

The Christian Unity

Everywhere we look in this life we see the mistakes, of Church leadership, brothers and sisters in Christ, our government, online merchants, delivery drivers, store personnel, and customer support. Nobody is above mistakes, and neither are we. Mistakes are a part of life; they bring out the faulty characters of others and expose us as humans. Most importantly, mistakes reveal the characters and weaknesses of Christians, they show that Christ is still working on us.

How is the Christian to react to the mistakes of others? In the same way God reacts to our mistakes. We are told by Jesus Himself:

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”—*Matthew 6:14-15*.

And again Christ warns:

“Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”—*Matthew 7:1-2*.

If we want to receive mercy, we must give mercy. If we smite with the fist of wickedness and point with the finger, woe to us! How will we escape a just God who gives to every man according to their words and works? This concept applies with no less force to our enemies.

“If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee.”—*Proverbs 25:21-22*.

As Christians, we are not to react but to be quick to hear and slow to speak. We are to act with intention, specifically to love the person to Christ; this includes wayward brothers and sisters. We are to treat them how we want to be treated. We should protect their reputation, but not leave them unwarned.

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”—*2 Timothy 4:2*.

“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of

his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”—*James 5:19-20*

If we cannot do these things, we should not call ourselves Christians, lest we take the name of the Lord in vain by misrepresenting the character of God. The Bible says in James 3:18:

“The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”

If we want to glorify God by bearing fruit we need to sow (act) peaceably. What does this mean? Some people believe it means to excuse everything that people say and do. This cannot truly be called peace. It is the satanic counterfeit called compromise. What is the peace that God is calling us to have?

“The angel of God has repeated again and again, ‘Press together! Press together! Be of one mind, of one judgement! Let God be your leader! Follow His footsteps!’”—*Manuscript Releases, Volume 20, 369*.

Sister White’s angel is making a clear call for unity by having the same mind, judgment, leader, and path. Unity brings peace. We will take a deeper look at this statement later. Let’s focus on what it means to have the same mind:

The cause of Strife and Contention

To know what brings peace we must first understand where strife and contention come from.

“Only by pride cometh contention.”—*Proverbs 13:10*.

Here we are told the root of strife—pride. Through pride comes contention; this results in separation, disunity, and alienation. As people take sides, the disunity grows, bringing with it confusion.

“For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.”—*James 3:16*.

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”—*Philippians 2:3*.

James Expounds

James gives the most in-depth look at the origins of contention. Let’s look over these verses.

“From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and

have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.”—*James 4:1-2*

Where does contention come from? Lusts for things that cannot be obtained. James says the reason these cannot be obtained is because we don't ask God.

“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”—*James 4:3*

Then James clarifies that these same people who fight and argue **also ask** for things, but do not receive them because their motives are not for the glory of God but for selfishness and self exaltation.

“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?”—*James 4:4-5*

Then James calls them idolaters, telling them they cannot have the worldly things they want and God. He warns them that God wants their whole hearts. He desires complete submission. He desires humility.

“But He giveth more grace. Wherefore He saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.”—*James 4:6*

He then highlights that God can give grace if they humble themselves. He also highlights the reason God did not answer the prayers that were asked: “God resisteth the proud.” James 4:7 tells us the solution to strife:

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

The devil is a reference to the lusts or temptations which Satan uses to draw us away from God. Lastly James appeals to these contentious brothers and sisters:

“Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.”—*James 4:8*

God cannot have double minded followers, we cannot be both humble and proud. James makes it clear with the close of his appeal that we are to co-operate with God.

“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.”—*James 4:9-10*

We humble ourselves, and He lifts us up. How do we humble ourselves? By realizing our wretched condition and mourning and weeping.

This qualifies us to receive grace: “He giveth grace to the humble.”

Evil Speaking and Reputation

Pride in one's reputation is often a cause of contention. It should be noted that this does not escape mention.

“Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?”—*James 4:11-12*.

Evil speaking is a sin. James lists the cause as pride. When someone judges another, they usurp the position of the Lawgiver who alone is able to save and destroy. This is the same sin as Lucifer, and the same work as the man of sin. While blackening motives and judging others is a sin, it doesn't give us an excuse to justify ourselves when we are evil spoken of. We are not the judge that saves. We have accepted Christ as our Saviour, He is our defense and will justify us if He sees fit. Never defend self; should that trait of character be indulged, we will even condemn God to justify ourselves (*Job 40:8*). We dare not be proud of our reputation. Following are some comments on evil speaking and justifying self:

“We think with horror of the cannibal who feasts on the still warm and trembling flesh of his victim; but are the results of even this practice more terrible than are the agony and ruin caused by misrepresenting motive, blackening reputation, dissecting character? Let the children, and the youth as well, learn what God says about these things: ‘Death and life are in the power of the tongue.’ The spirit of gossip and talebearing is one of Satan's special agencies to sow discord and strife, to separate friends, and to undermine the faith of many in the truthfulness of our positions.”—*Adventist Home 440-441*.

“When the claims of God are presented, those who love sin evince their true character by the satisfaction with which they point to the faults and errors of professed Christians. They are actuated by the same spirit as their master, Satan, whom the Bible declares to be the ‘accuser of the brethren.’ Let an evil report be started, and how rapidly it will be exaggerated and passed from lip to lip! How many will feast upon it, like vultures upon a heap of garbage.”—*Signs of the Times, March 9, 1882*.

“The Lord loves us yet. Let us praise Him

for this. Let us take hold of the work in a new way, with heart, and mind, and strength. Do not any longer pick flaws in your brethren. I see enough vultures watching for dead bodies. Let us have nothing of this nature in our work. Let there be no picking flaws. Attend to yourselves, and you will have all you can do. When you purify your souls by obeying the truth, you will have something to impart.”—6 *Manuscript Releases*, 313.

“We may expect that false reports will circulate about us; but if we follow a straight course, if we remain indifferent to these things, others will also be indifferent. Let us leave to God the care of our reputation.... Slander can be lived down by our manner of living; it is not lived down by words of indignation. Let our great anxiety be to act in the fear of God and show by our conduct that these reports are false. No one can injure our character as much as [we] ourselves. It is the weak trees and the tottering houses that need to be constantly propped. When we show ourselves so anxious to protect our reputation against attacks from the outside, we give the impression that it is not blameless before God and that it needs therefore to be continually bolstered up.”—*Mind Character and Personality, Volume 2, 548-549.*

“I saw that some are withering spiritually. They have lived some time watching to keep their brethren straight—watching for every fault to make trouble with them. And while doing this, their minds are not on God, nor on heaven, nor on the truth; but just where Satan wants them—on someone else. Their souls are neglected; they seldom see or feel their own faults, for they have had enough to do to watch the faults of others without so much as looking to their own souls or searching their own hearts.... They must talk to this one or that one, and it is sufficient to dwell upon for weeks. I saw that all the religion a few poor souls have consists in watching the garments and acts of others, and finding fault with them. Unless they reform, there will be no place in heaven for them, for they would find fault with the Lord Himself. Said the angel: ‘It is an individual work to be right with God.’ The work is between God and our own souls. But when persons have so much care of others’ faults, they take no care of themselves. These notional [exist in the mind in theory and imagination], faultfinding ones would often cure themselves of the habit if they would go directly to the individual they think is wrong. It would be so

crossing that they would give up their notions rather than go. But it is easy to let the tongue run freely about this one or that one when the accused is not present.”—1 *Testimonies*, 145.

An In-depth Look at Unity

Let’s turn our attention again to the subject of unity as described by Sister White’s angel:

“The angel of God has repeated again and again, ‘Press together! Press together! Be of one mind, of one judgement! Let God be your leader! Follow His footsteps!’ ”—*Manuscript Releases, Volume 20, 369.*

Since the angel is calling for unity, it stands to reason that he also gives the recipe for it. Therefore, unity and peace are found in having the same mind, judgment, leader, and path. What mind brings peace? As discussed, it is a humble mind, the mind of Christ.

“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.”—Philippians 2:5-8.

The Angel mentions the “same mind” first because pride is the leading cause of contention. Pride is not the only cause, and the angel’s call is very comprehensive in its reach.

One Judgment

We are called to be of one judgment, this is the second greatest cause of contention in the Church. Some condone homosexuality, women’s ordination, and abortions. They call the wicked righteous and condemn the just as “sticklers for rules.” Their loud cry is: “[Let’s] wholly embrace one another as God’s children, just trying to do what **we think is right**” (*An SDA interviewed by Spectrum*). Does God call us to do what we think is right? God calls us to have the same judgment, but He invites us to see through His eyes, not our own.

Let’s study what God says about judgment. Is it safe to do what we think is right?

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”—*Jeremiah 17:9.*

If the fountain is bitter the water will be bitter too. Our judgment is corrupted by an evil heart; therefore, it is not safe to do what we think is right. Since our hearts are evil, how can we know what is right?

“For the Word of God is quick, and powerful,

4 and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, **and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**—*Hebrews 4:12*.

The Bible is the only judge that can discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. If we want to be of the same judgment we must use the same standard.

Spiritual Leadership Qualities

Our judgment is directly linked to spiritual maturity.

“Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”—*Hebrews 5:14*.

There is a great need for us to spiritually grow up. God is calling everyone to repentance. The only way to spiritually grow is to use the Word of God, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, to discern right and wrong. Note the following statement:

“God will not intrust the care of His precious flock to men whose minds and judgment have been weakened by former errors that they have been in, such as so-called perfectionism and spiritualism, and by their course, while in these errors, have brought reproach upon the cause of truth and disgraced themselves. And although they may now feel free from error, and competent to go forth to teach this last message, God will not accept them. He will not entrust precious souls to their care; for their judgment has been perverted while in error, and is now weakened.”—Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White, Volume 54, 19.

God accounts sound judgment as essential for leadership. Here we see Ellen White parallels perfectionism and spiritualism. In speaking of perfectionism she says:

“They held that those who are sanctified cannot sin. And **this naturally led to the belief that the affections and desires of the sanctified ones were always right**, and never in danger of leading them into sin. In harmony with these sophistries, they were practicing the worst sins under the garb of sanctification, and through their deceptive, mesmeric influence were gaining a strange power over some of their associates, who did not see the evil of these apparently beautiful but seductive theories.”—*Early Writings 301*.

Ellen White tells us that perfectionism is the belief that God has sanctified all desires and af-

fections, **meaning one can do what is right in God's eyes by doing what is right in their eyes.** This is a great deception. God speaks to these people through the words of the psalmist:

“Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.”—*Psalms 50:21-23*.

Satan tells the world, “Do what thou wilt” and “Follow your heart.” This is why Sister White parallels perfectionism and spiritualism. We can clearly see that good judgment fits people for leadership. We also have seen that our standard of judgment shows our allegiance. Those who “follow their hearts” choose Satan as their king, and those who follow the Bible choose Christ.

“In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”—*Judges 17:6*.

“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”—*1 Corinthians 1:10*.

Leadership

Let's take a deeper look into letting Christ be our Leader. We have much to learn about leadership from the apostle Paul. We will be looking at *1 Corinthians 3*.

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.”—*1 Corinthians 3:1*

Here we see that spiritual children are still carnal, they are babes in Christ still learning how to discern good and evil.

“I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.”—*1 Corinthians 3:2*

Those who are still learning what is good and evil cannot understand the deep things of God. Why not?

“For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”—*1 Corinthians 3:3*

Only those who are babes in Christ still bare the carnal fruit of envying, strife and division. They cannot discern spiritual things because spiritual things are spiritually discerned. What are they striving about?

6 labour in the word and doctrine.”—1 Timothy 5:17.

This means the elders that rule poorly are still to be honored. Dare anyone speak against the Lord’s anointed? This would only show contempt for God’s order. Should we not pray for them? If you have the opportunity write to them in the spirit of Love. They need encouragement too. If you are loving, you have an opportunity to be the iron that sharpens them. Are you not concerned for their salvation? Remember Satan is far more active in their lives than he is in ours. Our church is a family, not a battle arena where everyone fights each other to the death. God shows His church grace; and, if we are His children, we will too.

“The church, enfeebled and defective, **needing to be reprov’d, warn’d, and counsell’d,** is the only object upon earth upon which Christ bestows His supreme regard.”—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 49.

The Same Path

The final subject regarding unity is that of being on the same path. Unity is NEVER to be promoted at the cost of principle. The way of the righteous and the way of the wicked go in opposite directions.

“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”—Amos 3:3.

If we unite with those who are proud, those that despise God’s judgment and leadership, we demonstrate our agreement with their course of action. God has not called us to unite with the tares; this will only result in pain. This is not an excuse to speak evil or to be contentious, Christ never spoke evil, He was never contentious, and He never united with evil. Our course of action is pointed out in Hebrews 12:12-14:

“Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and **make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way;** but let it rather be healed. **Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.**”

If we want to encourage unity, we must make straight paths for our feet. The work begins with us. If we would correct, we must first be corrected. We must humbly submit ourselves to God and follow the path of peace:

“The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.”—2 Timothy 2:24-25.

Humility is the first trait of character for anyone who would be God’s servant. He only accepts

willing slaves. The Bible points out that these people with double minds and worldly judgment are in so much confusion that they “oppose themselves.” God gives us two tools to use to save them:

“And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.”—Jude 1:22-23.

Solution for Bad Church leadership

Undeniably there are false shepherds in the church. Inspiration tells us there is but one solution—close the door to them:

“I inquired of the angel how this door could be closed. Said he, **‘The church must flee to God’s Word, and become established upon gospel order which has been overlooked and neglected.’** This is indispensably necessary to bring the church into the unity of the faith. I saw that they were in danger in the apostles’ days of being imposed upon and deceived by false teachers; and men were chosen by the brethren, or church, who had given good evidence that they were capable of ruling well their own house, and preserving order in their own families; men that could enlighten those who were in darkness. Inquiry was made of God concerning them, and then, according to the mind of the church, and the Holy Ghost, they were set apart by the laying on of hands.”—*Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, pp. 18-19

The key to solving the problems of unity in the church is not to get rid of order and organization. This is what Satan wants; a house divided against itself cannot stand. The solution to the problem of disunity is order and organization in God’s given way. False shepherds are in the church because estimation of leadership is based on worldly principles. This has happened because of spiritual immaturity. We cannot rightly judge what good leadership is by our worldly standards. Christ points out our poor judgment and spiritual immaturity with these words:

“Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”—Revelation 3:17.

Leave the leadership with God, unless you have a sincere desire to perish in Korah’s rebellion. The church is not ours to control. When God sees that there are those among us who are mature enough to lead, He will sweep away the corrupt leadership and establish true shepherds after His choosing.

“If any one man refuses to cooperate with the Lord in doing the work after God’s order, that God’s mold may be upon it and not man’s,

then another will be chosen in his place, and He will make the willing and obedient to do His work which will be wrought in righteousness and will be as enduring as eternity.”—20 *Manuscript Releases*, 369.

“Shall we not remedy the difficulties that exist by striving to restore the wounded, not by cutting off their limbs, leaving them crippled for life, their usefulness impaired, when they might have been restored? The plans and methods of God’s workers are to be thoroughly sifted from worldly policy. Their work is to be carried forward with Christlike simplicity. Remember that he who takes the position of a criticizer greatly weakens his own hands.... This is Satan’s special temptation, whereby he strives to hinder the work.... The attributes of the enemy of God and man too often find expression in their spirit and attitude toward one another. They hurt one another, because they are not partakers of the divine nature; and thus they work against the perfection of their own character. They bring trouble to themselves, and make the work hard and toilsome, because they regard their spirit and defects of character as precious virtues, to be clung to and fostered....

“Men make the work of advancing the truth tenfold harder than it really is by seeking to take God’s work out of His hands into their own finite hands. They think they must be constantly inventing something to make men do things which they suppose these persons ought to do. The time thus spent is all the while making the work more complicated; for the great Chief Worker is left out of the question in the care of His own heritage. Men undertake the job of tinkering up the defective character of others, and only succeed in making the defects much worse. They would better leave God to do His own work; for He does not regard them as capable of reshaping character. Those who are defective in character, in conduct, in habits and practices, are to take heed.... Every stone that can be used in the heavenly temple must be hewed and polished until it is a tried and precious stone, fitted for its place in the Lord’s building. But if we refuse to be trained and disciplined, we shall be as stones that will not be hewed and polished, and that are cast aside at last as useless.”—*Evangelism*, 634-635.

“Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will

deliver My flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.”—*Ezekiel 34:10*.

“Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: And I will give you pastors according to Mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.”—*Jeremiah 3:14-15*.

The deliverance will come when we repent of our spiritual immaturity.

My brother or sister, have you been a Christian? Are you your brother’s keeper or your brother’s killer? Do you sow peace or are you one who opposes yourself? Do you share the humility of Christ? Have you exercised your mind with the Word of God to discern good and evil? Have you let Christ be your Leader? Do you walk the blood-stained path? We pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. He has never turned away an earnest seeker. Christ’s own disciples were spiritual children, contentious and self-seeking. He did not cast them away, and He will not cast us away. There is still time to let the mind of Christ be in us, to exercise sound judgment, to follow the Lamb and pick up the cross. But today is the day of salvation. We must choose today who we will serve. God will not forever accommodate the double minded. While mercy is still pleading; let us make sure that our house will abide the fire. Let’s build with the gold of faith, and not the stubble of man’s reasoning.

For a finished work,



Jonathan Taylor

Ellen White’s Significant Dream

“I had a dream. I saw Dr. Kellogg in close conversation with men and with ministers. He adroitly [cleverly] would make statements born of suspicion and imagination to draw them out, and then would gain expression from them, while I saw him clap his hands over something very eagerly. I felt a pang of anguish at heart as I saw this going on. I saw in my dream yourself and Elder [probably G.I., president of the General Conference] Butler in conversation with him. You made statements to him which he seemed to grasp with avidity [greed, keen eagerness] and close his hand over something

in it. I then saw him go to his room, and there upon the floor was a pile of stones systematically laid up, stone upon stone. He placed the additional stones on the pile and counted them up. Every stone had a name—some report gathered up—and every stone was numbered.

“The young man who often instructs me came and looked upon the pile of stones with grief and indignation and inquired what he had and what he purposed to do with them. The doctor looked up with a sharp, gratified laugh. ‘These are mistakes of Elder White. I am going to stone him with them, stone him to death.’ The young man said, ‘You are bringing back the stoning system, are you? You are worse than the ancient Pharisees. Who gave you this work to do? The Lord raised you up. The Lord entrusted you with a special work. The Lord has sustained you in a most remarkable manner, but it was not for you to degrade your powers for this kind of work. Satan is an accuser of the brethren.’

“I thought the doctor seemed very defiant and determined. Said he, ‘Elder White is trying to tear us to pieces. He is working against us; and, to save our reputation and life, we must work against him. I shall use every stone to the last pebble here upon this floor to kill him. This is only self-defense, a disagreeable necessity.

“And then said the young man solemnly, ‘What have you gained? Have you, in the act, righted your wrongs? Have you opened your heart to Jesus Christ, and does He sit there enthroned? Who occupies the citadel [the fortress of an army for protection or a strong building, where people can shelter for safety] of the soul under this administration of the stoning system?

[The following paragraph, only, is in the same dream of Ellen White in *The Stoning System in 12 Manuscript Releases, 10-11*]:

[“ ‘You have a higher calling, a more important work. Leave all such work of gathering stones for the enemies of God’s law. You brethren must love one another, or you are not children of the day, but of darkness.’ ”]

“I then saw my husband engaged in a similar work, gathering stones, making a pile, and ready to begin the stoning system. Similar words were repeated to him with additional injunctions, and I awoke.”—*Arthur L. White (grandson of E.G. White), The Biography of Ellen G. White, The Lonely Years (Volume 3): 1876-1891, pp. 161-162.*

Thoughts from our Editor Diane

(Diane has worked with Vance for many years as his editor. In this article she has important information to share.)

Let’s throw away our stones, love our enemies, help our leaders, and assist the weaker members in the Church. In this way, there will be perfect unity and the Latter Rain can finally be poured out on God’s people. Those who refuse to throw away their stones will leave the presence of Christ, as did the Pharisees when Jesus pointed out their sins by writing them in the sand. They will soon find that they have severed their connection with God. Today, there is still time. Let us love one another in the true spirit of Christ.

“When Christians accuse and condemn their brethren, they show themselves to be in the service of the accuser of the brethren. When they talk of their faults and failings, they plant roots of bitterness, whereby many shall be defiled. It is through this kind of work that brother becomes suspicious of brother and variance arises in the church.”—*Review, July 22, 1890.*

On Leadership

God has lessons for us in the story of Gideon about leadership. After Gideon was given victory, in their blindness of understanding, Israel wanted Gideon as their king. Let’s not overlook these lessons as others do. The story starts in Judges 7:7-8:

“And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped [water] will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place.

“So the people took victuals [supplies of food] in their hand, and their trumpets: and he [Gideon] sent all the rest of Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.”

God had a very different battle plan than Gideon did! The Lord reduced Gideon’s army to 300 men against the many, many more Midianite soldiers, so there would be no mistake; the victory was possible only because it was God’s doing. In *Conflict and Courage, 127*, we are told:

“Because his numbers were so few compared with those of the enemy, Gideon had refrained from making the usual proclamation (which is in Deuteronomy 20:5-9). He was filled with astonishment at the declaration that his army was too large. But the Lord saw the pride and unbelief existing in the hearts of His people. Aroused by the stirring appeals of Gideon, they had readily enlisted; but many were filled

The Christian Unity

with fear when they saw the multitudes of the Midianites. Yet, had Israel triumphed, those very ones would have taken the glory to themselves instead of ascribing the victory to God.

“Gideon obeyed the Lord’s direction, and with a heavy heart he saw twenty-two thousand, or more than two thirds of his entire force, depart for their homes.”

God saved Israel in a marked manner. It was obvious to all that it was the Lord’s doing, not men’s. This was especially evident in the battle plan, and the sending away of so many men of war. The story is in Judges, chapters 6-8. Even after this, Israel still did evil in the sight of the Lord; and God, at another time, delivered them into the hands of Midian for seven years (Judges 6:1).

In our weaknesses of character, we make it much harder to obtain those victories of character building needed in our lives. Yes, the Pearl of Great Price is to be a gift to each of us, but only as we give Him all of ourselves and fight that good fight of faith:

“In the parable the pearl is not represented as a gift. The merchantman bought it at the price of all that he had. Many question the meaning of this, since Christ is represented in the Scriptures as a gift. He is a gift, but only to those who give themselves, soul, body, and spirit, to Him without reserve. We are to give ourselves to Christ, to live a life of willing obedience to all His requirements.... When we thus give ourselves wholly to Him, Christ, with all the treasures of heaven, gives Himself to us.”—Christ’s Object Lessons, 116.

Let’s not get distracted by demonizing people, including friends and family, and focusing on what they have done. We also are wrongly influenced by those we admire much. But God judges people differently than we do (*Christ’s Object Lessons, 71-72; Patriarchs and Prophets, 217-218*). We forget to study our Bibles and the Spirit of Prophecy books, pray, ask God’s for His will, and trust and obey Him. On the judgment day, it will be too late for us to change, when we are “found wanting” and lose eternal life. We need to realize that Christ wants all our affections, our hearts—not just our talents and our minds.

“Self-sufficiency and self-esteem lay at the

foundation of the greatest trials and discords that have ever existed among the people of God.”—20 Manuscript Releases, 369.

“We must not think that we can wait till we get to Heaven before we perfect pure, chaste, lovely characters. The Christian will be Christ-like here. There is a diversity among us. We each have traits of character, tastes, gifts, and capacities peculiar to ourselves, all of which have been established or modified by education and habit. But by the grace of Christ all these varied characteristics may be brought into harmony with the will of God.”—Signs, October 22, 1885.

When we get to heaven and meet many dear souls who we have never met on earth and know little about, we can say, “How did they make it? I want to hear how God worked in their lives.”

“Gideon had taken numerous wives, and at his death he left no less than seventy sons.”—Signs, August 4, 1881.

“The custom of the nations of his time had perverted his judgment and influenced his actions. Even great and good men have erred in following the practices of the world.”—Patriarchs and Prophets, 668.

After Gideon was given the victory, Israel wanted to make him their king:

“The people of Israel, in their gratitude at deliverance from the Midianites, proposed to Gideon that he should become their king, and that the throne should be confirmed to his descendants. This proposition [something offered for consideration or acceptance] was in direct violation of the principles of the theocracy [a government by immediate divine guidance, direction, and administration of God].... Gideon recognized this fact; his answer shows how true and noble were his motives. ‘I will not rule over you,’ he declared; ‘neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you.’ ”—Conflict and Courage, 129.

We are told about the three-year government (Judges 9:22) of one son of Gideon:

“Besides these [Gideon’s seventy sons], there was another, Abimelech, ‘the son of a strange woman.’ This person had no right in the inheritance with Gideon’s lawful children,

and his debased character rendered him still more unworthy to be numbered with the descendants of the illustrious leader. The sons of Gideon had concurred [agreed] in their father's refusal to accept the throne of Israel, but Abimelech determined to secure the position for himself. Being a native of Shechem, where his mother's relatives dwelt, he induced them to influence the Shechemites in his favor. He endeavored to advance his own interests by basely misrepresenting his brethren. He accused them of designing to seize upon the government and unite in its administration, and he sought to convince the people that it would be much better for them to be ruled by one of their own number than by such a band of tyrants. Had the Israelites preserved a clear perception of right and wrong, they would have seen the fallacy of Abimelech's reasoning and the injustice of his claims. They would have seen that he was filled with envy, and actuated by a base ambition to exalt himself by the ruin of his brethren. Those who are controlled by policy rather than by principle are not to be trusted. They will pervert the truth, conceal facts, and construe [interpret] the words of others to mean that which was never intended. They will employ flattering words, while the poison of asps is under their tongue. He who does not earnestly seek the divine guidance will be deceived by their smooth words and their artful plans. There are many who would scorn the appellation [name, term, style] of policy men, yet who will stoop to concealment, evasion, and even misrepresentation, to accomplish their purposes. He who, in a matter of right and wrong, remains noncommittal that he may retain the friendship of all; he who seeks to secure by evasion of truth what should be won by courage; he who waits for others to take the lead, when he should go forward himself, and then feels at liberty to censure their course—all these are in God's sight numbered as deceivers. Abimelech was successful in his schemes, and was accepted, at first by the Shechemites, and afterward by the people generally, as the ruler of Israel. But while thus exalted to the highest position in the gift of the nation, he was utterly unworthy of the trust. His birth was ignoble [characterized by baseness or meanness], his character vicious [violent, dangerously aggressive]. The higher and nobler qualities—virtue, integrity, and truth—he had never cherished. He possessed a strong will and indomitable perseverance, and thus, by the most unscrupulous [unprincipled, corrupt] measures, he accomplished his purposes. The

Israelites, blinded by their own sinful course of apostasy, were acting directly contrary to God's express commands, and He left them to reap the results of their own folly. It was not God's will that Israel should have a king. But, in case they desired to be thus governed, the Lord, understanding the pride and perversity of the human heart, had reserved to Himself the right to appoint a king over them. God had brought Israel out from Egypt to be a peculiar people, especially devoted to Himself, and unlike any other people. Israel's great ambition to imitate the idolatrous nations around them was the result of separation from God. Pride and ambition similar to that which cursed ancient Israel, exists in the church of God today. They are unwilling to be a peculiar people, distinct and separate from the world. To reach the Bible standard requires self-denial, a crucifixion of the affections and lusts. The unsanctified heart reaches out for forbidden things, but these very objects of desire will prove now, as anciently, a source of weakness and corruption. Christ 'gave Himself for us, that He might cleanse us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' Those who seek the honor which comes from men are ever ready to adopt the customs and practices of the world. They gain their position by the exercise of traits of character which should lie dormant. If only those were exalted who had gained their position by fidelity to God and to man, the standard of morality and religion among the people would be elevated. The sin of which we are guilty in acting contrary to God's expressed will is as much greater than was that of ancient Israel, as our light and privileges have been greater than theirs."—*Signs, August 4, 1881.*

The best way to defeat the enemies of the Truth is to rely fully on God. It doesn't matter how big or powerful they look; because God is always bigger and mightier. Relying on God is an expression of faith and obedience.

"The Christian life does not consist merely in the exercise of meekness, patience, humility, and kindness. One may possess these precious and amiable traits, and yet be nerveless and spiritless, and almost useless when the work goes hard. Such persons lack the positiveness and energy, the solidity and strength of character, which would enable them to resist evil, and would make them a power in the cause of God."—*Review, January 6, 1885.*

Balaam was, at one time a prophet of God. But he wanted his own desires, as opposed to God's; and he was determined to have his own

way. King Balak wanted him to curse the nation of Israel. Balaam knew he could not do this and still be approved of God, but he was determined to get those riches that Balak offered him if he could do it.

“And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron [Moses’ brother] the priest, saw it [the feasting and activities at Baal-peor], he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; and he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.”—Numbers 25:7-9.

Many of us know the story: Baalim secretly worked it out with King Balak to get Israel to sin in order to get those riches offered to him for doing this. At Baal-peor, the Israelites were involved in idol worship and sexual immorality. However, some folk in Israel took vengeance on the leaders at this event; and, among those who were killed, both Balaam and King Balak lost their lives. The story of Balaam and Baal-peor is found in Numbers, chapters 22-25 and Numbers 31:8-18. What are God’s people doing today? And does He approve of what we are now doing?

“The crime that brought the judgments of God upon Israel was that of licentiousness.... Notwithstanding the punishment that followed the sinners in Israel, the same crime was repeated many times. Satan was most active in seeking to make Israel’s overthrow complete. Balak, by the advice of Balaam, laid the snare. Israel would have bravely met their enemies in battle, and resisted them, and come off conquerors; but...they did not resist temptations.... The power of self-control, their allegiance to God’s law, was not preserved.... They invited temptation even to the attending of these idolatrous feasts. Those who had never flinched in battle, who were brave men, did not barricade their souls to resist temptation to indulge their basest passions. Idolatry and licentiousness went together. They first defiled their conscience by lewdness, and then departed from God still farther by idolatry, thus showing contempt for the God of Israel.

“Near the close of this earth’s history Satan will work with all his powers in the same manner and with the same temptations wherewith he tempted ancient Israel just before their entering the land of promise. He will lay snares for those who claim to keep the commandments of God and who are almost on the borders of the heavenly Canaan. He will use his powers to their utmost in order to entrap souls, and

to take God’s professed people upon their weakest points. Those who have not brought the lower passions into subjection to the higher powers of their being, those who have allowed their minds to flow in a channel of carnal indulgence of the baser passions, Satan is determined to destroy with his temptations—to pollute their souls with licentiousness. He is not aiming especially at the lower and less important marks, but he makes use of his snares through those whom he can enlist as his agents to allure or attract men to take liberties which are condemned in the law of God. And men in responsible positions, teaching the claims of God’s law, whose mouths are filled with arguments in vindication of His law, against which Satan has made such a raid—over such he sets his hellish powers and his agencies at work, and overthrows them upon the weak points in their character, knowing that he who offends on one point is guilty of all, thus obtaining complete mastery over the entire man. Mind, soul, body, and conscience are involved in the ruin. If he be a messenger of righteousness, and has had great light, or if the Lord has used him as his special worker in the cause of truth, then how great is the triumph of Satan! How he exults! How God is dishonored!

“The licentious practice of the Hebrews accomplished for them that which all the warfare of nations and the enchantments of Balaam could not do. They became separated from their God. Their covering and protection were removed from them. God turned to be their enemy. So many of the princes and people were guilty of licentiousness, that it became a national sin; for God was wroth with the whole congregation. The very same Satan is now working to the very same end, to weaken and destroy the people who claim to be keeping the commandments of God, as they are just on the borders of the heavenly Canaan. Satan knows it is his time. He has but little time left now in which to work, and he will work with tremendous power to ensnare the people of God upon their weak points of character....

“It is necessary to guard the thoughts; to fence the soul about with the injunctions of God’s Word; and to be very careful in every thought, word, and action not to be betrayed into sin....

“It is now the duty of God’s command-keeping people to watch and pray, to search the Scriptures diligently, to hide the Word of God in the heart, lest they sin against Him in idolatrous thoughts and debasing practices, and thus the church of God become demoralized like the fallen churches whom

prophecy represents as being filled with every unclean and hateful bird.”—*Review, May 17, 1887.*

Thoughts on favorite Pastors

Why is it that preachers of present truth have followings, when it is Christ that gives them light and power?

“Christ is spoken of as walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks. Thus is symbolized His relation to the churches. He is in constant communication with His people. He knows their true state. He observes their order, their piety, their devotion. Although He is high priest and mediator in the Sanctuary above, yet He is represented as walking up and down in the midst of His churches on the earth. With untiring wakefulness and unremitting vigilance, He watches to see whether the light of any of His sentinels [watchmen] is burning dim or going out. If the candlesticks were left to mere human care, the flickering flame would languish and die; but He is the true watchman in the Lord’s house, the true warden of the temple courts. His continued care and sustaining grace are the source of life and light.

“Christ is represented as holding the seven stars in His right hand. This assures us that no church faithful to its trust need fear coming to nought [nothing], for not a star that has the protection of Omnipotence can be plucked out of the hand of Christ....

“He walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks. Thus is symbolized the relation of Christ to His churches, and the stars are used to represent His ministers. He is represented as walking up and down among the golden candlesticks. He is in communion with His people. He knows their true state. He observes their order, their vigilance, their piety, and their devotion; and He takes pleasure in them if He sees these fruits manifest. Although Christ is mediator in the heavenly Sanctuary, yet He walks up and down in the midst of the churches on earth. He goes about from church to church, from congregation to congregation, from soul to soul. He observes their true condition—that which is neglected, that which is in disorder, and that which needs to be done. He is represented as walking, which signifies unrest, wakefulness, and unremitting vigilance. He is observing whether the light of any of his sentinels, or candlesticks, is burning dim or going out. These under-shepherds may sleep, but He that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. If these candlesticks were left to the charge of human powers, the flickering flame

would languish and die. But He is the true watchman...the sleepless warden of the temple courts. The continual watchcare and presence and sustaining grace of Christ are the source of all light and life.”—*Acts of the Apostles, 586.*

“ ‘These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand.’ Revelation 2:1. These words are spoken to the teachers in the church—those entrusted by God with weighty responsibilities. The sweet influences that are to be abundant in the church are bound up with God’s ministers, who are to reveal the love of Christ. The stars of heaven are under His control. He fills them with light. He guides and directs their movements. If He did not do this, they would become fallen stars. So with His ministers. They are but instruments in His hands, and all the good they accomplish is done through His power. Through them His light is to shine forth. The Saviour is to be their efficiency [the quality of being able to do a task successfully, without wasting time or energy]. If they will look to Him as He looked to the Father, they will be enabled to do His work. As they make God their dependence, He will give them His brightness to reflect to the world.”—*Acts of the Apostles, 586-587.*

Thoughts on Faultfinding

“If you shirk responsibility and crosses and burden-bearing, hard thinking and earnest praying, and look to the president of the General Conference to do your work and help you out of your difficulties, cannot you see that you lay upon him burdens that will imperil his life? Have you not mind and ability as well as he? You should not neglect any part of the work because it calls for earnest cross-bearing effort.

“I repeat, Do not throw your burdens upon the president of the General Conference. Do not expect him to take up your dropped stitches and bind off your work. Resolve that you will bear your own burdens through Christ, who strengthens you.

“The president of the General Conference, if he is walking in the counsel of God, will not encourage his brethren to look to him to define their duty, but will direct them to the only Source that is untainted with the errors of humanity. He will refuse to be mind and conscience for others.”—*9 Manuscript Releases, 140.*

Finding fault is a habit that people develop. When fully developed you will even find fault with the Lord Himself. If we hope to go to heaven we must overcome it.

Let us be found faithful, —*Diane*