resistance of the Word of God.<sup>23</sup>

It is a fatal mistake to think that there is nothing for you to do in obtaining salvation. You are to cooperate with the agencies of heaven. We are exhorted to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." You want to take hold of the work intelligently; and when you discern spiritual things, you will see that there is a warfare before you. There is a cross to be lifted in the pathway, a wall to be scaled before you enter the eternal city, a ladder to be climbed before the gate of pearl is reached; and as you realize your inability and weakness, and cry for help, a divine voice will come to you

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<sup>21</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, 370. Emphasis added.

<sup>22</sup> White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 67, 68.

<sup>23</sup> Ellen G. White, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1956), 1083.

from the battlements of heaven, saying, “Take hold of my strength.” “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”<sup>24</sup>

To aid in the comparison of Scriptures regarding these three passages, let us turn our attention to this table:

Matthew 5—Beatitudes	2 Peter 1—Spiritual Ladder	Galatians 5—Fruits of the Spirit
Poor in Spirit	Faith	Faith
Mourn	Virtue	Joy
Meek	Knowledge	Meekness
Hunger and Thirst After Righteousness	Temperance	Temperance
Merciful	Patience	Long-suffering, Gentleness
Pure in Heart	Godliness	Goodness
Peacemakers	Brotherly Kindness	Peace
Persecuted for Righteousness’ Sake	Charity, Love	Love

Initially, the comparisons seem to be disconnected. What do faith and being poor in spirit have to do with each other? What possible connection do mourning, virtue, and joy have with character formation?

A word study on faith in the Bible actually reveals the spiritual poverty. Moses tells the children of Israel that they have no faith, and Christ tells the children of Israel how little faith they have.<sup>25</sup> The Laodicean church is no better off, thinking we are rich when the True Witness diagnosis contradicts our conventional wisdom.

Closer examination of Scripture reveals virtue to be courageous strength we may claim as our own when we recognize our need, mourn our spiritual condition, and find that the joy of the Lord is our strength.<sup>26</sup> However, the proper progression begins with mourning and humility before God—submission without any conditions on our part as we surrender to the conditions God has established in order to be accepted by Him. “Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”<sup>27</sup>

To assist us in properly understanding how these traits relate to each other, we should consider what additional light has been given to us in the form of the Spirit of Prophecy. Only as we have a complete and proper understanding of the principles can we then take the theory and make it practical in our efforts to co-operate with God in becoming wise and turning many to righteousness. Since the gold consists of faith and love, and the first and last rungs of the spiritual ladder are faith and love, I refer to the spiritual progress of 2 Peter 1 as the Golden Ladder. Let us commence to understanding the connection between each blessing and rung.

<sup>24</sup> Ellen G. White, “Evidences of Genuine Faith,” *The Review and Herald*, March 6, 1888.

<sup>25</sup> Deuteronomy 32:20; Matthew 6:30

<sup>26</sup> Job 5:11; Nehemiah 8:9-12; Isaiah 61:3

<sup>27</sup> James 4:9, 10, KJV

Regarding spiritual poverty and faith:

The sense of need, the recognition of our poverty and sin, *is the very first condition of acceptance with God.* “Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:3.<sup>28</sup>

In my last vision I was shown that even this decided message of the True Witness had not accomplished the design of God. The people slumber on in their sins. They continue to declare themselves rich and having need of nothing. Many inquire: Why are all these reproofs given? Why do the Testimonies continually charge us with backsliding and with grievous sins? We love the truth; we are prospering; we are in no need of these testimonies of warning and reproof. But let these murmurers see their hearts and compare their lives with the practical teachings of the Bible, let them humble their souls before God, let the grace of God illuminate the darkness, and the scales will fall from their eyes, and *they will realize their true spiritual poverty and wretchedness.* They will feel the necessity of buying gold, which is pure faith and love; white raiment, which is a spotless character made pure in the blood of their dear Redeemer; and eyesalve, which is the grace of God and which will give clear discernment of spiritual things and detect sin. *These attainments are more precious than the gold of Ophir.*

I have been shown that the greatest reason why the people of God are now found in this state of spiritual blindness is that they will not receive correction. Many have despised the reproofs and warnings given them. The True Witness condemns the lukewarm condition of the people of God, which gives Satan great power over them in this waiting, watching time. The selfish, the proud, and the lovers of sin are ever assailed with doubts. Satan has ability to suggest doubts and to devise objections to the pointed testimony that God sends, and many think it a virtue, a mark of intelligence in them, to be unbelieving and to question and quibble. Those who desire to doubt will have plenty of room. God does not propose to remove all occasion for unbelief. He gives evidence, which must be carefully investigated with a humble mind and a teachable spirit, and all should decide from the weight of evidence.<sup>29</sup>

Regarding the mourning as it relates to virtue:

“Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.” In pronouncing a blessing upon those who mourn, Jesus did not design to teach that there is any virtue in living under a perpetual cloud, nor that selfish sorrow and repining has any merit of itself to remove a single stain of sin. *The mourning spoken of by Christ is a godly sorrow for sin, that works repentance unto eternal life.* Many grieve when their guilt is discovered, because the result of their evil course has brought them into disagreeable circumstances. It was thus that Esau mourned the sin of despising and selling his birth-right; but it was the unexpected consequences of that sin which caused his grief. So Pharaoh regretted his stubborn defiance of God, when he cried for the plagues to be removed from him; but his heart was unchanged, and he was ready to repeat his crime when tempted. Such mourning is not unto repentance.

He who is truly convicted of sin feels his whole life to have been one continued scene of ingratitude. He feels that he has robbed his best friend of the time and strength which was

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<sup>28</sup> White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 152. Emphasis added.

<sup>29</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1875), 254, 255. Emphasis added.

bought for him at an infinite price. *His whole soul is filled with unutterable sorrow that he has slighted and grieved his compassionate Saviour. Such mourning is precious, for it will yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness.* The worldling, from his stand-point, may pronounce this sorrow a weakness; *but it is the strength which binds the penitent to the Infinite One with links that cannot be broken.* It reveals that the angels of God are bringing back to his soul the graces which were lost through hardness of heart and transgression. To confess and deplore one's errors evinces an excellence of character capable of discerning and correcting them. *The tears of the penitent are only the clouds and the raindrops that precede the sunshine of holiness, the sorrow that heralds a joy that will be a living fountain in the soul.* Men are sowing in God's great field with toil and tears, yet with patient expectation; and they will be blessed, for the heavens will open and the rain will fall, insuring a bountiful harvest. Then when the Reaper comes, he will return with joy bringing home his sheaves.<sup>30</sup>

It is good for me to tread a hard and humble path, to encounter difficulties, to experience disappointments, to suffer afflictions and bereavements. The Saviour knows what is best. *Faith grows by conflict with doubt and difficulty and trial. Virtue gathers strength by resistance to temptation.* The life of the faithful soldier is a battle and a march. No rest, fellow-pilgrim, this side the heavenly Canaan.<sup>31</sup>

Christ lifts up the contrite heart and refines the mourning soul until it becomes His abode.<sup>32</sup> Christ will be constantly laboring for your salvation. Angels will be commissioned to guard you from the devices of the adversary, and to minister to all your needs. *And the object of all this abundant solicitude must, on his part, depart from all iniquity, and perfect holiness in the fear of God.* He must watch and pray. He must fight the good fight of faith, resist the devil that he may flee from him, and endure hardness as a good soldier of the cross of Christ. He has to wage a constant conflict with unseen foes, and only through Christ can he come off victorious. *He must cultivate courage to surmount the difficulties obstructing his pathway, and build up a character of integrity and virtue, representing to the world the character of his Redeemer.*<sup>33</sup>

Pertaining to meekness and knowledge:

Of all men upon the face of the earth, those who are handling solemn truths for these perilous times should understand their Bibles and become acquainted with the evidences of our faith. Unless they possess a knowledge of the word of life they have no right to undertake to instruct others in the way to life. Ministers should give all diligence to add to their "faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." Some of our ministers graduate when they have scarcely learned the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. *Those who are ambassadors for Christ, who stand in His stead, beseeching souls to be reconciled to God, should be qualified to present our faith intelligently and be able to give the reasons of their hope with meekness and fear.* Said Christ: "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me."

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<sup>30</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2 (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1877), 205, 206. Emphasis added.

<sup>31</sup> Ellen G. White, "Our Present Position," *The Review and Herald*, August 28, 1883. Emphasis added.

<sup>32</sup> Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1896), 11.

<sup>33</sup> Ellen G. White, "Abide in Me," *The Signs of the Times*, March 23, 1888. Emphasis added.

Ministers who teach unpopular truth will be beset by men who are urged on by Satan and who, like their master, can quote Scripture readily; and shall the servants of God be unequal to the servants of Satan in handling the words of Inspiration? They should, like Christ, meet scripture with scripture. Oh, that those who minister in holy things would awake, and, like the noble Bereans, search the Scriptures daily! Brethren in the ministry, I entreat of you to study the Scriptures with humble prayer for an understanding heart, that you may teach the way of life more perfectly. Your counsel, prayers, and example must be a savor of life unto life, or you are unqualified to point out the way of life to others.<sup>34</sup>

As for temperance when connected to the word picture of hungering and thirsting after righteousness, we also see the association of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding with the perspective of their natures. The Psalmist wrote, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.”<sup>35</sup> We are not to be obtaining such knowledge of evil, but of righteousness as a higher ideal relative to God. To obtain a right knowledge of God is true education. Paul’s gospel is consistent with the teaching of Peter, as indicated in his sermon to Felix and Drusilla.

So violent and cruel had been the course of Felix that few had ever before dared even to intimate to him that his character and conduct were not faultless. But Paul had no fear of man. He plainly declared his faith in Christ, and the reasons for that faith, and was thus led to speak particularly of those virtues essential to Christian character, but of which the haughty pair before him were so strikingly destitute.

He held up before Felix and Drusilla the character of God—His righteousness, justice, and equity, and the nature of His law. He clearly showed that it is man’s duty to live a life of sobriety and temperance, keeping the passions under the control of reason, in conformity to God’s law, and preserving the physical and mental powers in a healthy condition. He declared that there would surely come a day of judgment when all would be rewarded according to the deeds done in the body, and when it would be plainly revealed that wealth, position, or titles are powerless to gain for man the favor of God or to deliver him from the results of sin. He showed that this life is man’s time of preparation for the future life. Should he neglect present privileges and opportunities he would suffer an eternal loss; no new probation would be given him.<sup>36</sup>

The knowledge of God is the real essence of education. The education that would supersede this knowledge, or dismiss it from the mind, as Felix dismissed Paul when he spoke to him of temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come, is not of God. Paul’s words made Felix tremble; but the governor dismissed the apostle with the words, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.” Acts 24:25. And today multitudes are saying the same. Their minds are called to the deep subjects of truth, problems as high as heaven and as broad as eternity; but they say, “I cannot bring these subjects into my daily studies; for they would so stir up my mind as to unfit me for the daily routine of study. I have never mastered Bible problems. I cannot take up this study now. Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.” Thus God’s great lesson book is set aside because it is not regarded as the one thing needful.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1871), 342, 343. Emphasis added.

<sup>35</sup> Psalm 42:1, KJV

<sup>36</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), 423.

<sup>37</sup> Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1913), 393.

The application of mercy and patience within the framework of temperance helps us to understand why temperance precedes patience in the ladder of Christian progress. Much counsel is given regarding these connections as they relate to character development.

The abuses of the stomach by the gratification of appetite are the fruitful source of most church trials. *Those who eat and work intemperately and irrationally, talk and act irrationally. An intemperate man cannot be a patient man.* It is not necessary to drink alcoholic liquors in order to be intemperate. The sin of intemperate eating, eating too frequently, too much, and of rich, unwholesome food, destroys the healthy action of the digestive organs, affects the brain, and perverts the judgment, preventing rational, calm, healthy thinking and acting. And this is a fruitful source of church trials. *Therefore in order for the people of God to be in an acceptable state with Him, where they can glorify Him in their bodies and spirits which are His, they must with interest and zeal deny the gratification of their appetites, and exercise temperance in all things.* Then may they comprehend the truth in its beauty and clearness, and carry it out in their lives, and by a judicious, wise, straightforward course give the enemies of our faith no occasion to reproach the cause of truth. God requires all who believe the truth to make special, persevering efforts to place themselves in the best possible condition of bodily health, for a solemn and important work is before us. Health of body and mind is required for this work; it is as essential to a healthy religious experience, to advancement in the Christian life and progress in holiness, as is the hand or foot to the human body. God requires His people to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. All those who are indifferent and excuse themselves from this work, waiting for the Lord to do for them that which He requires them to do for themselves, will be found wanting when the meek of the earth, who have wrought His judgments, are hid in the day of the Lord's anger.

I was shown that *if God's people make no efforts on their part, but wait for the refreshing to come upon them and remove their wrongs and correct their errors; if they depend upon that to cleanse them from filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and fit them to engage in the loud cry of the third angel, they will be found wanting. The refreshing or power of God comes only on those who have prepared themselves for it by doing the work which God bids them, namely, cleansing themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*<sup>38</sup>

*It is impossible for those who indulge the appetite to attain to Christian perfection. You cannot arouse the moral sensibilities of your children while you are not careful in the selection of their food. The tables that parents usually prepare for their children are a snare to them. Their diet is not simple, and is not prepared in a healthful manner. The food is frequently rich and fever-producing, having a tendency to irritate and excite the tender coats of the stomach. The animal propensities are strengthened and bear sway, while the moral and intellectual powers are weakened and become servants to the baser passions.*<sup>39</sup>

There is but little moral power in the professed Christian world. Wrong habits have been indulged, and physical and moral laws have been disregarded, until the general standard of virtue and piety is exceedingly low. Habits which lower the standard of physical health enfeeble mental and moral strength. The indulgence of unnatural appetites and passions has a controlling influence upon the nerves of the brain. The animal organs are

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<sup>38</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1868), 618, 619. Emphasis added.

<sup>39</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, 399. Emphasis added.

strengthened, while the moral are depressed. *It is impossible for an intemperate man to be a Christian, for his higher powers are brought into slavery to the passions.*<sup>40</sup>

Any further progress on the spiritual ladder is impeded unless we overcome appetite and passion as Christ overcame temptations to selfishness. "Intemperance of any kind is the worst sort of selfishness."<sup>41</sup> Mercy is predicated upon patience. For the impatient person mercy is impossible to extend. To those who cannot give mercy, no mercy will be given. However, the blessing of mercy is given to those who give mercy.<sup>42</sup>

Since only God is good, we can safely conclude that goodness and godliness springs from a pure heart. Only the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit can purify the heart, mind, and soul.

Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children. Godliness—godlikeness—is the goal to be reached. Before the student there is opened a path of continual progress. He has an object to achieve, a standard to attain, that includes everything good, and pure, and noble. He will advance as fast and as far as possible in every branch of true knowledge. But his efforts will be directed to objects as much higher than mere selfish and temporal interests as the heavens are higher than the earth.

He who co-operates with the divine purpose in imparting to the youth a knowledge of God, and molding the character into harmony with His, does a high and noble work. As he awakens a desire to reach God's ideal, he presents an education that is as high as heaven and as broad as the universe; an education that cannot be completed in this life, but that will be continued in the life to come; an education that secures to the successful student his passport from the preparatory school of earth to the higher grade, the school above.<sup>43</sup>

The Lord requires all who enter his service to be consecrated and converted daily, as vessels unto honor. Simplicity will be their true eloquence.

The heart that is under the molding of the Spirit of truth is full of holy sentiments. It possesses the meekness and lowliness of Christ, and a veneration for the pure, the merciful, the upright, who possess sterling integrity, combined with the most tender sympathy for humanity. Such a one places true goodness before greatness. He has a mental culture that is in harmony with the character of Christ. Such a man will possess eloquence that is of a superior order. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: and ... thy neighbor as thyself." Obedience to this command is the mainspring to the highest eloquence. *Those who obey these principles practise true godliness.* The soul is purified from selfishness and sensuality and from every phase of sin; it chooses those things that are lovely and of good report, and is a vessel unto honor.

There is altogether too little account made of the Holy Spirit's power to work upon mind and character. Those who reject the Holy Spirit, thinking that the human being, single-handed, can struggle with principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places, will find themselves overmatched.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, 51. Emphasis added.

<sup>41</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1881), 31.

<sup>42</sup> Matthew 5:7

<sup>43</sup> Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1903), 18, 19.

<sup>44</sup> Ellen G. White, "Go, Preach the Gospel—No. 2," *The Review and Herald*, March 22, 1898. Emphasis added.

Brethren and sisters, we need the reformation that all who are redeemed must have, through the cleansing of mind and heart from every taint of sin. In the lives of those who are ransomed by the blood of Christ self-sacrifice will constantly appear. Goodness and righteousness will be seen. *The quiet, inward experience will make the life full of godliness, faith, meekness, patience. This is to be our daily experience. We are to form characters free from sin—characters made righteous in and by the grace of Christ.* Thus we shall reveal pure and undefiled religion to a world that has not now in the midst of it a Saviour in human form, constantly manifesting his power to heal others' woes. Much depends upon our individual course of action. We should each live in the world the life of a true Christian, that our words and acts may be such as to win souls to Christ. Our hearts are to be cleansed from all impurity in the blood shed to take away sin.<sup>45</sup>

The next rung in the spiritual ladder is brotherly kindness which is connected to the blessing for peacemakers.

Remember that we shall be forgiven only as we forgive. Let all enmity, dissension, and bitterness die with the old year. Let kindness and brotherly and sisterly affection revive in our hearts. We may open the new year with a clean record. How happy the thought! Let us draw near to God "with a true heart in full assurance of faith," that the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, may keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.<sup>46</sup>

We are exhorted to add godliness, brotherly kindness. O how much we need to take this step, to add to this quality to our characters! In many of our homes there is a hard, combative spirit manifested. Critical words and unkind actions are offensive to God. Dictatorial commands and haughty, overbearing manners are not acceptable to Heaven. *The reason there are so many differences existing between brethren is that they have failed to add brotherly kindness.* We should have that love for others that Christ has had for us. A man is estimated at his true value by the Lord of heaven. *If he is unkind in his earthly home, he is unfit for the heavenly home.* If he will have his own way, no matter whom it grieves, he would not be content in heaven, unless he could rule there. *The love of Christ must control our hearts, and the peace of God will abide in our homes.* Seek God with a broken and contrite spirit, and you will be melted with compassion toward your brethren. You will be prepared to add to brotherly kindness, charity, or love. Without charity we will become "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." Our highest professions are hollow and insincere; but "love is the fulfilling of the law." We shall be found wanting, if we do not add charity that suffereth long and is kind; that vaunteth not itself, that seeketh not her own.<sup>47</sup>

"Blessed are the peacemakers." 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." Psalm 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.* "Instead of the

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<sup>45</sup> Ellen G. White, "A Call for Greater Consecration," *The Review and Herald*, May 31, 1906. Emphasis added.

<sup>46</sup> Ellen G. White, "Holiday Gifts," *The Review and Herald*, December 26, 1882.

<sup>47</sup> Ellen G. White, "The Path of Progress," *The Review and Herald*, February 21, 1888.

thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree;” and life’s desert “shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.” Isaiah 55:13; 35:1.<sup>48</sup>

The top rung of the spiritual ladder is a willful love exemplified when confronted by those who have not yet made peace with God. The persecutor is at enmity with God’s law of love, and therefore cannot comprehend that any execution of justice done apart from the law of God is nothing but the cruelest form of coercion. When the unrighteous persecute the righteous, God promises a blessing to those who make themselves vulnerable by reason of living peaceably so far as possible with all men.<sup>49</sup> The righteous live by faith that justice will be served by a God Who claims vengeance as His own, and Who will not execute judgment before the right time.<sup>50</sup>

All who in that evil day would fearlessly serve God according to the dictates of conscience, will need courage, firmness, and a knowledge of God and His word; for those who are true to God will be persecuted, their motives will be impugned, their best efforts misinterpreted, and their names cast out as evil. Satan will work with all his deceptive power to influence the heart and becloud the understanding, to make evil appear good, and good evil. The stronger and purer the faith of God’s people, and the firmer their determination to obey Him, the more fiercely will Satan strive to stir up against them the rage of those who, while claiming to be righteous, trample upon the law of God. It will require the firmest trust, the most heroic purpose, to hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints.

God desires His people to prepare for the soon-coming crisis. Prepared or unprepared, they must all meet it; and those only who have brought their lives into conformity to the divine standard, will stand firm at that time of test and trial. When secular rulers unite with ministers of religion to dictate in matters of conscience, then it will be seen who really fear and serve God. When the darkness is deepest, the light of a godlike character will shine the brightest. When every other trust fails, then it will be seen who have an abiding trust in Jehovah. And while the enemies of truth are on every side, watching the Lord’s servants for evil, God will watch over them for good. He will be to them as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.<sup>51</sup>

The world loves sin, and hates righteousness, and this was the cause of its hostility to Jesus. All who refuse His infinite love will find Christianity a disturbing element. The light of Christ sweeps away the darkness that covers their sins, and the need of reform is made manifest. While those who yield to the influence of the Holy Spirit begin war with themselves, those who cling to sin war against the truth and its representatives.<sup>52</sup>

Brethren, we can afford to wait. Let our enemies exult because they have represented us in a character to suit their malicious fancy. But Christ will judge righteously, and will reward every man according to his deeds. To the faithful, who have been clothed by their enemies in the black robes of falsehood, he will give the spotless garments of truth and purity.

It will do our proud hearts good to suffer reproach for Christ’s sake. “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake; for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.” “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against

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<sup>48</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898), 302. Emphasis added.

<sup>49</sup> Romans 12:18; Hebrews 12:14; 2 Timothy 3:12

<sup>50</sup> Deuteronomy 32:41; Romans 12:19; 1 Corinthians 4:5

<sup>51</sup> White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 431.

<sup>52</sup> White, *The Desire of Ages*, 306.

you, falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in Heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you.”

Take courage, then, when the burden is heavy, when the work moves slowly, and temptations, strong and fierce, surge in upon you. Cease not your effort so long as there is one soul to be warned by your words, one soul to be benefited by your example.

I entreat you to depend less upon your own efforts, and trust more to the power of Christ. Cultivate fortitude, firmness, patience, humility, and self-control. The God whom we serve will arm us with courage in every emergency; but we must abase self, and let God be all in all.<sup>53</sup>

While we ought to desire to obtain the character trait of love so that we can properly face the persecution that will come to all who have godly characters, we also ought to have a right understanding of what it means to love. Love will not cover unconfessed and unrepented sin. Nor will it cover defects of character because imperfection of character is sin.

God will accept only those who are determined to aim high. He places every human agent under obligation to do his best. *Moral perfection is required of all.* Never should we lower the standard of righteousness in order to accommodate inherited or cultivated tendencies to wrong-doing. *We need to understand that imperfection of character is sin.* All righteous attributes of character dwell in God as a perfect, harmonious whole, and every one who receives Christ as a personal Saviour is privileged to possess these attributes.<sup>54</sup>

The ethics inculcated by the Gospel acknowledge no standard but the perfection of God’s mind, God’s will. God requires from His creatures conformity to His will. *Imperfection of character is sin, and sin is the transgression of the law.* All righteous attributes of character dwell in God as a perfect, harmonious whole. Every one who receives Christ as his personal Saviour is privileged to possess these attributes. This is the science of holiness.<sup>55</sup>

In giving his only begotten Son to die for sinners, God has manifested to fallen man love that is without a parallel. We have full faith in the scripture that says, “God is love;” and yet many have shamefully perverted this word, and have fallen into dangerous error because of a false interpretation of its meaning. *God’s holy law is the only standard by which we can estimate divine affection.* If we do not accept the law of God as our standard, we set up a standard of our own. *God has given us precious promises of his love, but we are not to ascribe to Jehovah a tenderness that will lead him to pass over guilt and wink at iniquity.*

The Creator loves his creatures, but *he who loves sin more than righteousness, error more than truth, perpetuates the transgression that brought woe into our world, and cannot be regarded with favor by the God of truth.* The way of truth and righteousness involves a cross. Many misinterpret the requirements of God, and make them mean anything that will not disturb their consciences or inconvenience them in their business relations; but truth is the only sanctifying medium. *The love of God as manifested in Jesus, will lead us to the true conception of the character of God. As we behold Christ, pierced for our sins, we shall see that we cannot break the law of God and remain in his favor; we shall feel that as sinners we must lay hold of the merits of Christ and cease to sin.* Then we are drawing nigh

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<sup>53</sup> White, “Our Present Position,” *The Review and Herald*, August 28, 1883. Emphasis added.

<sup>54</sup> White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 330. Emphasis added.

<sup>55</sup> Ellen G. White, “Let This Mind Be In You,” *The Signs of the Times*, September 3, 1902. Emphasis added.

to God. As soon as we have a correct view of the love of God, we shall have no disposition to abuse it.<sup>56</sup>

God is love. He has shown that love in the gift of Christ. When “He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” He withheld nothing from His purchased possession. (John 3:16.) He gave all heaven, from which we may draw strength and efficiency, that we be not repulsed or overcome by our great adversary. *But the love of God does not lead Him to excuse sin. He did not excuse it in Satan; He did not excuse it in Adam or in Cain; nor will He excuse it in any other of the children of men. He will not connive at our sins or overlook our defects of character. He expects us to overcome in His name.*<sup>57</sup>

One such person that overcame defects of character in Christ’s name was the apostle John. Being the youngest of the twelve disciples, John writes of himself as being loved by Jesus.<sup>58</sup> To John was given a vision of a book being unsealed, a commandment to seal up and not write about the words spoken by seven thunders, and to refrain from sealing the book of Revelation.<sup>59</sup> When called to follow Jesus John was not perfect in character. But of all the disciples, he was most receptive to, cherished, and practiced the teachings of Christ.

The confiding love and unselfish devotion manifested in the life and character of John present lessons of untold value to the Christian church. John did not naturally possess the loveliness of character that his later experience revealed. By nature he had serious defects. He was not only proud, self-assertive, and ambitious for honor, but impetuous, and resentful under injury. He and his brother were called “sons of thunder.” Evil temper, the desire for revenge, the spirit of criticism, were all in the beloved disciple. But beneath all this the divine Teacher discerned the ardent, sincere, loving heart. Jesus rebuked this self-seeking, disappointed his ambitions, *tested his faith*. But He revealed to him that for which his soul longed—the beauty of holiness, the transforming power of love....

The lessons of Christ, setting forth meekness and humility and love as essential to growth in grace and a fitness for His work, were of the highest value to John. *He treasured every lesson and constantly sought to bring his life into harmony with the divine pattern*. John had begun to discern the glory of Christ—not the worldly pomp and power for which he had been taught to hope, but “the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14.

*The depth and fervor of John’s affection for his Master was not the cause of Christ’s love for him, but the effect of that love. John desired to become like Jesus, and under the transforming influence of the love of Christ he did become meek and lowly. Self was hid in Jesus. Above all his companions, John yielded himself to the power of that wondrous life.* He says, “The life was manifested, and we have seen it.” “And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.” 1 John 1:2; John 1:16. *John knew the Saviour by an experimental knowledge*. His Master’s lessons were graven on his soul. When he testified of the Saviour’s grace, his simple language was eloquent with the love that pervaded his whole being.

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<sup>56</sup> Ellen G. White, “The Truth as It Is in Jesus,” *The Review and Herald*, June 17, 1890. Emphasis added.

<sup>57</sup> White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 316. Emphasis added.

<sup>58</sup> John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20

<sup>59</sup> Revelation 5:1-6:2; 10:4; 22:10

It was John's deep love for Christ which led him always to desire to be close by His side. The Saviour loved all the Twelve, but John's was the most receptive spirit. He was younger than the others, and with more of the child's confiding trust he opened his heart to Jesus. Thus he came more into sympathy with Christ, and through him the Saviour's deepest spiritual teaching was communicated to the people.

Jesus loves those who represent the Father, and John could talk of the Father's love as no other of the disciples could. *He revealed to his fellow men that which he felt in his own soul, representing in his character the attributes of God. The glory of the Lord was expressed in his face. The beauty of holiness which had transformed him shone with a Christlike radiance from his countenance. In adoration and love he beheld the Saviour until likeness to Christ and fellowship with Him became his one desire, and in his character was reflected the character of his Master....*

It is not the opposition of the world that most endangers the church of Christ. It is the evil cherished in the hearts of believers that works their most grievous disaster and most surely retards the progress of God's cause. There is no surer way of weakening spirituality than by cherishing envy, suspicion, faultfinding, and evil surmising. On the other hand, the strongest witness that God has sent His Son into the world is the existence of harmony and union among men of varied dispositions who form His church. This witness it is the privilege of the followers of Christ to bear. But in order to do this, they must place themselves under Christ's command. *Their characters must be conformed to His character and their wills to His will.*<sup>60</sup>

Scriptures tell us, through prophets contemporary to Daniel, of five individuals given as examples of those whose characters are righteous, whose integrity is noteworthy of the attention of unfallen worlds and angels as those who were fit to join the family of heaven because they beheld the character of Jesus by faith long before Christ was born on this earth. Special attention will be given to each of these worthies, and to the descendants of one other who were tested for their faithfulness to his commandment—the Rechabites—as well as to those whose influence impacted the lives and ministries of these six, whether for good or evil.

Of these Bible heroes, Jeremiah names Samuel and Moses as two who were wise and upright acting as intercessors on behalf of God's denominated people in their day, but whose intercession in Jeremiah's day would be refused by God because of the exceedingly great wickedness of the apostates. He echoes the history of Moses and Samuel, bringing to mind the words of the Psalmist,

Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy. Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the Lord, and he answered them. He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them. Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions. Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the Lord our God is holy.<sup>61</sup>

The wickedness of Judah could now be likened to that expressed by Hosea where there was no remedy for the rebellion against God's law, only a casting out of God's house.<sup>62</sup> Though willing to forgive and demonstrate mercy, God now had no other choice but to take vengeance of their wicked inventions from which they had no desire to repent.

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<sup>60</sup> White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 539, 544-545, 549. Emphasis added.

<sup>61</sup> Psalm 99:5-9, KJV

<sup>62</sup> Jeremiah 7:15, 16; 15:1; Hosea 9:15

The other three are identified by Ezekiel as Noah, Daniel, and Job.<sup>63</sup> God informs us through Ezekiel that integrity of character is non-transferable, and He gives notice through Jeremiah that intercession will come to an end for the finally impenitent. We then see the consistency of God's Word as He affirms through the apostle John the revelation of when the characters of all will be forever fixed by the declaration, "It is done.... He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still."<sup>64</sup>

Of the five mentioned, Noah is the first to be mentioned in Biblical records. But Noah is not the first prophet in Scriptures.

Enoch was the first prophet among mankind. He foretold by prophecy the second coming of Christ to our world, and his work at that time. His life was a specimen of Christian consistency. Holy lips alone should speak forth the words of God in denunciation and judgments. His prophecy is not found in the writings of the Old Testament. We may never find any books which relate to the works of Enoch, but Jude, a prophet of God, mentions the work of Enoch (Manuscript 43, 1900).<sup>65</sup>

The apostle Jude wrote, "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."<sup>66</sup>

It was to Enoch that God first revealed His purpose to destroy the unrepentant generations living at the time which was determined as a probation for the antediluvians.

God communed with Enoch through his angels, and gave him divine instruction. He made known to him that he would not always bear with man in his rebellion—that his purpose was to destroy the sinful race by bringing a flood of waters upon the earth.<sup>67</sup>

One cannot really examine the life of Noah in a vacuum of influence. Noah was born sixty-nine years after Enoch was taken by God into Heaven, a significant event of great subsequence to the faithful of that period. Moses briefly recorded, "And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."<sup>68</sup> Paul would expand our understanding of just how big and well known this event of Enoch's translation would be in connection to the prophetic ministry of Noah, writing,

By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; *and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of

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<sup>63</sup> Ezekiel 14:14, 20

<sup>64</sup> Revelation 16:17; 22:11, KJV

<sup>65</sup> Ellen G. White, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1953), 1088.

<sup>66</sup> Jude 1:14, 15, KJV

<sup>67</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1 (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1870), 60.

<sup>68</sup> Genesis 5:21-24, KJV. 300-187=113-182=-69.

his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.<sup>69</sup>

Enoch's translation had widespread influence. His disappearance was noticed by the righteous and unrighteous alike. Search parties went out hoping to find him in the known retreats to which Enoch resorted after periods of ministry to the wicked inhabitants of the world.

God would not permit Enoch to die as other men, but sent his angels to take him to Heaven without seeing death. In the presence of the righteous and the wicked, Enoch was removed from them. Those who loved him thought that God might have left him in some of his places of retirement; but after seeking him diligently, and being unable to find him, reported that he was not, for God took him.<sup>70</sup>

Ellen White would have us understand just how Enoch, Noah, and others pleased God by the way they exercised faith. Note the connection to setting high standards as objectives to be reached as we contend for that faith once given to the saints.

Remember that you will never reach a higher standard than you yourself set. Then set your mark high, and *step by step*, even though it be by painful effort, by self-denial and sacrifice, *ascend the whole length of the ladder of progress*. Let nothing hinder you. *Fate has not woven its meshes about any human being so firmly that he need remain helpless and in uncertainty*. Opposing circumstances should create a firm determination to overcome them. The breaking down of one barrier will give greater ability and courage to go forward. Press with determination in the right direction, and circumstances will be your helpers, not your hindrances.

*Be ambitious, for the Master's glory, to cultivate every grace of character. In every phase of your character building you are to please God. This you may do; for Enoch pleased Him though living in a degenerate age. And there are Enochs in this our day.*<sup>71</sup>

She further exhorts us to comprehend that Enoch began his walk with God by determining to seek first the righteousness of God, studying His character with purpose, and then co-operating with God by accepting the works God ordained rather than seeking to establish his own course and following his own will. In order to accomplish his desire to become like God in character, he recognized his spiritual poverty, mourned his spiritual condition, while in meekness hungering and thirsting after righteousness. He sought mercy for himself, and then ministered to others by preaching the judgments of God mingled with mercy for all on the condition of repentance.

Do not for a moment think that Enoch preached without opposition, without mockery and scorn, or without persecution. "Before the destruction of the antediluvian world, Enoch bore his testimony unflinchingly."<sup>72</sup> With great courage and power, the virtue that must be added to faith, Enoch delivered messages of truth for all time to a population steeped in the proclivity to unrighteousness.

She also informs us that the period of time in which Enoch lived was unparalleled for moral darkness. As it was in the days of Enoch and Noah, so would it be in the last days of Earth's history before the coming of the Lord.

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<sup>69</sup> Hebrews 11:5-7, KJV, Emphasis added.

<sup>70</sup> White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, 63.

<sup>71</sup> White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 331, 332.

<sup>72</sup> Ellen G. White, "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord," *The Review and Herald*, November 1, 1906.

Let us realize the weakness of humanity, and see where man fails in his self-sufficiency. We shall then be filled with a desire to be just what God desires us to be,—pure, noble, sanctified. *We shall hunger and thirst after the righteousness of Christ. To be like God will be the one desire of the soul.*

This is the desire that filled Enoch's heart. And we read that he walked with God. *He studied the character of God to a purpose.* He did not mark out his own course, or set up his own will, as if he thought himself fully qualified to manage matters. He strove to conform himself to the divine likeness (Letter 169, 1903).<sup>73</sup>

Enoch walked with God, while of the world around him sacred history records, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Enoch's righteous life was in marked contrast with the wicked people around him. His piety, his purity, his unswerving integrity were the result of his walking with God, while the wickedness of the world was the result of their walking with the deceiver of mankind. *There never has been and never will be an age when the moral darkness will be so dense as when Enoch lived a life of irreproachable righteousness* (Manuscript 43, 1900).<sup>74</sup>

With this backdrop to Noah's story of grace in the eyes of the Lord, we then understand how Noah choose for himself to live like his great-grandfather. Born sixty-nine years after Enoch's translation, the message of the reward for those choosing righteousness and seeking God's character for themselves, preached by Methuselah and Lamech, and taken up by Noah even years later, remained a powerful bulletin to the antediluvians.

The message preached by Enoch and his translation to heaven were a convincing argument to all who lived in his time. These things were an argument that Methuselah and Noah could use with power to show that the righteous could be translated.<sup>75</sup>

Noah preached with no less fervor and power than did Enoch. He had direct instruction from God, but he was also instructed by his grandfather and father. What instruction Noah received from God about the architecture and construction of the ark, he taught to his uncles and cousins.

Enoch instructed his family in regard to the flood. Methuselah, the son of Enoch, listened to the preaching of his grandson, Noah, who faithfully warned the inhabitants of the old world that a flood of waters was coming upon the earth. Methuselah and his sons, and grandsons, lived in the time of the building of the ark. They, with some others, received instruction from Noah, and assisted him in building the ark.<sup>76</sup>

God determined to purify the world by a flood; but in mercy and love he gave the antediluvians a probation of one hundred and twenty years. During this time, while the ark was building, the voices of Noah, Methuselah, and many others were heard in warning and entreaty, and every blow struck on the ark was a warning message.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> White, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, 1087. Emphasis added.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 1088. Emphasis added.

<sup>75</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, 392.

<sup>76</sup> White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, 65.

<sup>77</sup> Ellen G. White, "Doing God's Will," *The Review and Herald*, September 19, 1907.

The talented men of Noah's time set themselves in league against God's will and purpose, and scorned the message and the messenger that he had sent. When they could not move Noah from his firm and implicit trust in the word of God, they pointed to him as a fanatic, as a ranting old man, full of superstition and madness. Thus they condemned him because he would not be turned from his purpose by reasonings and theories of men. It was true that Noah could not controvert their philosophies, or refute the claims of science so called; but he could proclaim the word of God; for he knew it contained the infinite wisdom of the Creator, and, as he sounded it everywhere, it lost none of its force and reality because men of the world treated him with ridicule and contempt.

*Noah did not mix the soft, pleasing deceptions of Satan with his message. He did not utter the sentiment of many of his day who declared that God was too merciful to do such a terrible work. Many asserted that God would grant the wicked another season of probation; but Noah did not indulge them in the faintest hope that those who neglected the present opportunity, who rejected the present message, would be favored with another opportunity of salvation.* God means that men shall not only love him, but that his fear shall be in their hearts. Noah's faith was mingled with fear; for it is written that Noah, being warned of God, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house. His faith intensified his fear; for it was no cowardly fear that moved him. *He dared not suppress the words of God for fear of men, or withhold his message in dread of the consequences that might result because of the opposition and hate of the wicked and unbelieving about him. He knew the power of God, and realized that God would fulfill his word. His fear of God did not separate him from God, but served to draw him closer to him, and to lead him to pour out his soul in earnest supplication.* There were many who at first received Noah's message, but the fear of men was greater than the fear of God, and they turned away from the truth of God to believe a lie. As time passed on, and reproach and ridicule were heaped upon them, their hearts failed them, and they did not bear the test. It is the testing time that will measure professed faith and assurance in God. Courage and integrity cannot be estimated rightly by men until the day of trial puts them to the test.<sup>78</sup>

While only eight persons ended up on the ark prepared by Noah at God's command, his preaching had power to lead individuals to obey God's commandments by their repentance from unrighteousness and sin. They were faithful—some even died triumphant in the face of persecution and ridicule. Others choose to believe, but they did not endure to the end because they did not completely separate themselves from the world. They chose to behold, cherish, and do the things that the world was doing.

Noah and his helpers were constantly at work, preparing an immense boat. *Many of the believing ones kept the faith and died triumphant.* Finally the long period of probation was about to close. By the standard of God's law, the obedient were distinguished from the disobedient. The time was a most critical one. Will Noah become tempted by the universal scorn which he sees thrown upon God's law and upon himself and his helpers; and will he have less reverence and love for this law?—No; for Noah, and those who died in the faith, preached all the more earnestly, in proportion to the ridicule and scorn heaped upon them for building that immense ark—a boat on dry land.<sup>79</sup>

Those who believed when Noah began to build the ark, *lost their faith through association with unbelievers who aroused all the old passion for amusement and display.* For one hundred and twenty years the antediluvians were on probation, free to choose to obey the

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<sup>78</sup> Ellen G. White, "An Example of Saving Faith," *The Signs of the Times*, April 18, 1895. Emphasis added.

<sup>79</sup> Ellen G. White, *Letters and Manuscripts*, vol. 21 (Silver Springs, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 2015), Ms 35, 1906, paragraph 9. Emphasis added.

voice of God and find refuge in the ark, or to refuse to hear his voice, and be destroyed. They chose to disobey, and were destroyed.<sup>80</sup>

The pious mingled with the depraved, and became like them in spirit and in deeds. “The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.”

But the light was not heeded; and the preaching of Noah and his co-laborers impressed hearts less and less. Many, even of the worshipers of God, were beguiled into sin by the bewitching allurements which were constantly before them, and lost their peculiar, holy character. They had not sufficient moral power to stand against the corrupting influences of the age.<sup>81</sup>

The review of Enoch’s and Noah’s lifetime of character building helps us comprehend the seriousness of God’s words spoken to the children of Israel through the prophet Ezekiel, “... they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness.”<sup>82</sup> The warning we need to heed is grounded in the principle that “... character is not transferable. No man can believe for another. No man can receive the Spirit for another. No man can impart to another the character which is the fruit of the Spirit’s working.”<sup>83</sup>

The life of Job is resplendent with examples of the integrity of his character, especially as we are reminded of the connection between patience and mercy. The apostle James points us to these traits, writing, “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.”<sup>84</sup>

Job could not have acquired patience without first becoming temperate in the appetites of the eye and of the flesh. Moses recorded, moved by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the words by which Job proclaimed his integrity. “My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.” “I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?”<sup>85</sup>

But when we consider the words of the Lord spoken to Ezekiel, it is in light of the ministry of Job on behalf of his children that gives weight to the warning. Job was righteous, and a righteous character is non-transferable. Yet Job did what he could to intercede on behalf of children. “And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.”<sup>86</sup>

God has made it the privilege and the duty of parents to become co-workers with himself in the education and training of their children. Parents are responsible, in a great degree, for

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<sup>80</sup> Ellen G. White, “Training Children for God—No. 2,” *The Review and Herald*, September 15, 1904. Emphasis added.

<sup>81</sup> Ellen G. White, “Noah’s Time and Ours,” *The Signs of the Times*, November 27, 1884.

<sup>82</sup> Ezekiel 14:14, 20, KJV

<sup>83</sup> White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 411.

<sup>84</sup> James 5:10, 11, KJV

<sup>85</sup> Job 23:11, 12; 31:1, KJV

<sup>86</sup> Job 1:4, 5, KJV

the characters which their children develop. Would that every father and mother could see that in their own home is a missionary field in which they may work unitedly for the salvation of the precious souls committed to their care....

It were well for parents to learn from the man of Uz a lesson of steadfastness and devotion. Job did not neglect his duty to those outside of his household; he was benevolent, kind, thoughtful of the interest of others; and at the same time he labored earnestly for the salvation of his own family. Amid the festivities of his sons and daughters, he trembled lest his children should displease God. As a faithful priest of the household, he offered sacrifices for them individually. He knew the offensive character of sin, and the thought that his children might forget the divine claims, led him to God as an intercessor in their behalf.<sup>87</sup>

Only as parents co-operate with God can He then answer their prayer to contend with the one who contends with us, and save our children.<sup>88</sup> Still, God will respect the choices made by the children who refuse to repent.

We should also note how God turned the captivity of Job after he prayed for his “miserable comforters.”<sup>89</sup>

Let us strive to walk in the light as Christ is in the light. *The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed, not only for himself, but for those who were opposing him. When he felt earnestly desirous that the souls that had trespassed against him might be helped, he himself received help. Let us pray, not only for ourselves, but for those who have hurt us and are continuing to hurt us.* Pray, pray, especially in your mind. Give not the Lord rest; for His ears are open to hear sincere, importunate prayers, when the soul is humbled before Him.<sup>90</sup>

Only by submitting to the discipline of adding to faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, and brotherly kindness could Job then add love in the face of persecution that came from the opposing accusations of his friends. Job obeyed and worshipped God even in the face of adversity that encompassed the loss of herds, servants, and children resulting from the persecution power Satan exercised through his agents and the manipulation of weather elements.

The gold mentioned by Christ, the True Witness, which all must have, has been shown me to be faith and love combined, and love takes the precedence of faith. Satan is constantly at work to remove these precious gifts from the hearts of God’s people. All are engaged in playing the game of life. *Satan is well aware that if he can remove love and faith, and supply their place with selfishness and unbelief, all the remaining precious traits will soon be skillfully removed by his deceitful hand, and the game will be lost.*<sup>91</sup>

Moses was known as the meekest man on the face of the earth.<sup>92</sup> But, in order to attain that status of humility and teachability, he had to come to his senses regarding his spiritual poverty and mourn his spiritual condition. It was because of his self-confidence and self-sufficiency that he failed to deliver the

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<sup>87</sup> Ellen G. White, “The Parents’ Work,” *The Review and Herald*, August 30, 1881.

<sup>88</sup> Isaiah 49:25

<sup>89</sup> Job 16:2; 42:10

<sup>90</sup> White, *Letters and Manuscripts*, vol. 21, Lt 88, 1906, paragraph 8. Emphasis added.

<sup>91</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, 36. Emphasis added.

<sup>92</sup> Numbers 12:3

children of Israel at the first attempt. His failure led him to lose trust in God's Word, will, and purpose regarding His promises to lead Israel out of bondage.

The education received by Moses in the court of Egypt, as the adopted son of the king's daughter, was very thorough. Nothing was neglected that was necessary to make him a wise man, as the Egyptians understood wisdom. But this education did not fit him to do the work to which God had appointed him. In the wilds of Midian, Moses spent forty years as a keeper of sheep. Apparently cut off forever from his life's mission, he was receiving the discipline necessary for its fulfillment. As he led his flocks through the wilds of the mountains and into the green pastures of the valleys, the God of nature gave him the highest and grandest wisdom. In the school of nature, with Christ Himself for teacher, he learned lessons of humility, meekness, faith, and trust, and daily his soul was bound closer to God. In the solitudes of the mountains he learned that which all the instruction received in the king's palace was unable to impart to him,—simple, unwavering faith and trust in the Lord.

Prior to gaining this experience, Moses thought that his education in the wisdom of Egypt had fully qualified him to lead Israel from bondage. Had he not had the greatest advantages of the best schools in the land? Was he not learned in all things necessary for a general of armies to know? He felt that he was fully able to deliver Israel.

Moses set about his work by trying to obtain the favor of his people by redressing their wrongs. He killed an Egyptian who was ill-treating an Israelite. In this he manifested the spirit of him who was a murderer from the beginning, and proved himself unfit to represent the God of mercy, love, and tenderness. He made a miserable failure of his first attempt. Like many another, he immediately lost confidence in God and turned, his back on his appointed work. He fled from the wrath of Pharaoh. He concluded that because of his mistake, his sin in taking the life of the Egyptian, God would not permit him to have any part in the work of delivering His people from their cruel bondage. But the Lord permitted him to make this mistake in order that He might be able to teach him the gentleness, goodness, longsuffering, that is necessary for every worker for the Lord to possess.<sup>93</sup>

Moses had been learning much that he must unlearn. The influences that had surrounded him in Egypt—the love of his foster mother, his own high position as the king's grandson, the dissipation on every hand, the refinement, the subtlety, and the mysticism of a false religion, the splendor of idolatrous worship, the solemn grandeur of architecture and sculpture—all had left deep impressions upon his developing mind and had molded, to some extent, his habits and character. Time, change of surroundings, and communion with God could remove these impressions. It would require on the part of Moses himself a struggle as for life to renounce error and accept truth, but God would be his helper when the conflict should be too severe for human strength.<sup>94</sup>

Moses had become, in every sense, a great man. As a writer, as a military leader, and as a philosopher, he had no superior. Love of truth and righteousness had become the basis of his character, and had produced a steadfastness of purpose which no fickleness of fashion, opinion, or pursuits, could influence. Courtesy, diligence, and a firm trust in God, marked his life. He was young and vigorous, overflowing with energy and manly strength. He had deeply sympathized with his brethren in their affliction, and his soul had kindled with a desire to deliver them. Surely, it would appear to human wisdom that he was in every way fitted for his work.

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<sup>93</sup> Ellen G. White, "Taught of God," *The Signs of the Times*, July 12, 1905.

<sup>94</sup> Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1890), 248.

But God seeth not as man sees; his ways are not as ours. Moses is not yet prepared to accomplish this great work, neither are the people prepared for deliverance. He has been educated in the school of Egypt, but he has yet to pass through the stern school of discipline before he is qualified for his sacred mission. Before he can successfully govern the hosts of Israel, he must learn to obey, he must learn self-control. For forty long years he is sent into the retirement of the desert, that, in his life of obscurity, in the humble work of caring for the sheep and lambs of the flock, he may gain the victory over his own passions. He must learn entire submission to the will of God, before he can teach that will to a great people.<sup>95</sup>

The divine command to deliver Israel, found Moses self-distrustful, slow of speech, and timid. He was overwhelmed with a sense of his incapacity to be a mouth-piece for God. But he accepted the work, putting all his trust in the Lord. The greatness of his mission called into exercise the best powers of his mind. God blessed his ready obedience, and he became eloquent, hopeful, self-possessed, and well fitted for the greatest work ever given to man. This is an example of what God does to strengthen the character of those who trust him implicitly, and give themselves unreservedly to his commands.

The humble, efficient worker, who obediently responds to the call of God, may be sure of receiving divine assistance. To feel so great and holy a responsibility is of itself elevating to the character. It calls into action the highest mental qualities, and their continued exercise strengthens and purifies mind and heart. The influence upon one's own life, as well as upon the life of others, is incalculable.

It is wonderful how strong a weak man may become through faith in the power of God, how decided his efforts, how prolific of great results. The hesitating and irresolute, through exercising his abilities in the cause of God, becomes firm and decided. Taking in the great fact that he is called by the Redeemer of the world to work with him for the salvation of men, he dedicates his life to the work. His nature becomes exalted; the mission of Christ opens before him with new importance and glory, and with deep humility he recognizes in himself a co-laborer with the Saviour. No higher office is given to man. No joy can equal the assurance of being an instrument in the hand of God for saving souls. It is a grand thing to look back upon a course of labor all marked with glorious results; to see precious souls progressing in the light through your efforts; to feel that God has worked with and through you in the harvest-field of the world.<sup>96</sup>

Mark the result: He did not bring the work down to his deficiency; but in the strength of God he put forth the most earnest efforts to elevate and sanctify himself for his sacred mission.

*Moses would never have been prepared for his position of trust had he waited for God to do the work for him. Light from heaven will come to those who feel the need of it, and who seek for it as for hidden treasures. But if we sink down into a state of inactivity, willing to be controlled by Satan's power, God will not send His inspiration to us. Unless we exert to the utmost the powers which He has given us, we shall ever remain weak and inefficient. Much prayer and the most vigorous exercise of the mind are necessary if we would be prepared to do the work which God would entrust to us. Many never attain to the position which they might occupy, because they wait for God to do for them that which He has given them power to do for themselves. All who are fitted for usefulness in this life must be trained by*

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<sup>95</sup> Ellen G. White, "Moses," *The Signs of the Times*, February 19, 1890, Art. A.

<sup>96</sup> Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Publishing Co., 1892/1893 ed.), 359.

*the severest mental and moral discipline, and then God will assist them by combining divine power with human effort.*<sup>97</sup>

Moses suffered persecution at the hands of those he loved and for whom he ministered. Because the children of Israel did not co-operate with God in forming their own characters after the similitude of God they frequently provoked the Lord to anger by their disobedience, apostasy, insubordination, and rebellion. Moses, upon reviewing his life, could see the goodness of God throughout the wanderings in the wilderness. Yet, just as Noah only saw seven members of his household join him in the ark, Moses would only see two adults through to the promised land.

We have reason to believe it possible that we and our children may believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved along with our household, just as did Lydia the seller of purple or the jailor of Phillipi.<sup>98</sup> But it is a fatal delusion to think it possible to be saved without obeying the gospel which includes the individual work of character perfection. It is presumption to avoid the strenuous exercise of a living faith to diligently labor upon the principle of addition.

Moses was a man of like passions with ourselves, and his character is described that we may learn lessons from his noble example. What God did for Moses, he will do for us, if we are as faithful; and we have not only the same God to go to, the same Mediator to intercede for us, but the same mighty incentives of love to urge us to be obedient to all God's requirements. We have clearer light, and the examples of those who sinned. Their crimes are plainly stated and their punishments depicted. The commendation of God is for the obedient today as then; for God is no respecter of persons, and whoever worketh righteousness is accepted of him in every nation; but if we lack in character, in meekness, in humility, in faith in placing a true estimate upon the eternal riches, and in willingness to suffer reproach for the truth's sake, we shall be left without excuse....

*Moses felt his great responsibility as visible leader of Israel. He saw the perversity of their natures, and knew that he was unable to impress them and change their hearts....*

*Moses understood that there was to be a Judgment-day, when every man would be judged according to the deeds done in the body. We each have a case pending at the bar of God, and although Noah, Job, and Daniel were in the land, they could not save son or daughter. They could only save their own souls by their righteousness. It is an individual work for you and me. There will be every attraction to draw us away from Christ's righteousness, and the human heart is inclined to selfish gratification. Every soul who seeks righteousness will meet with perplexities; but shrink not at reproach or trial. Jesus was reproached by the sons of men, and can those of his household expect a better portion? There is help for every one who in humble faith seeks it. When you put all your powers to the stretch that you may become acquainted with God, you will have his power added to your weakness. Every soul that enters through the gates into the city will go in as a conqueror.*<sup>99</sup>

Samuel is mentioned along with Moses as a prophet who interceded on behalf of the children of Israel. His character was formed under circumstances of great moral darkness, for though shaped during the first three years of his life by his faithful mother, Hannah, he was kept by the power of God when living at the Temple in Eli's care because of the wickedness of Eli's sons. "Hannah prayed and trusted; and in her son Samuel she gave to the Israel of God a most precious treasure—a useful man, with a well-formed

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<sup>97</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, 611. Emphasis added.

<sup>98</sup> Acts 16:13-15, 27-33

<sup>99</sup> Ellen G. White, "The Choice of Moses," *The Signs of the Times*, November 17, 1887. Emphasis added.

character, one who was as firm as a rock where principle was concerned.”<sup>100</sup> “Faith strengthened the mother’s heart, and she yielded not to the pleadings of natural affection.”<sup>101</sup>

Samuel, by faith, demonstrated that

The youth may have principles so firm that the most powerful temptations of Satan will not draw them away from their allegiance. Samuel was a child surrounded by the most corrupting influences. He saw and heard things that grieved his soul. The sons of Eli, who ministered in holy office, were controlled by Satan. These men polluted the whole atmosphere which surrounded them. Men and women were daily fascinated with sin and wrong, yet Samuel walked untainted. His robes of character were spotless. He did not fellowship, or have the least delight in, the sins which filled all Israel with fearful reports. Samuel loved God; he kept his soul in such close connection with heaven that an angel was sent to talk with him in reference to the sins of Eli’s sons, which were corrupting Israel.<sup>102</sup>

Eli was a good man, pure in morals; but he was too indulgent. He incurred the displeasure of God because he did not strengthen the weak points in his character. He did not want to hurt the feelings of anyone and had not the moral courage to rebuke and reprove sin. His sons were vile men; yet he did not remove them from their position of trust. These sons profaned the house of God. He knew this, and felt sad in consequence of it, for he loved purity and righteousness; but he had not sufficient moral force to suppress the evil. He loved peace and harmony, and became more and more insensible to impurity and crime. But the great God takes the matter in hand Himself. When the rebuke falls upon him, through the instrumentality of a child, he accepts it, feeling that it is what he deserves. He does not show any resentment toward Samuel, the messenger of God; he loves him as he has done, but condemns himself.<sup>103</sup>

Because Samuel was faithful in diligently perfecting his character, God blessed him. The Scriptures tell us that “Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD. And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.”<sup>104</sup>

Fathers are just as important in forming the characters of their children as the mothers. In contrast to the faithfulness of Hannah in training Samuel we see the unfaithfulness of Eli in the rearing of his sons.

The course of Eli—his sinful indulgence as a father, and his criminal neglect as a priest of God—presents a striking and painful contrast to the firmness and self-denial of the faithful Hannah. Eli was acquainted with the divine will. He knew what characters God could accept, and what he would condemn. Yet he suffered his children to grow up with unbridled passions, perverted appetites, and corrupt morals.

Eli had instructed his children in the law of God, and had given them a good example in his own life; but this was not his whole duty. God required him, both as a father and as a priest,

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<sup>100</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1889), 304.

<sup>101</sup> Ellen G. White, “The Birth of Samuel,” *The Signs of the Times*, October 27, 1881.

<sup>102</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, 472.

<sup>103</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, 516.

<sup>104</sup> 1 Samuel 3:19-21, KJV

to restrain them from following their own perverse will. This he had failed to do. His sons were impatient of control, and he weakly resigned the reins to them, and suffered them to pursue their evil ways at pleasure. The fond father overlooked the faults and sins of their childhood, flattering himself that after a time they would outgrow these evil tendencies. He did not regard his children as a sacred trust which God had committed to his care, to be returned with interest; but he looked upon them as his own. Hence, instead of seeking guidance and help from God, and following the instructions given in his word, Eli chose his own way of management, that most agreeable to his ease-loving disposition. Had he taught his sons to obey their father, they would have learned to obey God; but by permitting them to disregard his commands, he taught them to disregard the commands of their heavenly Father. Thus their evil habits strengthened with their years, and when they reached manhood, they were ready to defy all authority, both human and divine.

God requires every parent not only to give his children right instruction and a good example, but with promptness and decision to restrain their inclination to do evil. The fact that Eli stood in holy office, cause his lax discipline, and the selfish, irreverent, licentious course of his wicked sons, to exert a corrupting influence upon the whole nation. All parents should strive to make their families patterns of good works, perfect Christian households. But in a pre-eminent degree is this the duty of those who minister in sacred things, and to whom the people look for instruction and guidance. The ministers of Christ are to be examples to the flock. He who fails to direct wisely his own household, is not qualified to guide the church of God.<sup>105</sup>

Apparently the warning given to Eli did not influence Samuel to the degree that it should have, for Samuel's own sons were not like him. But this is only evidence of how children have the power of choice, and must exercise the will to be like their godly parents or like the world around them. It was because of Samuel's sons that Israel decided to press their desire to be like the nations around them, and be ruled by a king. Even after the anointing and inauguration of Saul as king, Samuel continued to exert prophetic influence on the nation.

We read that he judged Israel all the days of his life. The closing years of the prophet could not but be years of sadness and burden of soul. His own children had not followed the example which he had given them. They had not heeded the precepts which he had sought to impress upon their minds. They had not copied the elevated, pure, unselfish life of their father. Through their impious and selfish life they had forfeited the confidence of the people, and this was a cause of great grief to Samuel. He had been to some extent too easy and indulgent with his sons, and the result that is usually seen where this is the case, was made apparent in his family. The characters of his children were marred with selfishness, and their course was such that it made them a dishonor to the cause of God. If the warning given to Eli had exerted the influence upon the mind of Samuel that it should have done, it would have aided him in the government of his household....

As the character and management of Saul were viewed in contrast to the character and management of Samuel, Israel saw what a mistake they had made in desiring a king, that they might not be different from the nations around them. The people looked with alarm at the condition of society, fast becoming leavened with irreligion and godlessness. The influence and example of their ruler was leaving its impression on all sides, and well might Israel mourn that Samuel, the prophet of the Lord, was dead.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Ellen G. White, "The Father's Duty," *The Signs of the Times*, November 10, 1881.

<sup>106</sup> Ellen G. White, "The Death of Samuel," *The Signs of the Times*, October 19, 1888.

Though Samuel's sons had not chosen to follow their father's example, he set up two schools where those who wanted to perfect their characters in holiness could resort to a safe haven established for the nurture of godly traits. God blessed these schools as an instrument to circumvent the evil influences of the surrounding nations upon His people.

Fathers and mothers in Israel became indifferent to their obligation to God, indifferent to their obligation to their children. Through unfaithfulness in the home, and idolatrous influences without, many of the Hebrew youth received an education differing widely from that which God had planned for them. They learned the ways of the heathen.

To meet this growing evil, God provided other agencies as an aid to parents in the work of education. From the earliest times, prophets had been recognized as teachers divinely appointed. In the highest sense the prophet was one who spoke by direct inspiration, communicating to the people the messages he had received from God. But the name was given also to those who, though not so directly inspired, were divinely called to instruct the people in the works and ways of God. For the training of such a class of teachers, Samuel, by the Lord's direction, established the schools of the prophets.

These schools were intended to serve as a barrier against the wide-spreading corruption, to provide for the mental and spiritual welfare of the youth, and to promote the prosperity of the nation by furnishing it with men qualified to act in the fear of God as leaders and counselors. To this end, Samuel gathered companies of young men who were pious, intelligent, and studious. These were called the sons of the prophets. As they studied the word and the works of God, His life-giving power quickened the energies of mind and soul, and the students received wisdom from above. The instructors were not only versed in divine truth, but had themselves enjoyed communion with God, and had received the special endowment of His Spirit. They had the respect and confidence of the people, both for learning and for piety....<sup>107</sup>

God accepted Samuel's labors and intercession on behalf of Israel because he co-operated with God in the formation of his character, and there was still hope for a backslidden but now repentant nation threatened by the Philistines. God delivered them by a great miracle at Ebenezer. But in Jeremiah's day, God pronounced the national apostasy beyond remedy because the people had cherished the sins of Manasseh.<sup>108</sup> He commanded Jeremiah not to pray for a people who refused to hear Him.<sup>109</sup> He represented Judah and Jerusalem as a worthless girdle.<sup>110</sup> He depicted, in a vision given Jeremiah, two baskets full of figs—one with good figs, the other with very bad figs. Those represented by the good figs God would discipline for their own good so that they might repent and form good characters. The rest would be destroyed until they were consumed.<sup>111</sup>

We should value character in the same way as does God—of greater value than the most precious minerals and gems. All else save the excellency of the knowledge and of the character of Christ accepted and received as our own should be counted as refuse.<sup>112</sup> We should ever keep in mind the warning

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<sup>107</sup> White, *Education*, 45, 46.

<sup>108</sup> Jeremiah 15:1-9

<sup>109</sup> Jeremiah 7:15, 16

<sup>110</sup> Jeremiah 13:7-11

<sup>111</sup> Jeremiah 24:1-10

<sup>112</sup> Philippians 3:7-11

issued by Paul, who wrote: “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.” Another way to say the same thing: “Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’”<sup>113</sup>

In order to form correct habits, we should seek the company of persons of sound moral and religious influence. We should constantly bear in mind that we may be fitting to inhabit the heavenly courts. The precious hours of probation are granted that we may remove every defect from the character; and we should seek to do this, not only that we may obtain the future life, but that we may be useful here. Young men and women should regard a good character as a capital of more value than gold or silver or stocks. It will be unaffected by panics and failures, and will bring rich returns when earthly possessions shall be swept away. The youth need a higher, nobler view of the value of Christian character. Sin blinds the eyes and defiles the heart. Integrity, firmness, and perseverance are qualities which all should seek earnestly to cultivate; for they clothe the possessor with a power which is irresistible, a power which makes him strong to do good, strong to resist evil, strong to bear adversity. It is here that true excellence of character shines forth with the greatest luster.

Strength of character consists of two things—power of will and power of self-control. Many youth mistake strong, uncontrolled passion for strength of character; but the truth is that he who is mastered by his passions is a weak man. The real greatness and nobility of the man is measured by the power of the feelings that he subdues, not by the power of the feelings that subdue him. The strongest man is he, who, while sensitive to abuse, will yet restrain passion and forgive his enemies. Such men are true heroes.<sup>114</sup>

In Daniel’s day, God threatened to do to Judah as He had done to Israel, warning that they would be cast “out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim.”<sup>115</sup> Israel had been corrupted by the idolatry introduced by Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, when he set up the golden calves in Bethel and Dan. Subsequently, one king after another continued in the sin of Jeroboam, refusing to serve God with the whole heart, until Josiah, king of Judah, came and broke down those altars according to the word of the Lord spoken to Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. How many professed Christians today are serving God in the same way as Jeroboam?

*Half-hearted Christians obscure the glory of God, misinterpret piety, and cause men to receive false ideas as to what constitutes vital godliness. Others think that they, also, can be Christians and yet consult their own tastes and make provision for the flesh, if these false-hearted professors can do so. On many a professed Christian’s banner the motto is written, “You can serve God and please self,—you can serve God and mammon.” They profess to be wise virgins, but not having the oil grace in their vessels with their lamps, they shed forth no light to the glory of God and for the salvation of men. They seek to do what the world’s Redeemer said was impossible to do; he has declared, “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” Those who profess to be Christians, but do not follow in the footsteps of Christ, make of none effect his words, and obscure the plan of salvation. By their spirit and deportment they virtually say, “Jesus, in your day you did not understand as well as we do in our day, that man can serve God and mammon.” These professors of religion claim to keep the law of God, but they do not keep it. O, what would the standard of true manhood have become had it been left in the hands of man! God has lifted his own standard,—the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus; and the experience that follows complete surrender to God, is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Everything that man touches with unholy hands and unsanctified intellect, even the gospel of truth, becomes, by*

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<sup>113</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:33, KJV; NIV

<sup>114</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, 655, 656.

<sup>115</sup> Jeremiah 7:15, KJV

the contact, contaminated. Man puts confidence in man, and makes flesh his arm, but all the work of man is of the earth, earthy.<sup>116</sup>

Of all the kings of Israel, Ahab and his sons were the worst because of the weak moral makeup of Ahab's character and the strength of Jezebel's personality and charisma—her influence over both husband and sons, as well as the nation. Enter the prophet Jehonadab (Jonadab) the son of Rechab, who is sent by Elisha to Ramothgilead to anoint Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimri king over Israel with the command that immediately after the anointing he was to flee without any hesitation. Jehu obeyed the commandment given him at the time of his anointing, going first to Jezreel where the kings of Israel and Judah, as well as Jezebel, were executed. Continuing on to Samaria, and after slaying forty-two of King Ahaziah's brethren, Jehu greets Jehonadab and invites him to witness his "zeal for the Lord."

In Samaria, Jehu then proceeds to deceive the worshippers of Baal so that he might uproot that form of idolatry from the nation. But, Jehu's character was flawed. He did not keep the commandments of God wholeheartedly! "But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin."<sup>117</sup>

Just as Elijah was appointed by God to do a work of judgment against the idolatrous priests and prophets at Carmel, Jehu was anointed by God to execute justice against Ahab's house after many years of impenitence after witnessing the manifestations of God's glory demonstrated by Elijah's ministry. Yet the religion of Elijah and that of Jehu was distinctly different, providing lessons for us today.

Men are slow to learn the lesson that the spirit manifested by Jehu will never bind hearts together. It is not safe for us to bind up our interests with a Jehu religion; for this will result in bringing sadness of heart upon God's true workers. God has not given to any of his servants the work of punishing those who will not heed his warnings and reproofs. When the Holy Spirit is abiding in the heart, it will lead the human agent to see his own defects of character, to pity the weakness of others, to forgive as he wishes to be forgiven. He will be pitiful, courteous, Christlike.

Mark how tender and pitiful the Lord is in his dealings with his creatures. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, and he stands ready to receive every wanderer who will return. The ear of the Lord is open to the cry of every one who is poor in spirit. Even before the prayer is offered, or the yearning of the soul made known, the Spirit of God goes forth to meet it. Never has there been a good desire, however weak, never a prayer lifted to God, however faltering, never a tear shed in contrition of soul, but grace from Christ has gone forth to meet the grace working in the human heart.<sup>118</sup>

There are many whose religion consists in activities. They want to be engaged in, and have the credit of doing, some great work while the little graces that go to make up a lovely Christian character are entirely overlooked. The busy, bustling service, which gives the impression that one is doing some wonderful work, is not acceptable to God. It is a Jehu spirit, which says, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord." It is gratifying to self; it feeds a self-complacent feeling; but all the while the soul may be defiled with the plague-spot of unsubdued, uncontrolled selfishness.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Ellen G. White, "The Righteousness of Christ," *The Review and Herald*, August 19, 1890. Emphasis added.

<sup>117</sup> 2 Kings 10:31, KJV

<sup>118</sup> Ellen G. White, "Pure and Undefined Religion," *The Review and Herald*, April 10, 1900.

<sup>119</sup> Ellen G. White, "The Right Use of Talents," *The Signs of the Times*, November 20, 1884.

Jehu the commander of Israel's armies did not trust God, Who had anointed him captain over His people, to maintain and sustain his monarchy. He supported the worship of the golden calves in Bethel and Dan with the same purpose of heart and mind as what led Jeroboam to establish this false religion in the first place. And, apparently, the palace lifestyle softened his army life habits to such an extent that an alarmed Jehonadab commanded his family to remain in tents, never to live a life of ease and pleasure by building houses or cultivating vineyards such as what Ahab had coveted, and to never drink wine because of its deleterious effects upon thoughts and feelings which make up the character.<sup>120</sup> Jehonadab recognized the same principles as what we are enjoined to remember.

You should keep off from Satan's enchanted ground and not allow your minds to be swayed from allegiance to God. Through Christ you may and should be happy and should acquire habits of self-control. *Even your thoughts must be brought into subjection to the will of God and your feelings under the control of reason and religion.* Your imagination was not given you to be allowed to run riot and have its own way without any effort at restraint or discipline. *If the thoughts are wrong the feelings will be wrong, and the thoughts and feelings combined make up the moral character.* When you decide that as Christians you are not required to restrain your thoughts and feelings you are brought under the influence of evil angels and invite their presence and their control. If you yield to your impressions and allow your thoughts to run in a channel of suspicion, doubt, and repining you will be among the most unhappy of mortals, and your lives will prove a failure.<sup>121</sup>

Dr. Adam Clarke commented on Jonadab's restriction on the use of wine, and the response of his descendants in this manner:

Ye shall preserve your bodies in temperance, shall use nothing that would deprive you of the exercise of your sober reason at any time; lest in such a time you should do what might be prejudicial to yourselves, injurious to your neighbour, or dishonorable to your God....

We have considered these precepts so very reasonable, so very useful, so conducive to the health of both body and mind, and sanctioned by such a respectable antiquity that we scrupulously and religiously observe them.<sup>122</sup>

Because the Rechabites were faithful in obeying the command of Jehonadab, they received a special commendation from God, and were used as examples of righteousness to condemn the finally unrepentant living in Jerusalem.

The Rechabites were commended for their ready and willing obedience, while God's people refused to be reproved by their prophets. Because He had spoken unto them but they had not heard, because He had called unto them but they had not answered, therefore God pronounced judgment against them. Jeremiah repeated the words of commendation from the Lord to the faithful Rechabites and pronounced blessings upon them in His name. Thus God taught His people that faithfulness, and obedience to His requirements, would be reflected back upon them in blessings, as the Rechabites were blessed for their obedience to their father's command.

If the directions of a good and wise father, who took the best and most effectual means to secure his posterity against the evil of intemperance, were to be so strictly obeyed, God's authority should be held in as much greater reverence as He is holier than man. He is our

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<sup>120</sup> Jeremiah 35:6-11

<sup>121</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, 310. Emphasis added.

<sup>122</sup> Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary*, vol. IV (New York: Eaton & Mains), 350.

Creator and commander, infinite in power and terrible in judgment. In mercy He employs a variety of means to bring men to see and repent of their sins. If they will continue to disregard the reproofs He sends them, and act contrary to His declared will, ruin must follow; for God's people are kept in prosperity only by His mercy, through the care of His heavenly messengers. He will not uphold and guard a people who disregard His counsel and despise His reproofs.<sup>123</sup>

By providing the example of Rechabite faithfulness and obedience, God was doing more than condemning the unfaithfulness of Judah and Israel. He revealed the character of the faithful, and contrasted the sin that is demonstrated by flawed and defective characters.

Ellen White would draw a comparison with the apostasy of Ahab's time, and subsequently the reformation of Elijah's ministry, to that of ours today. In the process of making that comparison, she warns us against the idols fashioned in the heart, and enthroned there, in the place of God's law and character.

In rejecting the truth, men reject its Author. In trampling upon the law of God, they deny the authority of the Law-giver. *It is as easy to make an idol of false doctrines and theories as to fashion an idol of wood or stone. By misrepresenting the attributes of God, Satan leads men to conceive of Him in a false character. With many, a philosophical idol is enthroned in the place of Jehovah; while the living God, as He is revealed in His word, in Christ, and in the works of creation, is worshiped by but few.* Thousands deify nature while they deny the God of nature. Though in a different form, idolatry exists in the Christian world today as verily as it existed among ancient Israel in the days of Elijah. The God of many professedly wise men, of philosophers, poets, politicians, journalists—the God of polished fashionable circles, of many colleges and universities, even of some theological institutions—is little better than Baal, the sun-god of Phoenicia.<sup>124</sup>

The apostasy prevailing today is similar to that which in the prophet's day overspread Israel. *In the exaltation of the human above the divine, in the praise of popular leaders, in the worship of mammon, and in the placing of the teachings of science above the truths of revelation, multitudes today are following Baal. Doubt and unbelief are exercising their baleful influence over mind and heart, and many are substituting for the oracles of God the theories of men.* It is publicly taught that we have reached a time when human reason should be exalted above the teachings of the Word. The law of God, the divine standard of righteousness, is declared to be of no effect. The enemy of all truth is working with deceptive power to cause men and women to place human institutions where God should be, and to forget that which was ordained for the happiness and salvation of mankind.

Yet this apostasy, wide-spread as it is, is not universal. Not all in the world are lawless and sinful; not all have taken sides with the enemy. God has many thousands who have not bowed the knee to Baal, many who long to understand more fully in regard to Christ and the law, many who are hoping against hope that Jesus will soon come to end the reign of sin and death. And there are many who are worshiping Baal ignorantly, with whom the Spirit of God is striving.

These need the personal help of those who have learned to know God and the power of his word. In such a time as this, every child of God should be actively engaged in helping others. As those who have an understanding of Bible truth try to seek out the men and women who are longing for light, angels of God will attend them. And where angels go, none need fear to move forward. As a result of the faithful efforts of consecrated workers,

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<sup>123</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, 175.

<sup>124</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), 583. Emphasis added.

many will be turned from idolatry to the worship of the living God. Many will cease to pay homage to man-made institutions, and will take their stand fearlessly on the side of God and his law.

Much depends on the unceasing activity of those who are true and loyal, and Satan puts forth every possible effort to thwart the divine purpose to be wrought out through them. He causes some to lose sight of their high and holy mission, and to become satisfied with the pleasures of this life. He leads them to settle down at ease, or, for the sake of greater worldly advantages, to remove from places where they might be a power for good. Others he causes to flee in discouragement from duty because of opposition or persecution.<sup>125</sup>

After the test of competing altars on Carmel, Elijah executed judgment against those who had led Israel into gross idolatry according to the law of Moses.<sup>126</sup> God had appointed a time for Jezebel to die. But when confronted by her opposition and threats to end his life, Elijah forgot God and fled from her wrath. By not completing his work begun at Mount Carmel, Jezebel lived on to influence greater mischief—the kangaroo court resulting in the death of Naboth, and the alliance between Ahab and Jehoshaphat with the marriage between Ataliah and Jehoram, who upon becoming king at the passing of his father killed all his brothers with the sword.<sup>127</sup> The weakness of character, of which the foundational failure of faith providing an example to us, has unintended consequences and collateral damage.

Elijah should not have fled from his post of duty. He should have met the threat of Jezebel with an appeal for protection to the One who had commissioned him to vindicate the honor of Jehovah. He should have told the messenger that the God in whom he trusted would protect him against the hatred of the queen. Only a few hours had passed since he had witnessed a wonderful manifestation of divine power, and this should have given him assurance that he would not now be forsaken. Had he remained where he was, had he made God his refuge and strength, standing steadfast for the truth, he would have been shielded from harm. *The Lord would have given him another signal victory by sending His judgments on Jezebel; and the impression made on the king and the people would have wrought a great reformation.*<sup>128</sup>

*By one failure of his faith, Elijah cut short his lifework.* Heavy was the burden that he had borne in behalf of Israel; faithful had been his warnings against the national idolatry; and deep was his solicitude as during three years and a half of famine he watched and waited for some token of repentance. Alone he stood for God upon Mount Carmel. Through the power of faith, idolatry was cast down, and the blessed rain testified to the showers of blessing waiting to be poured upon Israel. Then in his weariness and weakness he fled before the threats of Jezebel and alone in the desert prayed that he might die. His faith had failed. The work he had begun he was not to complete. God bade him anoint another to be prophet in his stead.

But God had marked the heart service of His servant. Elijah was not to perish in discouragement and solitude in the wilderness. Not for him the descent to the tomb, but the ascent with God's angels to the presence of His glory.

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<sup>125</sup> Ellen G. White, "What Doest Thou Here?" *The Review and Herald*, October 23, 1913. Emphasis added.

<sup>126</sup> Deuteronomy 13:1-5

<sup>127</sup> 1 Kings 19:1-4; 21:1-15; 22:1-4; 2 Chronicles 18:1-3; 19:1, 2; 21:1-6

<sup>128</sup> White, *Prophets and Kings*, 160. Emphasis added.

These life records declare what every human being will one day understand—that sin can bring only shame and loss; that unbelief means failure; but that God’s mercy reaches to the deepest depths; that faith lifts up the repenting soul to share the adoption of the sons of God.<sup>129</sup>

What great encouragement we have that God in His mercy will forgive and work on our behalf regardless of age. If we choose to cooperate with God, and if we do the part assigned to us as ordained by God, we will become His workmanship and receive the reward He has determined will be granted to those who overcome temptation as Jesus overcame temptation.

When we love with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength, we are precious to God. Three times Gabriel addresses Daniel as being “greatly beloved.”<sup>130</sup> To Daniel was given a vision and a book that was sealed until the time of the end when knowledge should increase.<sup>131</sup>

Daniel means “God is my judge” or “judge of God.” “Great significance was attached to the names given by Hebrew parents to their children. Often these stood for traits of character that the parent desired to see developed in the child.”<sup>132</sup> Perhaps Daniel’s parents had the words of the Psalmist in mind when they named him:

Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. For thou art the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?... Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.<sup>133</sup>

Of all the characters mentioned in the Bible, Joseph most closely resembles Daniel in experience and outcome. Joseph’s story begins when he was seventeen.<sup>134</sup> Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, were about eighteen years old when they arrived in Babylon as captives. Like Joseph, these four youths purposed in their hearts to live to the honor and glory of God, taking the stand that whatsoever they ate, drank, or whatsoever they did it would be to magnify their Creator and Redeemer wherever they should find themselves.<sup>135</sup> Like Joseph, they spent the remainder of their lives in Babylon—the whole of the seventy years of captivity prophesied by Jeremiah.<sup>136</sup> As such, they became examples to encourage us today.

God desires for the youth today to develop the self-discipline exemplified in the lives of Joseph, Daniel, Hannah, Mishael, and Azariah so that He might be honored and glorified in what ever situation and circumstance they find themselves today. Those who will cooperate with God today in the work of character development and soul winning will be blessed with the same sure results experienced by these mighty Bible heroes.

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<sup>129</sup> White, *Education*, 151. Emphasis added.

<sup>130</sup> Daniel 9:23; 10:11, 19, KJV

<sup>131</sup> Daniel 9:24; 12:4, 9

<sup>132</sup> White, *Prophets and Kings*, 480.

<sup>133</sup> Psalm 43:1, 2, 5, KJV

<sup>134</sup> Genesis 37:2

<sup>135</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:31

<sup>136</sup> Jeremiah 25:11, 12; 29:10

Daniel was but eighteen years old when brought into a heathen court in service to the king of Babylon, and because of his youth his noble resistance of wrong and his steadfast adherence to the right are the more admirable. His noble example should bring strength to the tried and tempted, even at the present day.<sup>137</sup>

The same mighty truths that were revealed through these men, God desires to reveal through the youth and the children of today. *The history of Joseph and Daniel is an illustration of what He will do for those who yield themselves to Him and with the whole heart seek to accomplish His purpose.*

The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, *men who do not fear to call sin by its right name*, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.

*But such a character is not the result of accident; it is not due to special favors or endowments of Providence. A noble character is the result of self-discipline, of the subjection of the lower to the higher nature—the surrender of self for the service of love to God and man.*<sup>138</sup>

Daniel feared not that his life might be destroyed by the deliberate stand regarding food and drink offered to heathen idols. Rather, he feared that he might dishonor God.<sup>139</sup> And so he lived a life consistent in faithfulness in the little things that prepared him for faithfulness in larger responsibilities. We have been called in like manner to be faithful.<sup>140</sup> In seeking to obtain for ourselves the gold refined in the fire which is the truth, love of God, and faith of Jesus, we may reach the highest rung in our climbing the golden ladder. Through the pen of Inspiration we gain much insight into the story of Daniel and how he reached the highest rung of that precious ladder.

At the very outset of their career there came to them a decisive test of character. It was provided that they should eat of the food and drink of the wine that came from the king's table. In this the king thought to give them an expression of his favor and of his solicitude for their welfare. But a portion having been offered to idols, the food from the king's table was consecrated to idolatry; and one partaking of it would be regarded as offering homage to the gods of Babylon. In such homage, loyalty to Jehovah forbade Daniel and his companions to join. *Even a mere pretense of eating the food or drinking the wine would be a denial of their faith. To do this would be to array themselves with heathenism and to dishonor the principles of the law of God.*

Nor dared they risk the enervating effect of luxury and dissipation on physical, mental, and spiritual development. They were acquainted with the history of Nadab and Abihu, the record of whose intemperance and its results had been preserved in the parchments of the Pentateuch; and they knew that their own physical and mental power would be injuriously affected by the use of wine.

*Daniel and his associates had been trained by their parents to habits of strict temperance. They had been taught that God would hold them accountable for their capabilities, and that*

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<sup>137</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, 570.

<sup>138</sup> White, *Education*, 57. Emphasis added.

<sup>139</sup> White, *Prophets and Kings*, 482, 483.

<sup>140</sup> Luke 19:17

they must never dwarf or enfeeble their powers. *This education was to Daniel and his companions the means of their preservation amidst the demoralizing influences of the court of Babylon.* Strong were the temptations surrounding them in that corrupt and luxurious court, but they remained uncontaminated. No power, no influence, could sway them from the principles they had learned in early life by a study of the word and works of God.<sup>141</sup>

God brought Daniel and his fellows into connection with the great men of Babylon, that these heathen men might become acquainted with the principles of true religion. In the midst of a nation of idolaters, Daniel was to represent the character of God. How did he become fitted for a position of so great trust and honor? *It was his faithfulness in the little things that gave complexion to his whole life. He honored God in the smallest duties, and the Lord co-operated with him.* To Daniel and his companions God gave “knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.” Daniel 1:17.

As God called Daniel to witness for Him in Babylon, so He calls us to be His witnesses in the world today. In the smallest as well as the largest affairs of life He desires us to reveal to men the principles of His kingdom....

The work to which as Christians we are called is to co-operate with Christ for the salvation of souls. This work we have entered into covenant with Him to do. To neglect the work is to prove disloyal to Christ. *But in order to accomplish this work we must follow His example of faithful, conscientious attention to the little things. This is the secret of success in every line of Christian effort and influence.*

*The Lord desires His people to reach the highest round of the ladder that they may glorify Him by possessing the ability He is willing to bestow.* Through the grace of God every provision has been made for us to reveal that we act upon better plans than those upon which the world acts. We are to show a superiority in intellect, in understanding, in skill and knowledge, because we believe in God and in His power to work upon human hearts.<sup>142</sup>

While God was working in Daniel and his companions “to will and to do of His good pleasure,” they were working out their own salvation. Philippians 2:13. *Herein is revealed the outworking of the divine principle of co-operation, without which no true success can be attained. Human effort avails nothing without divine power; and without human endeavor, divine effort is with many of no avail. To make God’s grace our own, we must act our part. His grace is given to work in us to will and to do, but never as a substitute for our effort.*

*As the Lord co-operated with Daniel and his fellows, so He will co-operate with all who strive to do His will.* And by the impartation of His Spirit He will strengthen every true purpose, every noble resolution. Those who walk in the path of obedience will encounter many hindrances. Strong, subtle influences may bind them to the world; but the Lord is able to render futile every agency that works for the defeat of His chosen ones; in His strength they may overcome every temptation, conquer every difficulty.

God brought Daniel and his associates into connection with the great men of Babylon, that in the midst of a nation of idolaters they might represent His character. How did they become fitted for a position of so great trust and honor? It was faithfulness in little things that gave complexion to their whole life. They honored God in the smallest duties, as well as in the larger responsibilities.

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<sup>141</sup> White, *Prophets and Kings*, 481, 482.

<sup>142</sup> White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 357, 358. Emphasis added.

As God called Daniel to witness for Him in Babylon, so He calls us to be His witnesses in the world today. In the smallest as well as the largest affairs of life, He desires us to reveal to men the principles of His kingdom. *Many are waiting for some great work to be brought to them, while daily they lose opportunities for revealing faithfulness to God. Daily they fail of discharging with wholeheartedness the little duties of life. While they wait for some large work in which they may exercise supposedly great talents, and thus satisfy their ambitious longings, their days pass away.*

In the life of the true Christian there are no nonessentials; in the sight of Omnipotence every duty is important. The Lord measures with exactness every possibility for service. The unused capabilities are just as much brought into account as those that are used. *We shall be judged by what we ought to have done, but did not accomplish because we did not use our powers to glorify God.*

*A noble character is not the result of accident; it is not due to special favors or endowments of Providence. It is the result of self-discipline, of subjection of the lower to the higher nature, of the surrender of self to the service of God and man.*

Through the fidelity to the principles of temperance shown by the Hebrew youth God is speaking to the youth of today. There is need of men who like Daniel will do and dare for the cause of right. Pure hearts, strong hands, fearless courage, are needed; for the warfare between vice and virtue calls for ceaseless vigilance. To every soul Satan comes with temptation in many alluring forms on the point of indulgence of appetite.<sup>143</sup>

The case of Daniel was presented before me. Although he was a man of like passions with ourselves, *the pen of inspiration presents him as a faultless character. His life is given us as a bright example of what man may become, even in this life, if he will make God his strength and wisely improve the opportunities and privileges within his reach.* Daniel was an intellectual giant; yet he was continually seeking for greater knowledge, for higher attainments. Other young men had the same advantages; but they did not, like him, bend all their energies to seek wisdom—the knowledge of God as revealed in His word and in His works. Although Daniel was one of the world's great men, he was not proud nor self-sufficient. He felt the need of refreshing his soul with prayer, and each day found him in earnest supplication before God. He would not be deprived of this privilege even when a den of lions was opened to receive him if he continued to pray.

Daniel loved, feared, and obeyed God. Yet he did not flee away from the world to avoid its corrupting influence. In the providence of God he was to be in the world yet not of the world. With all the temptations and fascinations of court life surrounding him, he stood in the integrity of his soul, firm as a rock in his adherence to principle. He made God his strength and was not forsaken of Him in his time of greatest need.

Daniel was true, noble, and generous. While he was anxious to be at peace with all men, he would not permit any power to turn him aside from the path of duty. He was willing to obey those who had rule over him, as far as he could do so consistently with truth and righteousness; but kings and decrees could not make him swerve from his allegiance to the King of kings....

A strict compliance with the Bible requirements will be a blessing, not only to the soul, but to the body. The fruit of the Spirit is not only love, joy, and peace, but temperance also. We

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<sup>143</sup> White, *Prophets and Kings*, 486-488. Emphasis added.

are enjoined not to defile our bodies, for they are the temples of the Holy Ghost. The case of Daniel shows us, that, through religious principle, young men may triumph over the lust of the flesh and remain true to God's requirements, even though it cost them a great sacrifice. What if he had made a compromise with those heathen officers, and had yielded to the pressure of the occasion by eating and drinking as was customary with the Babylonians? That one wrong step would probably have led to others, until, his connection with heaven being severed, he would have been borne away by temptation. But while he clung to God with unwavering trust, the spirit of prophetic power came upon him. While he was instructed of man in the duties of court life, he was taught of God to read the mysteries of future ages.<sup>144</sup>

I wish to impress upon the youth the fact that God has claims upon you, and has made provision so that you need not fail nor be discouraged. *Many fail to recognize the claims that God has upon them. They profess to be sons and daughters of God, but they do not behave as children of God. They argue that their evil habits and customs which they followed when they served under the black banner of the prince of darkness, must be excused on the ground of their weakness, while they claim that "it is their way." Their natural irreverence and lack of respect for those in positions of trust, their objectionable hereditary traits of character, they choose to retain as idols.* When a soul is truly converted, old habits and natural evil besetments are done away in Christ Jesus, and all things become new. Among those who profess to be servants of Christ, an earnest purpose should be cultivated, such as Daniel manifested in the courts of Babylon. He knew that God was his strength and his shield, his front guard and his rear guard. Amid the corruptions that surrounded him in the courts of Babylon, he kept himself free from those sights and sounds which would allure him, and draw him into temptation. When his duties required that he be present at scenes of revelry, intemperance, and basest idolatry, he cultivated the habit of silent prayer, and thus he was kept by the power of God.<sup>145</sup>

Now, of all the names mentioned by Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and with all the commonalities they had regarding a righteous character, Daniel stands out as distinctly different. When considering Noah, Job, Moses, and Samuel—all had children. Daniel did not—unless he, like Mordecai, adopted an orphan relative as his own—for being under the care of a prince of eunuchs we understand that Daniel and his three friends were caused to become such.<sup>146</sup>

It may be understood that, like Samuel, Daniel may have had opportunity to educate others' children. In any case, whether he had biological children, adopted children, or the spiritual children associated with students or disciples, Daniel could no more change the character of his charges any more than Moses or Samuel. God had, through the prophet Isaiah, promised, "Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off."<sup>147</sup> And yet, the righteous character of Daniel could not save those who learned from him how to live godly lives unless they took responsibility for their own characters and submitted to the will and purpose of God for them.

By faith, all of these Bible characters beheld Christ, and imitated Him before He was born to this earth. When Christ arrived as the infant miraculously born of Mary, he assumed the responsibility of His own character formation from an early age.

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<sup>144</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, 569, 570. Emphasis added.

<sup>145</sup> Ellen G. White, "Words to the Young," *The Youth's Instructor*, June 7, 1894. Emphasis added.

<sup>146</sup> Esther 2:7; Daniel 1:3, 7

<sup>147</sup> Isaiah 56:5, KJV

*At a very early age, Jesus had begun to act for Himself in the formation of His character, and not even respect and love for His parents could turn Him from obedience to God's word. "It is written" was His reason for every act that varied from the family customs. But the influence of the rabbis made His life a bitter one. Even in His youth He had to learn the hard lesson of silence and patient endurance.*<sup>148</sup>

Jesus would not follow any custom that would require him to depart from the will of God, nor would he place himself under the instruction of those who exalted the words of men above the word of God. He shut out of his mind all the sentiments and formalities that had not God for their foundation. He would give no place for these things to influence him. *Thus he taught that it is better to prevent evil than to attempt to correct it after it has gained a foothold in the mind. And Jesus would not by his example lead others to place themselves where they would be corrupted.* Nor would he needlessly place himself in a position where he would be brought into conflict with the rabbis that might in after years result in weakening his influence with the people. For the same reasons he could not be induced to observe the meaningless forms or rehearse the maxims that afterward in his ministry he so decidedly condemned.

*Tho Jesus was subject to his parents, he began at a very early age to act for himself in the formation of his character.* While his mother was his first human teacher, he was constantly receiving an education from his Father in heaven. Instead of poring over the learned lore handed down by the rabbis from century to century, Jesus, under the divine Teacher, studied the words of God, pure and uncorrupted, and studied also the great lesson book of nature. The words, "Thus saith the Lord," were ever upon his lips, and, "It is written," was his reason for every act that varied from the family customs. He brought a purer atmosphere into the home life. Tho he did not place himself under the instruction of the rabbis by becoming a student in their schools, yet he was often brought in contact with them, and the questions he asked, as if he were a learner, puzzled the wise men; for their practices did not harmonize with the Scriptures, and they had not the wisdom that comes from God. *Even to those who were displeased at his non-compliance with popular customs, his education seemed of a higher type than their own.*<sup>149</sup>

Thus to Jesus the significance of the word and the works of God was unfolded, as He was trying to understand the reason of things. Heavenly beings were His attendants, and the culture of holy thoughts and communings was His. *From the first dawning of intelligence He was constantly growing in spiritual grace and knowledge of truth.*

*Every child may gain knowledge as Jesus did. As we try to become acquainted with our heavenly Father through His word, angels will draw near, our minds will be strengthened, our characters will be elevated and refined. We shall become more like our Saviour.* And as we behold the beautiful and grand in nature, our affections go out after God. While the spirit is awed, the soul is invigorated by coming in contact with the Infinite through His works. Communion with God through prayer develops the mental and moral faculties, and the spiritual powers strengthen as we cultivate thoughts upon spiritual things.

The life of Jesus was a life in harmony with God. While He was a child, He thought and spoke as a child; but no trace of sin marred the image of God within Him. Yet He was not exempt from temptation. The inhabitants of Nazareth were proverbial for their wickedness. The low estimate in which they were generally held is shown by Nathanael's question, "Can

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<sup>148</sup> White, *The Desire of Ages*, 86.

<sup>149</sup> Ellen G. White, "Christ's Example in Contrast with Formalism," *The Signs of the Times*, August 27, 1896. Emphasis added.

there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” John 1:46. *Jesus was placed where His character would be tested. It was necessary for Him to be constantly on guard in order to preserve His purity. He was subject to all the conflicts which we have to meet, that He might be an example to us in childhood, youth, and manhood.*

Satan was unwearied in his efforts to overcome the Child of Nazareth. From His earliest years Jesus was guarded by heavenly angels, yet His life was one long struggle against the powers of darkness. That there should be upon the earth one life free from the defilement of evil was an offense and a perplexity to the prince of darkness. He left no means untried to ensnare Jesus. *No child of humanity will ever be called to live a holy life amid so fierce a conflict with temptation as was our Saviour.*<sup>150</sup>

We have a Savior worth imitating because He is a faultless pattern.

The word of God is able to make you wise, to guide and make you perfect in Christ. The blessed Saviour was a faultless pattern for all His followers to imitate. It is the privilege of the child of God to understand spiritual things, to be able wisely to manage that which may be intrusted to his charge. God does not provide a way whereby any one may have an excuse for doing slipshod work; and yet a great deal of this kind of work has been offered to Him by those who work in His cause, but it is not acceptable unto Him.<sup>151</sup>

In the Word of God we see Christ as poor in spirit being baptized by faith as He identifies with those He came to save. We see the virtue He adds to faith as He mourns the weakness of sinful flesh, yet by obedience to the Law of God through the strength of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit He condemns sin in the flesh so that we too may have that same Divine power to overcome as He overcame. We hear the invitation, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and *learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart:* and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”<sup>152</sup>

In the Word of God we behold the temperance of Christ preparing the way for that patient forbearance as Jesus permits the kisses of Judas without refusal, the binding of His hands by the unrighteous, the gentleness in response to Judas’s tardy confession exposing the perfidy of His persecutors. And then we read the exhortation of the apostle Paul who was won to Christ by the perfect reflection of character in the personage of the deacon Stephen who imitated Christ in pleading forgiveness to those who were ignorant in their unjust deed—in the hope that some would be pricked in conscience by the workings of the Holy Spirit to confession their own spiritual poverty and begin to climb the golden, spiritual ladder of Christian progress.

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. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the

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<sup>150</sup> White, *The Desire of Ages*, 70, 71. Emphasis added.

<sup>151</sup> Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1923), 214.

<sup>152</sup> Matthew 11:28-30, KJV, Emphasis added.

name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.<sup>153</sup>

At the very outset of the Christian life every believer should be taught its foundation principles. *He should be taught that he is not merely to be saved by Christ's sacrifice, but that he is to make the life of Christ his life and the character of Christ his character.* Let all be taught that they are to bear burdens and to deny natural inclination. Let them learn the blessedness of working for Christ, following Him in self-denial, and enduring hardness as good soldiers. Let them learn to trust His love and to cast on Him their cares. Let them taste the joy of winning souls for Him. In their love and interest for the lost, they will lose sight of self. The pleasures of the world will lose their power to attract and its burdens to dishearten. The plowshare of truth will do its work. It will break up the fallow ground. It will not merely cut off the tops of the thorns, but will take them out by the roots.<sup>154</sup>

We also read in the writings of Inspiration the warnings given to those who take on the form of godliness, but deny the only power by which true godliness may be demonstrated. Of them, Jesus says, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, *have we not prophesied in thy name?* and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."<sup>155</sup>

Not all who profess to keep the Sabbath will be sealed. There are many even among those who teach the truth to others who will not receive the seal of God in their foreheads. They had the light of truth, they knew their Master's will, they understood every point of our faith, but they had not corresponding works. These who were so familiar with prophecy and the treasures of divine wisdom should have acted their faith. They should have commanded their households after them, that by a well-ordered family they might present to the world the influence of the truth upon the human heart.

By their lack of devotion and piety, and their failure to reach a high religious standard, they make other souls contented with their position. *Men of finite judgment cannot see that in patterning after these men who have so often opened to them the treasures of God's word, they will surely endanger their souls. Jesus is the only true pattern. Everyone must now search the Bible for himself upon his knees before God, with the humble, teachable heart of a child, if he would know what the Lord requires of him. However high any minister may have stood in the favor of God, if he neglects to follow out the light given him of God, if he refuses to be taught as a little child, he will go into darkness and satanic delusions and will lead others in the same path.*

*Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement. Then the latter rain will fall upon us as the early rain fell upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost.*

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<sup>153</sup> Philipians 2:1-13, KJV

<sup>154</sup> White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 56, 57. Emphasis added.

<sup>155</sup> Matthew 7:21-23, KJV, Emphasis added.

We are too easily satisfied with our attainments. We feel rich and increased with goods and know not that we are “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” Now is the time to heed the admonition of the True Witness: “I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.”

In this life we must meet fiery trials and make costly sacrifices, but the peace of Christ is the reward. There has been so little self-denial, so little suffering for Christ’s sake, that the cross is almost entirely forgotten. *We must be partakers with Christ of His sufferings if we would sit down in triumph with Him on His throne. So long as we choose the easy path of self-indulgence and are frightened at self-denial, our faith will never become firm, and we cannot know the peace of Jesus nor the joy that comes through conscious victory.* The most exalted of the redeemed host that stand before the throne of God and the Lamb, clad in white, know the conflict of overcoming, for they have come up through great tribulation. *Those who have yielded to circumstances rather than engage in this conflict will not know how to stand in that day when anguish will be upon every soul, when, though Noah, Job, and Daniel were in the land, they could save neither son nor daughter, for everyone must deliver his soul by his own righteousness.*

No one need say that his case is hopeless, that he cannot live the life of a Christian. Ample provision is made by the death of Christ for every soul. Jesus is our ever-present help in time of need. Only call upon Him in faith, and He has promised to hear and answer your petitions.

Oh, for a living, active faith! We need it; we must have it, or we shall faint and fail in the day of trial. The darkness that will then rest upon our path must not discourage us or drive us to despair. It is the veil with which God covers His glory when He comes to impart rich blessings. We should know this by our past experience. In that day when God has a controversy with His people this experience will be a source of comfort and hope.

*It is now that we must keep ourselves and our children unspotted from the world. It is now that we must wash our robes of character and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. It is now that we must overcome pride, passion, and spiritual slothfulness. It is now that we must awake and make determined effort for symmetry of character.* “Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” We are in a most trying position, waiting, watching for our Lord’s appearing. The world is in darkness. “But ye, brethren,” says Paul, “are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.” It is ever God’s purpose to bring light out of darkness, joy out of sorrow, and rest out of weariness for the waiting, longing soul.<sup>156</sup>

Do we not see ourselves as Christian soldiers? Has there ever been a time in the great controversy between Satan and Christ that we should look upon ourselves as a peacetime army? The warfare is constant. There are battles we must be constantly waging in order to be victorious. Unless we conquer we shall be conquered. Take heed to the warnings and exhortations given by God through His messengers.

*Wrongs cannot be righted, nor can reformations in character be made, by a few feeble, intermittent efforts. Sanctification is the work, not of a day, or of a year, but of a lifetime. The struggle for conquest over self, for holiness and heaven, is a lifelong struggle. Without continual effort and constant activity there can be no advancement in the divine life, no attainment of the victor’s crown.*

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<sup>156</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, 213-215. Emphasis added.

*The strongest evidence of man's fall from a higher state is the fact that it costs so much to return. The way of return can be gained only by hard fighting, inch by inch, every hour. By a momentary act of will, one may place himself in the power of evil; but it requires more than a momentary act of will to break these fetters and attain to a higher, holier life. The purpose may be formed, the work begun; but its accomplishment will require toil, time, and perseverance, patience and sacrifice.*

*Beset with temptations without number, we must resist firmly or be conquered. Should we come to the close of life with our work undone, it would be an eternal loss.*

Paul's sanctification was the result of a constant conflict with self. He said: "I die daily." 1 Corinthians 15:31. His will and his desires every day conflicted with duty and the will of God. Instead of following inclination, he did God's will, however crucifying to his own nature.

*God leads His people on step by step. The Christian life is a battle and a march. In this warfare there is no release; the effort must be continuous and persevering. It is by unceasing endeavor that we maintain the victory over the temptations of Satan. Christian integrity must be sought with resistless energy and maintained with a resolute fixedness of purpose.*

No one will be borne upward without stern, persevering effort in his own behalf. All must engage in this warfare for themselves. Individually we are responsible for the issue of the struggle; though Noah, Job, and Daniel were in the land, they could deliver neither son nor daughter by their righteousness.<sup>157</sup>

*"Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." This figure represents human character, which is to be wrought upon point by point. Each day God works on his building, stroke upon stroke, to perfect the structure, that it may become a holy temple for him. Man is to co-operate with God, striving in his strength to make himself what God designs him to be, building his life with pure, noble deeds.*

No one is borne upward without stern, persevering effort in his own behalf. All must engage in the warfare for themselves. Individually we are responsible for the issue of the struggle; though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in the land, they could deliver neither son nor daughter by their righteousness.

*There is a science of Christianity to be mastered,—a science as much deeper, broader, higher, than any human science as the heavens are higher than the earth. The mind is to be disciplined, educated, trained; for we are to do service for God in ways that are not in harmony with inborn inclination. Often the training and education of a lifetime must be discarded, that one may become a learner in the school of Christ. Our hearts must be educated to become steadfast in God. We are to form habits of thought that will enable us to resist temptation. We must learn to look upward. The principles of the Word of God,—principles that are as high as heaven, and that compass eternity,—we are to understand in their bearing on our daily life. Every act, every word, every thought, is to be in accord with these principles.<sup>158</sup>*

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<sup>157</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1904), 312, 313. Emphasis added.

<sup>158</sup> Ellen G. White, "Co-operation," *The Review and Herald*, April 28, 1910. Emphasis added.

Because we have neglected the knowledge God has graciously given us, we have drifted from the safe anchorage into dangerous waters where the example of Christ's character and the power of His grace are being left out of the training and education of those born into the church and those who are proselytized. It is not enough to make one aware of spiritual ignorance and invite one to intellectually acknowledge the truth as it is in Jesus. Understanding of the prophecies scribed in Holy Scriptures is only a fraction of the knowledge of God that He desires us to receive for the purpose of genuine conversion. We need to obtain what God truly wants for us and from us. If we fail to obtain it, we can actually discourage those who are waiting to do a great work for God from the heart.

Our brethren who bear responsibilities in devising plans for carrying forward this part of the work must keep in mind that while a certain amount of education and training is essential in order to work intelligently, *there is danger of making this too great a matter*. By obtaining a most thorough education in all the minutiae, and leaving vital principles out of the question, we become dry and formal workers. *The hearts that God has made willing by the operations of His grace are fitted for the work.*

*God wants heartwork. The unselfish purpose, the pure, elevated principle, the high and holy motive, He will accept.* His grace and power will work with these efforts. All who realize that it is the work of God to prepare a people for His coming will find in their disinterested efforts opportunities where they can do tract and missionary labor. *But there may be too much means expended and too much time occupied in making matters so exact and minute that the heartwork is neglected and a dry form preserved.*

I tell you frankly that Jesus and the power of His grace are being left out of the question. Results will show that mechanical working has taken the place of piety, humility, and holiness of heart and life. *The more spiritual, devoted, and humble workers find no place where they can take hold, and therefore they stand back.* The young and inexperienced learn the form and do their work mechanically; but true love, the burden for souls, is not felt. Less dwelling upon set forms, less of the mechanical, and more of the power of godliness are essential in this solemn, fearful day of responsibilities.

There is order in heaven; and there should be system and order upon the earth, that the work may move forward without confusion and fanaticism. *Our brethren have been working to this end; but while some of our ministers continually bear the burden of souls, and ever seek to bring the people up in spiritual attainments, those who are not so conscientious, and who have not carried the cross of Christ nor felt the value of souls as reflected from Calvary, will, in teaching and educating others in the mechanical working, become formal and powerless themselves, and bring no Saviour to the people.*

Satan is ever working to have the service of God degenerate into dull form and become powerless to save souls. While the energy, earnestness, and efficiency of the workers become deadened by the efforts to have everything so systematic, the taxing labor that must be done by our ministers to keep this complicated machinery in motion engrosses so much time that the *spiritual work is neglected*. And with so many things to run, this work requires so large an amount of means that other branches of the work will wither and die for want of due attention.<sup>159</sup>

A more thorough study on the character of the wise may be realized by taking up the applications available to us and searching the Spirit of Prophecy for the realms of passages communicating what makes up genuine character, the test of character as it applies to discipleship, the need for change of heart or character so that we might understand and demonstrate that which constitutes Christian

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<sup>159</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, 601, 602. Emphasis added.

character without reproach to the cause of truth. We would see the danger of neglecting the heart work involved in striving to obtain those character traits exemplified in the life of Christ and those Bible characters that loved and served Him. We would better understand what constitutes genuine sanctification. God “requires the whole heart, the entire affections” as a prerequisite of genuine religion, giving “an earnestness and fixedness of purpose which molds the character to the divine image and enables us to count all things but loss for the excellency of Christ. This singleness of purpose will prove an element of tremendous power” that will result in victory over the world, temptation, and sin.<sup>160</sup> God has a work “He desires to accomplish for us, and He asks us to co-operate with Him.”<sup>161</sup>

God has given us the rule of conduct which every one of His servants must follow. It is obedience to His law, not merely a legal obedience, but an obedience which enters into the life, and is exemplified in the character. *God has set His own standard of character for all who would become subjects of His kingdom. Only those who will become co-workers with Christ, only those who will say, Lord, all I have and all I am is Thine, will be acknowledged as sons and daughters of God.* All should consider what it means to desire heaven, and yet to turn away because of the conditions laid down. Think of what it means to say “No” to Christ. The ruler said, No, I cannot give You all. Do we say the same? *The Saviour offers to share with us the work God has given us to do. He offers to use the means God has given us, to carry forward His work in the world. Only in this way can He save us.*<sup>162</sup>

Humble workers, who do not trust in their own strength, but who labor in simplicity, trusting always in God, will share in the joy of the Saviour. Their persevering prayers will bring souls to the cross. In co-operation with their self-sacrificing efforts Jesus will move upon hearts, working miracles in the conversion of souls. Men and women will be gathered into church fellowship. Meetinghouses will be built and schools established. The hearts of the workers will be filled with joy as they see the salvation of God.<sup>163</sup> 7T 27.

May we take up the challenge of seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness with the knowledge and confidence of faith that by meeting the conditions God has established we will obtain all that He has promised. He will complete the work He has begun in us so long as we cooperate with Him in that work. He will acknowledge us as among the wise because we will reflect His character.

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<sup>160</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, 307.

<sup>161</sup> White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 56.

<sup>162</sup> White, *The Desire of Ages*, 523. Emphasis added.

<sup>163</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1902), 27.

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