

MAKING TOUGH ETHICAL DECISIONS

Faithful Unto Death—Part 1

Compiled By

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1. An international war-crime tribunal has established beyond reasonable doubts that the dictators Adolf Hitler, Idi Amin, Saddam Hussein, and others are guilty of genocide (i.e, the deliberate and systematic murder of millions of people belonging to some ethnic groups and races). As punishment for their crimes against humanity they have been sentenced to face capital punishment. These war criminals themselves acknowledge that the trial was fair, and the verdict was just. Under these circumstances would you approve as morally right the execution these mass-murderers?

YES NO

2. You work as a check-out cashier in a large supermarket store-chain. Besides food and other household goods, this convenience store also retails alcohol and tobacco. You've just become a Christian. Is it right for you to continue working for a store that expects you to ring up sales on alcohol and tobacco?

YES NO

3. In a country where practicing and spreading Christianity is illegal, punishment can be confiscation of one's property, loss of job, imprisonment, or sometimes death. Because of these difficult conditions, Christians in this country must be extremely careful and discrete in how they live and share their faith. A pastor was one day driving a group of new converts for baptism when he was stopped by security officers and asked: "What are you going to do at the lake with these people in your truck?" Is it right to lie to the inquiring security officers in order to save both his life and that of his converts? **YES** **NO**

4. You live in Kuwait. Enemy soldiers from Iraq have invaded your country and are killing innocent people. To fight is to take human life; not to fight is to let human life be unjustly taken. Is it right to engage in a war to defend your people from enemy attack?

YES NO

5. You are a Seventh-day Adventist, part of a group of starving refugees escaping on foot from a war situation. After going several days without food, someone meets your group of dying refugees and offers you some hot soup and wheat crackers (biscuits). The soup contains ham

(pork) and the ingredients in the wheat-crackers include lard (pig fat). As an Adventist you believe that it is wrong to eat unclean foods (Lev 11; Deut 14). But given your critical situation, would it be right to partake of the soup and wheat-crackers in order to gain much-needed strength for your journey?

YES NO

6. You recently graduated at the top of your nuclear engineering class. You've been offered a well-paid job as a research-engineer in a prestigious company that designs and builds hi-tech weapons for the military. Is it right to accept the job?

YES NO

7. Your 11-year old daughter has been raped by an adult-relative and she becomes pregnant. According to psychologists your daughter is not in a stable mental and emotional health to carry the pregnancy to full-term. Your family doctor also indicates that even if she survives the trauma of the pregnancy, the baby that will be born will most-likely be severely deformed. Is it right, under these circumstances, for your 11-year old victim of incestuous-rape to have an abortion?

YES NO

8. You are a Seventh-day Adventist; you are single; and you live in a very small town where there are no eligible Adventists for marriage. Will it be right to marry a Christian of another faith?

YES NO

9. The Bible teaches that the tithe (one-tenth of one's earnings) belongs wholly to the Lord. But your situation is critical. Because of your biblical convictions, you've given-up your only source of livelihood, plunging your family into a very desperate financial crisis. Your neighbors are ridiculing your Christian faith because you are unable to pay your bills and provide medical care and food for your family. Your child has been diagnosed with a severe form of cancer requiring immediate medical care. Would it be right, under these circumstances, to use the tithe to procure food for your starving family and medical help for your sick child?

YES NO

10. Your 9-year old Christian son has been abducted from his village by a band of guerilla fighters and forced against his will to join that organization. As initiation into the guerilla organization all new recruits are compelled by their captors to shoot and kill wounded and timid captives. Refusal to join the armed organization would cost your son his own life. Under this trying situation, would you encourage your 9-year old Christian son to be part of the guerilla organization so as to save his life?

YES NO

11. A terrorist holds your only child hostage at the point of a loaded-gun, demanding to have sex with you before your child is

freed. Is it right for you to have sex with the terrorist to save your child's life?

YES NO

12. Living during Old Testament times, you make a solemn vow to God to sacrifice whatever living thing first approaches you when you arrive home. Sadly, your only daughter comes to meet you. Would it be right to kill your daughter as a sacrifice to God in order not to break your vow to God?

YES NO

13. Before the collapse of Soviet communism, Christians in Communist countries were denied their right to own Bibles and practice their faith. They, however, managed to keep their faith alive, worshiping in "underground" or secret churches. To help them in their quest to serve the Lord, some Christians from the "free world" were able to sneak Bibles to their fellow Christians in the "underground" churches by bribing custom and immigration officers. Was it right to bribe custom officers in order to bring Bibles to Christians denied their right to practice their faith?

YES NO

14. On the basis of the Bible, Christians teach their youth to abstain from sex outside of marriage. In spite of this, it is generally recognized that many Christian youth are sexually active, and some of them are coming down with AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Under these circumstances, is it right for concerned Christian parents and teachers to teach their sexually-active youth to practice safe sex, as in the use condoms?

YES NO

15. You are a missionary, giving Bible studies to a polygamist in a foreign land. The Bible teaches that in marriage every man must have only one wife, and once married, they should not divorce (except in cases of marital infidelity). The Bible also teaches that during the times of ignorance, God overlooks. You recognize that at the time of his marriage the polygamist to whom you are giving the studies did not know of the biblical teaching of monogamy. Also, untold hardships would befall the children and women in the polygamous marriage if the man decides to divorce his many wives. Given these facts, would it be right to baptize the practicing polygamist and his wives into the church?

YES NO

16. While living in a communist country you are required to send your 3-year old son to school every Sabbath or have him taken away from you and adopted out into an atheistic family. Would it be right to send him to school on Sabbath in order to keep him in a Christian family?

YES NO

17. You are a Christian living in an Islamic state. The law of your land does not allow citizens to be converted to another religion. Any conversion should be immediately reported to the police or risk severe punishment. You have just been converted to the Christian faith. Your aged parents are not pleased with your decision, but they plan to protect you--provided you don't betray them. They instruct you that whenever you are arrested and questioned you must deny that they know about your conversion. You have been arrested and are being interrogated. The Bible teaches that we must not lie; the same Bible also teaches children to "honor thy father and thy mother." Will it be right, under these circumstances, for you to lie to the interrogating security officers in order to "honor" your parents, and also save them from severe punishment?

YES NO

18. On October 13, 1972, a plane carrying 45 members of a rugby team crashed in the snow-capped Andes mountains. Sixteen (16) survivors were finally rescued after 72 dreadful days of freezing and starvation. They later told the world that during the gruesome ordeal, they had to eat the corpses of their dead companions in order to stay alive. Was their action right?

YES NO

19. A hurricane has just destroyed your uninsured church and school. Your prayers for God's intervention seemingly go unanswered. Just as you are about to close down both church and school due to a lack of funding, a large envelope containing \$150,000.00 arrives in the mail. An unsigned note from an unidentified non-Christian states that, having heard of the needs on the evening-news, he decided to donate this money which he won in a lottery. Would it be right to use this money to rebuild the church facilities?

YES NO

20. Because of your faith, you have been unjustly arrested, tried and condemned to death. While awaiting your execution, a sympathetic prison guard who knows that you are innocent offers you false identity papers to enable you escape. Would it be right to use these papers to get away?

YES NO

WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?

Making Tough Choices & Living Holy Lives in the End Time

Faithful Unto Death—Part 2

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*"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" (**Education**, p. 57).*

Holiness: A Biblical Teaching

1. Holiness is necessary for salvation (Heb 12:14).
2. Holiness is God's will for our lives. (1 Thess 5:3).
3. Holiness is a command from the Lord. (1 Pet 1:15, 16; Matt 5:48).
4. Jesus died so that we can be holy (2 Cor 7:1; Eph 5:25, 26; Titus 2:14).
5. Holiness or sanctification simply means godliness, or revealing Christlike character in a sinful world (Philippians 2:13-15; NIV).

6. Holiness is the preparation we need for Christ's second coming (Titus 2:11-14, NIV).

7. Holiness is the polarization in the last days. (Rev 22:11).

Understanding Biblical Holiness

The noun *holiness*, together with the adjective *holy* and the verb *sanctify* (the word *holify* does not exist in English), belong to a single word group in Hebrew and Greek. In both biblical languages the words carry the meaning of *setting something apart, either because it has extraordinary value, or because it is intended by God for some extraordinarily special purpose.*

Thus, although scholars sometimes make a distinction between sanctification (the process of becoming holy) and holiness (the state of being sanctified), the two terms may be viewed as functional equivalents.

When Scripture repeatedly emphasizes holiness as an attribute of God (Lev 19:2; Isa 6:3; Rev 4:8), it means that "God is pure and morally perfect, with a purity beyond any conception that we have. He is 'set apart' in the sense that He is removed from sin or evil; He is morally flawless. Therefore, He is the ultimate, perfect standard of right and wrong."

Things and people are not holy in themselves--except as they are associated with, or consecrated to the service of, the Holy God. As far as human beings are concerned, God's people are called the "holy ones" or "saints" because they have separated themselves from the world and its ways to a life of service and obedience to God (Ex 19:6; Lev 20:24; 1 Pet 2:9; Col 3:12).

A Definition of Holiness

"Holiness is . . . an entire surrender to the will of God; it is living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; it is doing the will of our heavenly Father; it is trusting God in trial, in darkness as well as in light; it is walking by faith and not by sight; it is relying on God with unquestioning confidence, and resting in His love" (*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 155).

Becoming & Remaining Holy

Justification and *sanctification*—two processes in salvation—are the means by which a person becomes holy and is kept holy. A person *becomes* holy through justification, and he *remains* holy through sanctification. Both processes in salvation are the operations of the Holy Spirit in the life of a person. Justification describes the Spirit's work *for us*, and sanctification is His work *in us*.

Holiness As A School

Holiness is as a school from which we never graduate. It is an educational process designed by God to re-build, re-shape, and refine us progressively into conformity with His own character. Like every good school, we need some good teachers, textbooks, standards, goals, companions, helpers, and role models in the School of Holiness.

--Our teachers are the *holy* Trinity; because God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are holy, they can make us holy if we maintain a right relationship with them.

--Our textbook is the *holy* Scriptures (2 Tim 3:15); not some human books, opinions, junk magazines, sleazy magazines, etc. (we must preach and study from the Word, not internet sermons, jokes, etc.)

--Our standard is the *holy* Law (Rom 7:12); not comparing ourselves to others.

--Our goal for this education is *holy* service (Rom 12:1, 2; Luke 1:74-75); our professions, occupations, talents are all for a holy service.

--Our helpers and companions are the *holy* angels (Rev 14:10), and

--Our Role-Model is Jesus Christ, "the *Holy* one" (Acts 3:14; cf. 4:30; Mark 1:24; 1 Pet 2:21-23).

In God's school of holiness, every thing we experience in life--its joys and sorrows, its fulfillments and disappointments, its hopes and despair--are all part of God's curriculum to mold

our character into conformity with the moral image of our Lord Jesus Christ (Heb 12:5-11; Rom 8:28-39).

Holiness As a Spiritual Walk

We may also describe holiness as a spiritual walk using two legs: *Spirituality and Ethics*. Without one of these legs, a person either limps in his spiritual walk, or is crippled.

On the one hand, *spirituality* (or Christian piety) concerns itself with the things that encourage and enhance the development of a meaningful *relationship with Christ*. It includes such inward aspects of the Christian life as prayer, meditation, fasting, music, worship, devotional study of Scriptures, simplicity in life, etc.

Ethics (or Christian lifestyle), on the other hand, deals with the outward aspects of the Christian life that show a *commitment to Christ*. It concerns itself with delineating God's moral standards, determining His revealed will, and the development and display of such divine qualities as truthfulness, honesty, integrity, self-control, compassion, purity, etc.

While ethics deals with the *what* of holiness, spirituality addresses the *how* of holiness. Ethics is *prescriptive*, concerning itself with the basis upon which human decisions and actions are judged as morally right or morally wrong. Spirituality is *descriptive*, exploring how to live a morally upright life in a sinful world.

Another way of saying it is that ethics is *lovingly doing God's will*. Spirituality is *appropriating God's provision* to restore us to harmony with me; it is learning how to obey.

Using the analogy of a tree, spirituality is sinking your roots down into the soil and *growing deep*; ethics is *growing tall*.

Without ethics, spirituality is corrupted into antinomianism, insensitivity, or a privatized religion that is more concerned with experiencing God's presence than keeping His law. And without spirituality, ethics is corrupted into formalism, legalism, and pharisaical pride.

Holiness As the Science of Ethics

Holiness is a call to an ethical lifestyle. It is cultivating a character that is honest, just, and morally upright. It is doing what is morally right and avoiding what God has revealed as morally wrong. "Those who are truly sanctified will not set up their own opinion as a standard of right and wrong" (*The Sanctified Life*, p. 9).

Ellen G. White refers to ethics as "the science of holiness": "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. Everyone who receives Christ as his personal Saviour is privileged to possess these attributes.

This is the science of holiness

" (

Testimonies, 7:276

; emphasis mine).

Through the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to live lives of ethical holiness, exhibiting such Christian virtues as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, etc. (Gal 5:22). We are also led to develop the "mind of Christ," defined by the apostle Paul as the cultivation of self-emptying humility, sacrificial service, and obedience even unto death (Phil 2:1-11). As people being sanctified, we also cherish the principles of the Kingdom, as enunciated in Christ's Sermon on the Mount--poor in Spirit, meekness, being merciful, peacemaker, etc. (Matt 5:1-10). We feed the hungry, help the stranger, clothe the naked, and visit the sick (Matt 25:31-46).

SUMMARY OF 20 ETHICAL QUESTIONS

1. Capital Punishment for war criminals
2. Selling Alcohol & Tobacco in Supermarket
3. Lying to Security Officers to save the lives of baptismal candidates
4. Fighting in Defensive War
5. Eating Unclean Meat to save your life
6. Working for a Defense Company as a research engineer
7. Abortion in the Case of Incest & Rape
8. Marrying a Person of Another Faith
9. Using Tithe in Emergency Situation
10. Forced to Kill for Guerilla Group

11. Sex with Terrorist to save child's life
12. Sacrificing Child to Keep Vow
13. Bribing Custom officers to Smuggle Bibles
14. Encouraging Youth to Practice Safe-Sex
15. Baptizing Practicing Polygamists
16. Sending 3-year Old Child to School on Sabbath
17. Lying to Protect & "Honor" Parents
18. Eating Dead Bodies to Stay Alive
19. Lottery Money for Church & School
20. Using False Papers to Escape

COUNT THE COST:

Do We Really Believe What We Teach?

What It Takes to Be A True Disciple

Luke 14:25-35

Faithful Unto Death—Part 3

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For years the Seventh-day Adventist church has correctly taught that any Christian who loves the Lord will also keep all of His Ten Commandment Law—including the seventh-day Sabbath, which is Saturday (John 14:13). We have also rightfully maintained that to disregard any one of the Ten commandments is to disregard all (James 2:10, 11; cf. Matt 5:17-19). Furthermore, we have argued that since the Decalogue is the transcript of God's character as reflected in the perfect life of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall all be judged by this Moral Law (James 2:12).

Moreover, we have taught that those who are going to be saved and who will have access to the tree of life (Rev 22:14; cf. Matt 19:17-19).

My question is: Do we really believe what we teach?

I am not suggesting that we should keep the Law *in order* to be saved. For the Bible is very clear that anyone who is ever going to be saved is going to be saved by grace alone, through faith in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:8ff), But the Bible is also equally plain in its teaching that those who are saved by grace also keep the Law as

evidence

that they have been saved:

“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him”

(1 John 2:3, 4).

“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous”

(1 John 5:2-3)

And we have correctly reminded Sunday-keeping churches that one identifying characteristic of God’s end-time church is that it keeps all of God’s Ten Commandments—including the fourth commandment, which enjoins upon people to keep the seventh-day Sabbath: “Here is the patients of the saints. Here are they who *keep the commandment of God* and have the faith of Jesus” (Rev 14:12).

My question again is: Do we really believe what we teach?

Why the Tough Questions?

The 20 "Ethical Questions" were designed to explore four important issues in our decision making processes: (i) our view of the Ten Commandments, (ii) how we go about making moral decisions, (iii) whether we are consistent with our self-prescribed principles, and (iv) the extent to which we trust the Lord.

1. Our view of the Ten Commandments. Do we really believe that God's Moral Law, the perfect transcript of His character, is still applicable to us—even under different, sometimes difficult conditions? For example, (a) Killing—capital punishment, war, abortion, child sacrifice, (b) Making God first—in what you eat (pork, dead bodies), the work you do (cashier, defense company), who you marry, who you obey (guerillas, mother-to lie, etc.). (c) Sabbath observance—child to school on Sabbath; (d) Lying-- to the security officers, using false papers, (e) Stealing—tithing, bribing, gambling, (f) Adultery—sex with terrorist, safe-sex, polygamy.

2. How we go about in making decisions of right and wrong. Do we have a moral compass to guide us in your ethical decisions? Do we hold on to some moral absolutes? If so, where did we get them? For example, are you a

relativist

—one who believes that right and wrong are not determined by God, but rather by each person

or group living at a particular time and place? Are you an

antinomian—

one who does not believe in the existence of any eternal moral laws? Are you a

situation ethicist

—one who believes that the only moral norm that exists is “love,” where love is defined by each individual the way they want (“Do the loving thing”)? Are your decisions based on some

unchanging moral

principles

, or do you decide issues of right and wrong on the basis of presumed

consequences

?

3. Are we consistent with our principles? To be consistent in our answers, a person must either answer ALL YES or ALL NO. All “Yes” or All “No” does not mean that the answers are necessarily *biblical*. It simply means they are *consistent*.

Many of us are not consistent. For example, if saving life at all cost is a principle to live by, why is it that we want to lie to the Nazi to save life, but will not lie with terrorist to save life? We want to eat pork and lobsters to save life, but not eat dead bodies to stay alive; we may kill to save life, but not steal to save life. If our decision is based on “justice,” why is that we will kill Adolf Hitler, Idi Amin, and Saddam Hussein because they are

guilty

, and at the same time want to kill the baby in the womb though it is

innocent

? We must be consistent.

4. Do we fully trust God? Who do we really trust? Is it God, or is it your self, or some other person or thing? Are you prepared to lovingly obey Him regardless of the cost, or will you only serve Him when you don't have to pay any price—loss of job, health, child, or even your life?

Are Our Assumptions Biblical?

All our ethical decisions have been shaped by many *un-biblical assumptions*, some of which we are not even fully aware of. Even where we are aware, we have not carefully evaluated them.

1. “We have no choice.” The suggestion here is that human beings are not free moral agents; they cannot overcome external forces urging them to sin (whether the forces be genetic, environmental, or coercive authorities); we are forced against our will to sin. But is this biblical? (Cf. Joshua 24:15; John 3:16; John 14:15; Rev 3:20; Rev 14:9; Rev 22:17; James 1:13-15)

2. “Issues are not always ‘black or white’.” The suggestion here is that situation in our world today is do different from that of the Bible times that we cannot always know right and wrong. Even if we did, we cannot always predict in advance what the right option ought to be in any given situation. Is this assumption biblical? (Cf. Micah 6:8; Rom 1:18ff.; James 2:8-12; Eccl 12:13).

3. “We can always know what will result from our actions.” The suggestion here is that presumed consequences, not principles should be the basis of our decisions (known technically as “consequentialism” or “teleological” or “result-centered” ethics). The idea here is that human beings can predict what will happen in the future. Human decisions, therefore, must be based on presumed consequences, not fixed moral principles. Decisions are based on “what if,” not “even if.” In other words, instead of the revealed will of God in Scriptures, the opinion or the

impulse of sinful human beings become the basis of moral judgment. Is this biblical? NOTE: Consequentialism attempts to play God—it falsely assumes human omniscience and omnipotence.

4. “God’s Law is not ideal in a sinful world; sometimes there are inevitable conflicts in God’s requirements.” The suggestion is that though God’s Law is perfect and may be suitable for a sinless world, it is not always the case in a sinful world. What is *ideally*

commanded cannot always be obeyed; we must choose the lesser of two moral evils. (This view is known technically as conflicting absolutism). NOTE, however, that according to Scripture the Law is not “burdensome” or “grievous”; it is “holy, just and good” (1 John 5:3; Rom 7:12). Obedience is possible through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. EGW concurs: “The precepts of the Decalogue are adapted to all mankind and they were given for the instruction and government of all. (

Patriarchs and Prophets,

305). “After the transgression of Adam the principles of the law were not changed, but were definitely arranged and expressed to meet man in his fallen condition” (1 SDABC 1104).

5. “Sometimes we have to choose “the lesser of two [moral] evils.” The suggestion is that sometimes every option is morally wrong, and we have to choose the lesser morally evil option. In other words, sin is unavoidable in certain situations, and God will understand and forgive. OBJECTION: If sin is unavoidable, does it mean that there is a moral duty to sin? 2. Can one be held responsible for not doing good, when only evil options are available? 3. Does God ask us to do what He knows we are incapable of doing? 4. Why confess an act as sin, if it is unavoidable 5. How do we deal with the

Christological problems

raised?--Did Christ, who was tempted in all points as we are, face this unavoidable choice between two evils (sins)? If Yes, He must have sinned If No, He is not our perfect moral example in this sinful world. The truth is that,

we are never forced to choose between two moral evils. Our choices always have to do with right and wrong—never two evils. Any time an evil choice is given us, there is always a right choice available.

6. “Some of God’s Ten Commandment Laws are More Important than Others.” (This view is known technically as pyramidalism—or the “law pyramid,” hierarchicalism or “Graded Absolutism”).

Graded

Absolutism (Hierarchicalism) maintains that there exists a hierarchical or pyramidal arrangement or ordering of ethical norms in a relative order of importance, and that where there is a conflict, one is

exempted

from obeying the lower norm. Since some “higher” norms justify the disregard of “lower norms,” some of the laws in the Ten Commandments can be graded as important and unimportant.

Objections:

Who draws this hierarchy of norms? On what basis is this drawn? Where in the Bible can this hierarchical arrangement be found? Is not this system a sophisticated form of situationism (situation ethics) Cf. James 2:8-12. If anyone was qualified to detect shortcomings in the Ten Commandments and lead us beyond them to something better, it should have been Jesus Christ. But Christ Himself affirmed their binding authority forever, insisting that not even the tiniest part of the Law is to be ignored (cf. Matt 5:17-19). In His teachings, He revealed that the Law was central to true religion (Matt 19:17-19), and expounded them in His sermon on the mount to show that the law has to do with both actions as well as attitudes. EGW also points out that Jesus condemned the Pharisees for establishing their ethical system upon hierarchicalism (graded absolutism) (cf.

Desire of Ages,
606-607).

7. “We must avoid pain at all cost.” The idea here is that moral decisions that avoid suffering must be right. It is a form of “utilitarianism”—an ethical system based on pleasure/pain principle. The Christian version of this principle is that when you come to Jesus, there will be roses on your path. Christians have not been promised freedom from trials or pain. Sometimes, faithfulness to Christ invokes suffering. The Bible says “all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim 3:12). Jesus Himself said: “In the world you will have trials and tribulation; but cheer up, for I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Ethical holiness always exacts a price.

To the Philippians, the apostle Paul wrote: “It has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for His sake” (Phil. 1:29). Suffering is the indispensable mark of every true Christian and church. In the beatitudes Jesus pronounces a blessing to those who suffer for righteousness sake: Cf.

Matt 5:10-12; Luke 6:26

;

1 Cor 11:23-27

8. **“We must save life at all cost.”** The suggestion is that life is so important that we MUST save life at all cost—by whatever means necessary (even if it means lying or stealing or killing, etc.). *Objections:* Not biblical. We are not to “save life at all cost,” *but to be faithful at all cost.* Ecclesiastes 12:13-14—“Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” Rev 2:10—“Be faithful unto death.” Rev 12:11—“They love not their lives unto the death.”

9. **“We must always follow the example of Bible Characters in similar situations.”**

Appeal is often made to the failures of Bible characters (and God's apparent “acceptance,” “toleration,” or “sympathetic understanding” of their acts) as the justification for some of our decisions: For example, Rahab, the Hebrew midwives, Abraham, David, etc. to justify lying; Moses, OT Israel, etc. to justify anger, and killing (self-defense, warfare); Abraham, Jacob, David, Solomon, etc. to justify polygamy.

Objections.

Not very accurate. We shall look carefully at this assumption later this afternoon. For now, it is important simply to say that our only human example is Jesus Christ. If we want to follow some other examples—even in the Bible—we must do so when they were consciously doing God's will (1 Cor 11:1)

10. **“Sometimes there is no way out—unless we help God out.”** The idea is that we are unable to do God's will, and God is unable to help us.

Objections:

There is always a way: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor 10:13)

Jesus is the way out (“I am the way. . .” [John 14:6]) . We do not fully realize the resources available to every Christian to succeed. We do not believe that God can intervene in our affairs, and if He chooses, He will deliver His faithful children. We are to trust in God's Providence, no matter the situation. Esther 4:16 "If I perish, I perish." "The God we serve is able to save us from it [fiery furnace]. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods. . ." (Dan. 3:17-18).
For the true Christian, it is not “what if,” but “even if.”

Let's Count the Cost

The above are some of the mistaken assumptions upon which many of our ethical decisions are based. The bottom line is that we don't believe in God's moral absolutes, we don't trust Him, and we choose to chart our own course. Instead of seeking help from Him, many of us choose to put matters in our own hands. We have not counted the cost.

The "Tough Ethical Questions" were designed to explore to what extent we believe that God's Moral Laws are still applicable to us today. Do we really believe that the Ten Commandments are *commandments*, not merely Ten *suggestions*? Do we actually believe that they are still binding upon us, regardless of the different conditions or circumstances that face us? At issue are the following sets of questions: Do we trust God enough to believe that He knows what is best for us, and that He has *power* to sustain and deliver us? Shall we serve God even in illness, financial crises, embarrassment, pain, disappointment, ridicule, death, etc.? Or we will serve God only when things go our way?

What is number one (# 1) in your life? Is it your career, job, your father, mother, brother, sister, children, life? Is it your property or possessions? In the next few minutes I'd invite you to "count the cost," determining whether you really believe what we teach.

REVIEW Luke 14:25-35.

Have we counted the cost? God can only help us when we first realize that we are not able, they cry unto Him for help, and rely upon His resources.

What It Takes for a Revival

In these last days of earth's history, God is going to do a special work of revival among His people. We are told in the book *The Great Controversy*: "Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon His children" (*Great Controversy*, 464)

But this revival will take place only as the Law of God is restored to its rightful place in the life of God's people. "It is only as the law of God is restored to its rightful position that there can be a revival of primitive faith and godliness among His professed people" (*Great Controversy*, 478)

Could it be that we have not yet fully understood the nature of God's claim upon us? Without a complete understanding of the Law, we cannot understand the nature and power of sin; neither can we fully appreciate what God is willing to do for us through His Spirit.

There can be no true revival unless we restore Law to its rightful position in God's plan of salvation. The law reveals God's true character of love and points out sin. But the law cannot save us, and in our own strengths, we cannot keep the law. Only Jesus can save us, and He alone can give us power to lovingly obey God. This is why He says, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). He does this day by day, through the enabling power of the Spirit.

TRUE TO PRINCIPLE:

Standing for the Right Though the Heavens Fall

How to Resolve the 20 Tough Ethical Questions—Part I

Faithful Unto Death—Part 4

By

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1. Commit ahead of time to doing the right thing. We must make up our minds ahead of time to what we will and will not do. We do not allow the prevailing situation to determine whether we do right or wrong. E.g., Daniel (1:8) Joseph (Gen 39:7-9), Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego (Dan 3).

2. Rule out Wrong Options. We must not accept options that are contrary to God's will. Determine to do the right thing and believe that the Lord will show you what to do (Isa 30:21; Mark 13:11)

ILLUSTRATE: Lying to Nazi officers; 3-year old to school on Sabbath, etc.

3. Recognize that we are free moral agents, possessing freedom of *choice*. We must recognize that we all have choices. Don't believe such expressions: saying "I had no choice"; "I was forced against my will"; "I was simply following orders"; "I was born that way"; "The devil made me do it"; "My genes made me do it"; etc. (Josh 24:15; John 14:15; Rev 22:17; James 1:13-15).

4. Recognize that our moral choices have to do with the great controversy. Our tough tests and trials reveal whether or not you love God, but your ultimate loyalty. The fundamental issue at stake is: Do we trust God enough to believe that He knows what is best for us, and that He has *power* to sustain and deliver us? Shall we serve God even in illness, financial crises, embarrassment, pain, disappointment, ridicule, death, etc.? Or you will serve God only when things go your way? Our decision is a vote for or against God. Shall we glorify God or shall we betray and mock Him.

5.. Avoid rationalizations. *Rationalization* is coming up with good reasons for bad actions. It is applying a good purpose to something that is inherently wrong. The Bible condemns rationalization when it says: "there is a way that seems right to a man but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov 16:25). Also: "let him who thinks he stands take heed, lest he falls" (1 Cor 10:12).

ILLUSTRATIONS: World War II story in city of Europe; Dr. Yeboah's fax to me while in Russia;

6. Suffering: The price for a loyal commitment to Christ. Christians have not been promised freedom from trials. Sometimes, faithfulness to Christ invokes suffering. The Bible says “all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim 3:12). Jesus Himself said: “In the world you will have trials and tribulation; but cheer up, for I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). To the Philippians, the apostle Paul wrote: “It has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for His sake” (Phil. 1:29). Cf. Matt 5:10-12; Luke 6:26 ; 1Cor 11:23-27.

7. Sin: It always exacts costly consequences. Every sin, however small they may appear to be, have consequences. Those consequences may come in this life or in the next, but we can never escape the repercussions of moral compromise. Sin can result in the loss of self respect and credibility, diminished witness to those around us, devastation on family and church. It can be as deadly as AIDs. There is no such thing as a small sin. Once it is sin, it has consequences. The Bible says, “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23); Cf. Adam and Eve thought it was a small fruit; Uzzah thought that touching the ark was a small thing; Esau that it was a small portage

8. Recognize *fear* as the root problem. Fear is an expression of a lack of *faith* in God. “Every failure on the part of God's children was due to a lack of faith” (PP 657). Illustrate with the sin of lying to save life: Abraham, Isaac, David, Peter. Think of the times you have failed God--lying, cheating, stealing, engaging in immoral or unlawful relationships, etc. Was it not a result of a lack of faith in God? This is why the Bible repeatedly urges us to “fear not.”

9. Make God first in all situations. Do not put trust in your own judgement, but in God's. The first commandment teaches that God should be number one—not self, life, family, government, etc.. Jesus also teaches that loyalty to God should always come first—before “father, mother,

children, brother, sister, yea, your own life also.” A true disciple must “forsake all” and follow Christ. (Luke 14:25-33). *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not unto thine own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your path”* (Prov. 3:5-6).

10. The Scriptures should be our only guide. Because we are finite, and because we are sinners, we cannot on our own know God's will unless He Himself reveals it to us (2 Tim 3:17-19). This is why God has clearly revealed His will to us in His Word, the holy Bible. Through biblical *prohibitions, commands, examples*, and *principles* we can discover definitive answers to all our ethical questions.

“God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain ‘Thus said the Lord’ in its support” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 595, emphasis mine).

WISDOM FROM THE PAST

How to Resolve the 20 Tough Ethical Questions—Part II

Faithful Unto Death—Part 5

By

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11. Interpret Scripture Carefully to Discover the Abiding Norms. While it may appear that the Bible has not given explicit prescriptions on every conceivable issue, a careful study of the Scriptures will show that there are adequate norms of Christian conduct in the Bible: Values, Rules, Principles, Doctrines. But the clearest revelation of God's will is in the Moral Law, the Ten Commandments.

12. Learn from Bible Biographies and History. "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom 15:4). "Now these things were our examples...Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor 10:6, 11). Note the following guidelines:

--*Follow Bible characters when they were doing right; but avoid their mistakes when they were doing wrong.*

--*The fact that the Bible reports an event does not mean the Bible approves it.* Cf. Lot & his daughters; Moses murder of Egyptians.

--"Not all practices *described* by Scripture are thereby *endorsed* by Scripture as moral ideals. . . . The *precepts* and *commands of Scripture* have priority over the narrative passages in discerning the moral law."

--"*Divine approval of an individual in one aspect or area of his life does not entail and must not be extended to mean that there is a divine approval of that individual in all aspects of his character or conduct* ";

ILLUSTRATE: Rahab's lying (Joshua 2:1-14; 6:25). Did God commend her lie or her faith? **Heb . 11:31; James 2:25**

The only prescriptive Human Example set forth in Scripture is Jesus Christ. He alone lived without sin (1 Cor 11:1; Heb 4:16-18; 1 Pet 2:21-22).

13. Be careful how you interpret Old Testament Laws. Even though they may be useful for us, we must make a careful distinction between the various kinds of Old Testament laws. There were, for example, *the Moral Laws* (Ten Commandments),

Specific Laws to Individuals, health laws, ceremonial laws, and civil laws

. Some of these laws are historically limited, and may not have direct application.

14. Understand that there is no theocracy today. A theocracy is a nation ruled directly by God. In the theocratic system, it is assumed that what God prohibits is harmful to individuals and society, and disobedience of God's laws affects all in that society. Also, in the theocratic nation of Israel, (a) sin is equated with crime, (b) morality is legally enforced, and (c) punishments (e.g., capital punishment) are divinely sanctioned. Today, there is no longer a theocracy. Therefore, we cannot always apply OT theocratic laws to our political institutions today. A correct understanding of OT Israel's theocracy places a limitation on the legitimacy of wars and capital punishment (besides murder, in the OT capital punishment was meted out for at least 18 other offences). Refer to EGW's Comments on Theocracy--

PP

603, 761-764, (Appendix, note 8).

15. Seek guidance from the Spirit of Prophecy. Just as every religious persuasion recognizes the spiritual insights of their founders or pioneers, so Seventh-day Adventists cannot ignore the writings of Ellen G. White. Especially, since we believe that she was the recipient of the true Spirit of Prophecy (Rev 12:17; 19:10).

16. Decide or Choose to Obey God at Whatever Cost. Our highest obligation is not to "save life at all cost," but to lovingly obey God at whatever cost (Eccl 12:14; John 14:15). There may be times when it will appear that obedience to the moral law may not be good or helpful, and sometimes even harmful. However, in the long run, their validity will be sustained. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams" (1 Sam 15:22). At all times, we must seek to "obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29). It should be remembered that sometimes, obedience to God results in suffering and persecution (2 Tim 3:12). But we are to be "faithful unto death" (Rev

2:10). Examples: Joseph in Potiphar's house, jail, etc. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Daniel; John the Baptist, Stephen

17. Use only the right means or methods. Do not use your own means or methods (cf. Uzzah, children of Samuel who used "strange fire" before the Lord). We are told: "Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord deceitfully" (Jer. 48:10). *The end did not justify the means*

18. Depend on God's Unlimited Resources—He Has A Thousand Ways Out. His promises assure us that He is never caught off-guard by man's predicament or problems. He is never unprepared for what may appear to us as grave, un-solvable or emergency. Thus we are told: "God is our refuge; a very present help in trouble, therefore will we not fear" (Ps 46:1,2); "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps 27:1); "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all" (Ps 34:19); "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" (Heb 7:25).

"Jesus sees the end from the beginning." In every difficulty, He has His way prepared to bring relief. "Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing" (DA 330). We must therefore believe that **God will bring deliverance in His own good time, in His own good way, and to His own glory**

19. Resign fully to God's will. Like Jesus, we must say, "Not my will, your will be done." Know that His will is always the best. In life, He may be preparing you for the future. A complete surrender of the mind and will to God, is the only cure to the problem of lack of faith.

"Those who surrender their lives to His guidance and His service will never be placed in a position for which He has not made provision. Whatever our situation, if we are doers of His word, we have a Guide to direct our way; whatever our perplexity, we have a sure Counselor; whatever our sorrow, bereavement, or loneliness, we have a sympathizing Friend" (Ministry of Healing, 248-249).

20. Wait patiently upon the Lord. "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps 46:10); "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait; I say on the Lord" (Ps 27:14); "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa 40:31).

NO MATTER WHAT:

Uncompromising Loyalty in the End-Time

Compilations from the Writings of Ellen G. White

Faithful Unto Death—Part 6

by

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Ethics: The Science of Holiness: “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. Everyone who receives Christ as his personal Savior is privileged to possess these attributes.

This is the science of holiness

" (7 Testimonies, 276).

Biblical Holiness: "Holiness is ...an entire surrender to the will of God; it is living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; it is doing the will of our heavenly Father; it is trusting God in trial, in darkness as well as in light; it is walking by faith and not by sight; it is relying on God with unquestioning confidence, and resting in His love" (Sons and Daughters of God, 155)

Revival of Primitive Faith and Godliness: "It is only as the law of God is restored to its rightful position that there can be a revival of primitive faith and godliness among His professed people" (The Great Controversy, 478).

A. OUR ASSURANCE: Who Can Help Us Make the Tough Ethical Decisions?

TEXT: "For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are--yet without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Heb. 4:15-16).

1. "The Elder Brother of our race is by the eternal throne. He looks upon every soul who is turning his face toward Him as the Savior. He knows by experience what are the weaknesses of humanity, what are our wants, and where lies the strength of our temptations; for He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. He is watching over you, trembling child of God. Are you tempted? He will deliver. Are you weak? He will strengthen. Are you ignorant? He will enlighten. Are you wounded? He will heal. The Lord 'telleteth the number of the stars;' and yet 'He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.' Ps. 147:4, 3. 'Come unto Me,' is His invitation. Whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. Your spirit will be braced for endurance. The way will be opened for you to disentangle yourself from embarrassment and difficulty. The weaker and more helpless you know yourself to be, the stronger will you become in His strength. The heavier you burdens, the more blessed the rest in casting them upon the Burden Bearer. The rest that Christ offers depends upon conditions, but these conditions are plainly specified. They are those which all can comply. He tells us just how His rest is to be found" (*Desire of Ages*, 329).

2. "Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on the merits of the Savior. By prayer, by the study of His word, by faith in His abiding presence, the weakest of human beings may live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold them by a hand that will never let go" (*Ministry of Healing*, 182)

B. THE GREAT CONTROVERSY: What Is At Stake Each Time We Face Ethical Challenges?

TEXT: “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Rev 14:12)

1. “From the first, the great controversy had been upon the law of God. Satan had sought to prove that God was unjust, that his law was faulty, and that the good of the universe required it to be changed” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 69).

2. “It is on the law of God that the last great struggle of the controversy between Christ and His angels and Satan and his angels will come, and it will be decisive for all the world” (*Counsels on Stewardship*, 155)

3. “From Adam’s day to the present time the great controversy has been concerning obedience to God’s law” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 73).

4. “Satan had claimed that it was impossible for man to obey God’s commandments; and in our own strength it is true that we cannot obey them. But Christ came in the form of humanity, and by His perfect obedience he proved that humanity and divinity combined can obey every one of God’s precepts” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, 314).

5. “The Savior’s life of obedience maintained the claims of the law; it proved that the law could be kept in humanity, and showed the excellence of character that obedience would develop. All who obey as He did are likewise declaring that the law is ‘holy, and just, and good.’ Romans 7:12. On the other hand, all who break God’s commandments are sustaining Satan’s claim that the law is unjust and cannot be obeyed. Thus they second [approve of] the deceptions of the great adversary, and cast dishonor upon God” (*Desire of Ages*, 309).

6. “In His dealing with sin, God could employ only righteousness and truth. Satan could use what God could not—flattery and deceit. He had sought to falsify the world of God and had misrepresented His plan of government before the angels, claiming that God was not just in laying laws and rules upon the inhabitants of heaven; that in requiring submission and obedience from His creatures, He was seeking merely the exaltation of Himself. Therefore it must be demonstrated before the inhabitants of heaven, as well as of all the worlds, that God’s government was just, His law perfect” (*The Great Controversy*, 498).

C. THE STANDARD OF MORALITY: Can Human Beings Always Know Right from Wrong?

TEXT: “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God” (Micah 6:8; cf. Romans 1:18-20).

1. “The precepts of the Decalogue are adapted to all mankind and they were given for the

instruction and government of all. Ten precepts, brief, comprehensive, and authoritative, cover the duty of man to God and his fellow man; and all are based upon the great fundamental principle of love . . . (Luke 10:27). In the ten commandments, these principles are carried out in detail and made applicable to the condition and circumstances of man” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 305).

2. “The law of God existed before man was created. The angels were governed by it. Satan fell because he transgressed the principles of God’s government. After Adam and Eve were created, God made known to them His law. It was not then written, but was rehearsed to them by Jehovah After Adam’s sin and fall nothing was taken from the law of God. The principles of the Ten Commandments existed before the fall and were of a character suited to the condition of a holy order of beings. After the fall the principles of those precepts were not changed, but additional precepts were given to meet man in his fallen state” (*Story of Redemption*, 145).

3. “After the transgression of Adam the principles of the law were not changed, but were definitely arranged and expressed to meet man in his fallen condition” (*1 SDA Bible Commentary*, 1104).

4. “Adam and Eve, at their creation, had a knowledge of the law of God; they were acquainted with its claims upon them; its precepts were written upon their hearts. When man fell by transgression, the law was not changed, but a remedial system was established to bring him back to obedience” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 363).

5. "Adam taught his descendants the law of God, which law was handed down to the faithful through successive generations. The continual transgression of God's laws called for a flood of waters upon the earth. The law was preserved by Noah and his family, who for right-doing were saved in the ark by a miracle of God. Noah taught his descendants the Ten Commandments. The Lord preserved a people for Himself from Adam down, in whose hearts was His law [this includes Abraham and his descendants]" (*Story of Redemption*, 146).

6. "If the people of God had obeyed the principles of the Ten Commandments, there would have been no need of the specific directions given to Moses, which he wrote in a book, relative to their duty to God and to one another. The definite directions which the Lord gave to Moses in regard to the duty of His people to one another, and to the stranger, are the principles of the Ten Commandments simplified and given in a definite manner, that they need not err" (*Story of Redemption*, 149).

7. "God has given us His holy precepts, because He loves mankind. To shield us from the results of transgression He reveals the principles of righteousness. The law is an expression of the thought of God; when received in Christ, it becomes our thought. It lifts us above the power of natural desires and tendencies, above temptations that lead to sin. God desires us to be happy, and He gave us the precepts of the law that in obeying them we might have joy" (*Desire of Ages*, 308).

8. "The Pharisees had exalted the first four commandments, which point out the duty of man to his Maker, as of far greater consequence than the other six, which define man's duty to his fellow-man. . . . The first four of the ten commandments are summed up in the one precept, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.' The last six are included in the other, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' Both these commandments are an expression of the

principle of love. The first cannot be kept and the second broken, nor can the second be kept while the first is broken. . . . And since all the commandments are summed up in love to God and man, it follows that not one precept can be broken without violating this principle. Thus Christ taught His hearers that the law of God is not so many separate precepts, some of which are of great importance, while others are of small importance, and may with impunity be ignored. Our Lord presents the first four and the last six commandments as a divine whole, and teachers that love to God will be shown by obedience to all His commandments” (*Desire of Ages*, 606-607).

D. IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBILITY: Is Loving Obedience Possible in a Sinful World?

TEXT: “Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:12).

“Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe” (Philippians 2:14-15).

1. “God has given no commandments which cannot be obeyed by all” (*Desire of Ages*, 204).

2. "In order to be a commandment breaker it is not necessary that we should trample upon the whole moral code. If one precept is disregarded, we are transgressors of the sacred law. But if we would be true commandment keepers we should strictly observe every requirement that God has enjoined upon us" (*4 Testimonies*, 253).

3. "God requires of all His subjects obedience, entire obedience to all His commandments" (*6 SDA Bible Commentary*, 1072).

4. "By His own obedience to the law, Christ testified to its immutable character and proved that through His grace it could be perfectly obeyed by every son and daughter of Adam" (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 49).

5. "He [Christ] came to demonstrate the fact that humanity, allied by living faith to divinity, can keep all the commandments of God" (*Review and Herald*, November 15, 1898, p. 730).

6. "Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, 333).

7. "If we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses" (*Desire of Ages*, 668).

8. "Those who have the mind of Christ will keep all of God's commandments, irrespective of circumstances" (*Sanctified Life*, 67).

9. "The law of God will be satisfied with nothing short of perfection, of perfect and entire obedience to all its claims. To come half-way to its requirements, and not render perfect and thorough obedience, will avail nothing. The worldling and the infidel admire consistency, and have ever been powerfully convicted that God was of a truth with his people, when their works correspond with their faith" (*1 Testimonies*, 416).

E. "THE LESSER OF TWO EVILS": What If We Don't Have Any Choice?

TEXT: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve..." (Josh. 24:15).

"But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death" (James 1:14-15)

1. "Man was created a free moral agent. Like the inhabitants of all other worlds, he must be subjected to the test of obedience; but he is never brought into such a position that yielding to evil becomes a matter of necessity. No temptation or trial is permitted to come to him which he is unable to resist" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 331-332).

2. "Everyone may place his will on the side of the will of God, may choose to obey Him, and by thus linking himself with divine agencies, he may stand where nothing can force him to do evil" (*Education*, 289).

3. "God has made ample provision for his people; and if they rely upon his strength, they will never become the sport of circumstances. The strongest temptation cannot excuse sin" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 421).

4. "No man can be forced to transgress" (*5 Testimonies*, 177).

5. "So long as we surrender the will to God, and trust in His strength and wisdom, we shall be guided in safe paths, to fulfill our appointed part in His great plan" (*Desire of Ages*, 209).

F. ◻ PRESUMED CONSEQUENCES: What If Harm Will Result?

TEXT: “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. ◻ But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Dan. 3:17, 18).

“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. ◻ And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me cannot be my disciple. . . So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26-27, 33).

1. “In deciding upon any course of action we are not to ask whether we can see that harm will result from it, but whether it is in keeping with the will of God” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 634).

2. “True Christian principle will not stop to weigh consequences” (*Sanctified Life*, 39).

3. "Christ ambassadors have nothing to do with consequences. They must perform their duty and leave results with God" (*Great Controversy*, 609-610).

4. "We should choose the right because it is right, and leave consequences with God" (*Great Controversy*, 460).

5. "We should not follow impulse, nor rely on the judgment of men; we should look to the revealed will of God, and walk according to his definite commandment, no matter what circumstances may surround us. God will take care of the results" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 622).

6. "When the laws of men conflict with the word and law of God, we are to obey the latter, whatever the consequences may be" (*1 Testimonies*, 201-202).

7. "Our only safe course is to render obedience to all his requirements, at whatever cost" (*5 Testimonies*, 365).

8. "The deepest poverty, the greatest self-denial, with His approval, is better than riches, honors, ease, and friendship without it" (*Great Controversy*, 622).

G. □ NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH: What About Lying For a Just Cause?

TEXT: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" (Exo 20:16)

"You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another" (Lev 19:11)

"A worthless person, a wicked man, goes about with crooked speech, winks with his eyes, scrapes with his feet, points with his finger, with perverted heart devises evil, continually sowing discord" (Prov 6:12-14)

"Lying lips are an abomination the Lord" (Prov 12:22)

"Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord deceitfully" (Jer. 48:10).

"But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matt 5:37)

“Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another” (Eph 4:25)

1. “An intention to deceive is what constitutes falsehood. By a glance of the eye, a motion of the hand, an expression of the countenance, a falsehood may be told as effectually as by words” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 309).

“Let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one’ [Matt 5:37]. These words condemn all those meaningless phrases and expletives that border on profanity. They condemn the deceptive compliments, the evasion of truth, the flattering phrases, the exaggerations, the misrepresentations in trade, that are current in society . . . A glance, a word, even an intonation of the voice, may be vital with falsehood. Even facts may be so stated as to convey a false impression. And ‘whatsoever is more than’ truth, ‘is of the evil one’ [Matt 5:37]” (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 67-68).

2. “Truth is of God; deception, in every one of its myriad forms, is of Satan; and whoever in any way departs from the straight line of truth is betraying himself into the power of the wicked one” (*Thoughts from Mount of Blessing*, 68).

3. “Falsehood and deception of every cast is sin against the God of truth and verity” (*4 Testimonies*, 336).

4. "Never prevaricate, never tell an untruth in precept or in example. . . . Be straight and undeviating. Even a slight prevarication should not be allowed" (*My Life Today*, 331).

5. "He who utters untruths sells his soul in a cheap market. His falsehoods may seem to serve in emergencies; he may thus seem to make business advancement that he could not gain by fair dealing; but he finally reaches the place where he can trust no one. Himself a falsifier, he has no confidence in the word of others" (*My Life Today*, 331)

6. "God wants men in His service, under His banner, to be strictly honest, unimpeachable in character, that their tongues shall not utter a semblance of untruth. The tongue must be true, the eyes must be true, the actions wholly and entirely such as God can commend" (*Child Guidance*, 52).

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7. "An adherence to the strictest principles of truth will frequently cause present inconveniences and may even involve temporal loss, but it will increase the reward in the future life" (*4 Testimonies*, 337).

8. "God requires that truthfulness shall mark His people, even in the greatest peril" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 656).

9. "Even life itself should not be purchased with the price of falsehood" (4 *Testimonies*, 336).

10. "There are those who have so closely identified themselves with the truth that nothing, not even martyrdom and death, could sever them from it. Those who would evade the truth by silence, fearing to offend someone else, testify to a lie. . . . Let us despise falsifying. Let us never by a word or act or by silence testify to a lie" (*In Heavenly Places*, 179)

11. "Never, never should the physician feel that he may prevaricate. It is not always safe and best to lay before the invalid the full extent of his danger. The truth may not all be spoken on all occasions, but never speak a lie. If it is important for the good of the invalid not to alarm him lest such a course might prove fatal, do not lie to him" (*Medical Ministry*, 38).

12. "By precept and example, parents are to teach their children never to speak falsely. When a falsehood is uttered, the heavenly angels turn away in sorrow, grieved that Christ's heritage should so dishonor him. One falsehood spoken prepares the way for another. The Lord desires all to adhere strictly to the truth, to be straightforward in every transaction. Never tell a lie, because thus you hurt your own soul, and disgrace yourself in your own eyes" (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 12, 1911).

13. “The least departure from truthfulness and rectitude is a transgression of the law of God. Continual indulgence in sin accustoms the person to a habit of wrongdoing, but does not lessen the aggravated character of sin. God has established immutable principles, which He cannot change without a revision of His whole nature.... Those who disregard the requirements of God in this life would not respect His authority were they in heaven” (*4 Testimonies*, 312).

14. “All who make untruthful statements . . . are serving him who has been a liar from the beginning. . . . Put away all prevarication and exaggeration. Never make a false statement. For the sake of your own soul and the souls of others, be true in your utterances. Never speak or act a falsehood. The truth alone will bear to be repeated. A firm adherence to truth is essential to the formation of Christian character” (*In Heavenly Places*, 179).

H. MOTIVES AND MORALITY: “What If My Motives or Intentions Are Right? What If I’m Sincere”?

TEXT: “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov 16:24). □

“Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

1. "We need to carefully search our hearts and study our motives" (*Welfare Ministry*, 23).

2. "It is not enough to have good intentions; it is not enough to do what a man thinks is right or what the minister tells him is right. His soul's salvation is at stake, and he should search the Scriptures for himself" (*Great Controversy*, 598).

3. "Faith in a lie will not have a sanctifying influence upon the life or character. No error is truth, or can be made truth by repetition, or by faith in it. Sincerity will never save a soul from the consequences of believing an error. Without sincerity there is no religion, but sincerity in a false religion will never save a man. I may be perfectly sincere in following a wrong road, but that will not make it the right road, or bring me to the place I wished to reach" (*2 Selected Messages*, 56).

4. "Good intentions, good resolutions, good acts, can not be accepted as substitutes for repentance, faith, and willing obedience" (*Signs of the Times*, November 7, 1896)

5. "It is the love of self, the desire for an easier way than God has appointed, that leads to the substitution of human theories and traditions for the divine precepts" (*Desire of Ages*, 409).

6. "God classes as idolaters those who trust in their own wisdom" (*1 SDA Bible Commentary*, 1

105).

I. WHEN LIFE IS AT STAKE: Isn't "Saving Life At All Cost" the Highest Value?

TEXT: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl 12:13)

" . . . They loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev 12:11).

" . . . Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10)

1. "Choose poverty, reproach, separation from friends, or any suffering rather than to defile the soul with sin. Death before dishonor or the transgression of God's law should be the motto of every Christian" (*5 Testimonies*, 147).

2. "It is better to die than to sin; better to want than to defraud; better to hunger than to lie" (*4 Testimonies*, 495).

3. Even in this life it is not for our good to depart from the will of our Father in heaven. When we learn the power of His word, we shall not follow the suggestions of Satan in order to obtain food or to save our lives. Our only questions will be, What is God's command? and what is His promise? Knowing these, we shall obey the one, and trust the other" (*Desire of Ages*, 121).

4. "The young man who makes the Bible his guide need not mistake the path of duty and of safety. That Book will teach him to preserve his integrity of character, to be truthful, to practice no deception. It will teach him that he must never transgress God's law in order to accomplish a desired object, even though to obey involves a sacrifice. It will teach him that the blessing of heaven will not rest upon him if he departs from the path of right doing; that although men may appear to prosper in disobedience, they will surely reap the fruit of their sowing" (*Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, 449-450).

5. "God has promised to care for those who obey His commandments" (*Evangelism*, 240).

6. "While true faith trusts wholly in Christ for salvation, it will lead to perfect conformity to the law of God" (*6 SDA Bible Commentary*, 1073).

7. "Christ, our example, did nothing to vindicate or deliver Himself. He committed His case to God. So His followers are not to accuse or condemn, or to resort to force in order to deliver themselves"; (*Christ Object Lesson*, 171).

8. "The season of distress before God's people will call for a faith that will not falter. His children must make it manifest that He is the only object of their worship, and that no consideration, not even that of life itself, can induce them to make the least concession to false worship. To the loyal heart, the commands of sinful, finite men will sink into insignificance beside the word of the eternal God. Truth will be obeyed though the result be imprisonment or exile or death"; (*Prophets and Kings*, 512-513).

J. BIBLE CHARACTERS: Can't We Follow Their Examples?

TEXT: "Be followers of me, even as I also am of Christ"; (1 Cor. 11:1). □

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. . . Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded. . . Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. □ Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample"; (Phil. 3:12-17).

1. "Those who question why the word of God brings out the sins of His people... should consider that it was all written for their instruction, that they may avoid the evils recorded and imitate only the righteousness of those who served the Lord" (*4 Testimonies*, 12).

2. "Men whom God favored, and to whom He entrusted great responsibilities, were sometimes overcome by temptation and committed sin.... Their lives, with all their faults and follies, are open before us, both for our encouragement and warning. If they had been represented as without fault, we, with our sinful nature, might despair at our own mistakes and failures. But seeing where others struggled through discouragements like our own, where they fell under temptation as we have done, and yet took heart again and conquered through the grace of God, we are encouraged in our striving after righteousness.... On the other hand, the record of their lives may serve as a warning to us. It shows that God will by no means clear the guilty" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 238).

3. "Very many, reading the history of David's fall, have inquired, 'Why has this record been made public? Why did God see fit to throw open to the world this dark passage in the life of one so highly honored of Heaven?' The prophet, in his reproof to David, had declared concerning his sin, 'By this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.... Thus a reproach has been brought upon religion, God and His word have been blasphemed, souls have been hardened in unbelief, and many, under a cloak of piety, have become bold in sin. But the history of David furnishes no countenance to sin. It was when he was walking in the counsel of God that he was called a man after God's own heart. When he sinned, this ceased to be true of him until by repentance he had returned to the Lord'" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 722-723).

4. "The law of God is the only true standard of moral perfection. That law was practically exemplified in the life of Christ" (*Sanctified Life*, 80).

K. OUR PERFECT EXAMPLE: Who Is Humanity's Only Example?

TEXT: For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously (1 Pet 2:21-23).

“Jesus was a perfect pattern of what we should be,

He was the strictest observer of His Father's law,

yet He moved in perfect freedom.

He had all the fervor of the enthusiast,

yet He was calm, sober, and self-possessed.

He was elevated above the common affairs of the world,

yet He did not exclude Himself from society.

He dined with publicans and sinners,

played with little children,

and took them in His arms and blessed them.

He graced the wedding with His presence.

He shed tears at the grave of Lazarus.

He was a lover of the beautiful in nature and used the lilies

to illustrate the value of natural simplicity in the sight

of God, above artificial display.

He used the occupation of the husbandman to illustrate

the most sublime truths...

“His zeal never degenerated into passion

nor His consistency into selfish obstinacy.

His benevolence never savored of weakness

nor His sympathy of sentimentalism.

He combined the innocence and simplicity of the child

with manly strength, all-absorbing devotion to God

with tender love for man.

He possessed commanding dignity combined

with winning grace of humility.

He manifested unyielding firmness with gentleness.

May we live daily in close connection

with this perfect, faultless character.

"We have not six patterns to follow, nor five;

we have only one, and that is Christ Jesus."

(In Heavenly Places, p. 54

L. ISRAEL'S THEOCRACY: Are the Old Testament Civil Laws Binding Today? □

TEXT: "Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father." 1 Chronicles 29:23. David's throne was the throne of the Lord, and Solomon sat on the *throne of the Lord* as king over the earthly kingdom of God” (1 Chron 29:23, emphasis mine)

□ "Thou . . . shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:31-33).

□ "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me; that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:29, 30). □

"In the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew

19:28).

□ **"When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, *then* shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations" (Matthew 25:31, 32, emphasis mine).**□

“The government of Israel was administered in the name and by the authority of God. The work of Moses, of the seventy elders, of the rulers and judges, was simply to enforce the laws that God had given; they had no authority to legislate for the nation. This was, and continued to be, the condition of Israel's existence as a nation. From age to age men inspired by God were sent to instruct the people and to direct in the enforcement of the laws.

The Lord foresaw that Israel would desire a king, but He did not consent to a change in the principles upon which the state was founded. The king was to be the vicegerent of the Most High. God was to be recognized as the Head of the nation, and His law was to be enforced as the supreme law of the land” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 603).

“The question has been raised, and is now much agitated, If a theocracy was good in the time of Israel, why would not a theocratical form of government be equally good for this time? The answer is easy:

A theocracy is a government which derives its power immediately from God. The government of Israel was a true theocracy. That was really a government of God. . . . When Solomon succeeded to the kingdom in the place of David his father, the record is: "Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father." 1 Chronicles 29:23. David's throne was the throne of the Lord, and Solomon sat on the *throne of the Lord* as king over the earthly kingdom of God. . . .

“The kingdom was then subject to Babylon. When Babylon fell, and Medo-Persia succeeded, it was overturned the first time. When Medo-Persia fell and was succeeded by Greece, it was overturned the second time. When the Greek empire gave way to Rome, it was overturned the third time. And then says the word, ‘It shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him.’ Who is He whose right it is? ‘Thou . . . shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.’ Luke 1:31-33. And while He was here as ‘that Prophet,’ a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, the night in which He was betrayed He Himself declared, ‘My kingdom is not of this world.’ Thus the throne of the Lord has been removed from this world and will ‘be no more, until He come whose right it is,’ and then it will be given Him. And that time is the end of this world, and the beginning of ‘the world to come.’ . . .

“‘When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, *then* shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations.’ Matthew 25:31, 32. . . .

“Until that time the kingdom of Christ cannot be established on the earth. His kingdom is not of this world. His followers are to account themselves ‘strangers and pilgrims on the earth.’ Paul says, ‘Our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.’ Hebrews 11:13; Philippians 3:20, R.V.

“Since the kingdom of Israel passed away, God has never delegated authority to any man or body of men to execute His laws as such. ‘Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.’ Romans 12:19. Civil governments have to do with the relations of man with man; but they have nothing whatever to do with the duties that grow out of man's relation to God.

“Except the kingdom of Israel, no government has ever existed on the earth in which God by inspired men directed the affairs of state. Whenever men have endeavored to form such a government as that of Israel, they have, of necessity, taken it upon themselves to interpret and enforce the law of God. They have assumed the right to control the conscience, and thus have usurped the prerogative of God.

“In the former dispensation, while sins against God were visited with temporal penalties, the judgments executed were not only by divine sanction, but under His direct control, and by His command. Sorcerers were to be put to death. Idolaters were to be slain. Profanity and sacrilege were punished with death. Whole nations of idolaters were to be exterminated. But the infliction of these penalties was directed by Him who reads the hearts of men, who knows the measure of their guilt, and who deals with His creatures in wisdom and mercy. When men, with human frailties and passions, undertake to do this work, it needs no argument to show that the door is opened to unrestrained injustice and cruelty. The most inhuman crimes will be perpetrated, and all in the sacred name of Christ.

“From the laws of Israel, which punished offenses against God, arguments have been drawn to prove the duty of punishing similar sins in this age. All persecutors have employed them to justify their deeds. The principle that God has delegated to human authority the right to control the conscience is the very foundation of religious tyranny and persecution. But all who reason thus lose sight of the fact that we are now living in a different dispensation, under conditions wholly different from those of Israel; that the kingdom of Israel was a type of the kingdom of Christ, which will not be set up until His second coming; and that the duties which pertain to

man's relation to God are not to be regulated or enforced by human authority" (Appendix [Note 8], *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 761-764)

M. □ DIVINE POWER: Do We Have the Strength to Endure?

TEXT: "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. □ And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. □ But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

1. "Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service of God supreme, will find perplexities vanish and a plain path before their feet" (*Ministry of Healing*, 481).

2. "Too many, in planning for a brilliant future, make an utter failure. Let God plan for you. As a little child, trust to the guidance of Him who will 'keep the feet of His saints.' 1 Samuel 2:9. God never leads His children other wise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning and discern the glory of the purpose which they are

fulfilling as co-workers with Him" (*Ministry of Healing*, 479).

3. "Those who surrender their lives to His guidance and His service will never be placed in a position for which He has not made provision. Whatever our situation, if we are doers of His word, we have a Guide to direct our way; whatever our perplexity, we have a sure Counselor; whatever our sorrow, bereavement, or loneliness, we have a sympathizing Friend" (*Ministry of Healing*, 248-249).

4. "To all who are reaching out to feel the guiding hand of God, the moment of greatest discouragement is the time when divine help is nearest" (*Desire of Ages*, 528).

5. "If we plan according to our own ideas, the Lord will leave us to our own mistakes. But when, after following His directions, we are brought into strait places, He will deliver us. We are not to give up in discouragement, but in every emergency we are to seek help from Him who has infinite resources at His command. . . . He will keep every soul that is brought into perplexity through trying to keep the way of the Lord" (*Desire of Ages*, 369).

6. "Often the follower of Christ is brought where he cannot serve God and carry forward his worldly enterprises. Perhaps it appears that obedience to some plain requirement of God will cut off his means of support. Satan would make him believe that he must sacrifice his conscientious convictions. But the only thing in our world upon which we can rely is the word of

God. . . Matt. 6:33 (*Desire of Ages*, 121).

7. "Those who take Christ at His word, and surrender their souls to His keeping, their lives to His ordering, will find peace and quietude. Nothing of the world can make them sad when Jesus makes them glad by His presence" (*Desire of Ages*, 331).

8. "When in faith we take hold of His strength, he will change, wonderfully change, the most hopeless, discouraging outlook. He will do this for the glory of His name" (*Prophets and Kings*, 260).

9. "It is the work of faith to rest in God in the darkest hour, to feel, however sorely tried and tempest tossed, that our Father is at the helm. The eye of faith alone can look beyond the things of time to estimate aright the worth of the eternal riches" (*Acts of the Apostles*, 575, 576).

10. "Angels are round about those who are willing to be taught in divine things; and in the time of great necessity they will bring to their remembrance the very truths which are needed" (*Great Controversy*, 600).

N. OUR DAILY CHALLENGE: What Does Christ Expect from Me Today? □

TEXT: "For we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of men" (2 Cor. 8:21).

1. "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 [compass] needle to the [north] pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall" (*Education*, 57).

2. "That faith which will live through the time of trouble must be daily in exercise now" (*Story of Redemption*, 99).

3. "The mind must be trained through daily test to habits of fidelity, to a sense of the claims of right and duty above inclination and pleasure. Minds thus trained do not waver between right and wrong, as the reed trembles in the wind; but as soon as matters come before them, they discern at once that principle is involved, and they instinctively choose the right without long debating the matter. They are loyal because they have trained themselves in habits of faithfulness and truth" (*3 Testimonies*, 22).

4. "My heart aches when I see so many who are satisfied with the cheap experience, an experience that costs them but little" (*9 Testimonies*, 103).

5. "You must represent Christ to the world. It must be your daily study how you can learn to work the works of God. His followers are to be living epistles, 'known and read of all men'" (*Messages to the Young People*, 348).

6. "Now is the time for God's people to show themselves true to principle. When the religion of Christ is most held in contempt, when his law is most despised, then should our zeal be the warmest and our courage and firmness the most unflinching. To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few,--this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason" (*5 Testimonies*, 136).

7. "When the people of God are brought into strait places, and apparently there is no escape for them, the Lord alone must be their dependence" (*Prophets and Kings*, 257).

8. "We should now seek a deep and living experience in the things of God. We have not a moment to lose. Events of vital importance are taking place around us; we are on Satan's enchanted ground" (*Great Controversy*, 601).

O. THE FINAL CRISIS: How Do I prepare for the Final Crisis?

TEXT: "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe"; (Philippians 2:14-15).

1. "Day by day God instructs His children. By the circumstances of the daily life He is preparing them to act their part upon that wider stage to which His providence has appointed them. it is the issue of the daily test that determines their victory or defeat in life's great crisis"; (*Desire of Ages*, 382).

2. "Those who come up to every point, and stand every test, and overcome, be the price what it may, have heeded the counsel of the True Witness, and they will be fitted by the latter rain for translation"; (*2 Spiritual Gifts*, 226).

3. "None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict. To every soul will come the searching test: Shall I obey God rather than men?"; (*Great Controversy*, 593, 594).

4. "As in the days of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, so in the closing period of earth's history the Lord will work mightily in behalf of those who stand steadfastly for the right. He who walked with the Hebrew worthies in the fiery furnace will be with His followers wherever they are. His abiding presence will comfort and sustain. In the midst of the time of trouble--trouble such as has not been since there was a nation--His chosen ones will stand unmoved"; (*Prophets and Kings*, 513).

5. "The season of distress before God's people will call for a faith that will not falter. His children must make it manifest that He is the only object of their worship, and that no consideration, not even that of life itself, can induce them to make the least concession to false worship. To the loyal heart, the commands of sinful, finite men will sink into insignificance beside the word of the eternal God. Truth will be obeyed though the result be imprisonment or exile or death"; (*Prophets and Kings*, 512-513).

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

A Compelling Motivation to Hold On

Revelation 2:8-11

Faithful Unto Death—Part 7

By

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“Why is it, then, that persecution seems in a great degree to slumber? The only reason is that the church has conformed to the world's standard and therefore awakens no opposition. The religion which is current in our day is not of the pure and holy character that marked the Christian faith in the days of Christ and His apostles. It is only because of the spirit of compromise with sin, because the great truths of the word of God are so indifferently regarded, because there is so little vital godliness in the church, that Christianity is apparently so popular with the world. Let there be a revival of the faith and power of the early church, and the spirit of persecution will be revived, and the fires of persecution will be rekindled” (*Great Controversy*, 48).

Christ's Letters to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2-3)

Letters are addressed to the seven “angels” of the churches to be read to their respective congregations. The word *angel* (Greek = *angelos*) means “messenger”—one who brings God’s message. The messenger (“angel”) can be supernatural beings (e.g., real angels, such as Gabriel; cf. Heb 1:13-14), or he can be non-supernatural messenger (e.g., human beings like John the Baptist, disciples of John, disciples of Jesus, two spies; cf. Mark 1:2; Luke 7:24; Luke 9:52; James 2:25). Thus, the “seven angels” of Revelation 2 & 3 are the *ministers* or pastors/elders of the seven congregations.

How To Read Letters

The letters can be read as spiritual messages: 1. To the specific local congregations of the first century that are named. 2. To all other Christian churches. 3. As predictive prophecy—a history of the seven eras of the Christian church from John’s day to the end of the world. 4. To the various conditions of the Christian’s spiritual journey..

Smyrna: A Suffering Church

The Christian church at Smyrna was a suffering church. Twice, their experience is described as a “tribulation” (vv. 9, 10)—a word which in the original language (*thlipsis*) denotes “crushing pressure.” Though living in one of the wealthiest cities of Asia Minor, the church was in deep poverty. It was being slandered and persecuted by people who claimed to be religious. And there were signs in the horizon that many of the church members in Smyrna were going to be thrown in jail and even killed.

Types of Tribulation in Smyrna

1. Poverty (v. 9). The church at Smyrna was suffering from poverty for many reasons:

2. Slander (v.9). The church at Smyrna was also being slandered. False rumors were circulated against them. They were misrepresented and caricatured as:

According to Jesus, though the church in Smyrna was already experiencing the pains of poverty and slander, more tribulations was yet to come.

3. Imprisonment (v.10).

4. Death (v.10).

Christ's Comfort

1. Do Not Fear (v.10)

2. Be faithful unto death (v.10)

NOTE: First, we must not fear. Fear is an expression of a lack of faith. And we are told that "Every failure on the part of God's children was due to a lack of faith" (PP 657). The Bible repeatedly urges us not to fear: "fear not;" "be not afraid;" "be not dismayed" etc. Someone has estimated that there are about 366 "fear nots" in the Bible—one for each day's trials, and an extra one for the leap year. Second, we are to remain faithful, even unto death. Faithfulness challenges us to "hold on." It is not enough to start a journey. We must also finish it. On another occasion, Jesus said: "He that endures to the end shall be saved.."

Motivation to Hold On

1. He is _____ (v.8)

2. He's _____ (v.8)

3. He _____ (v.9)

4. He Offers a _____ (v.9)

5. He Is _____ (v.10)

6. He'll _____ (vv. 10, 11)

Examples of Sacrifice & Commitment

1. Jesus.

2. Old Testament Believers:

3. The Early Church:

4. The Protestant Reformers:

5. Today's Faithful Christians