

PARCHMENT

AND HE SAID UNTO ME, WRITE: FOR THESE WORDS ARE TRUE AND FAITHFUL.

REVELATION 21:5



*Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart:
for consider how great things he hath done for you.
1 Samuel 12:24*

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF LOVE

Each day we are faced with choices and tempted to indulge the selfish nature. Yet these temptations are no more about turning on the television or wearing jewellery than they are about the day or the hour in which they come.

Benumbed by the apparent appeal of pleasure, wealth or pride, we are lured into the enemy's trap, believing that the only act we're committing is sin. Yet dig a little deeper and the real issue becomes clear. You have given the adversary your worship. The real object all along was your heart.

We are well familiar with Ephesians 6:12; a verse which casts our lives in light of the great controversy between Christ and Satan.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Ephesians 6:12

We know that we at war with the enemy. None of us would intentionally pay him homage or give him our loyalty. Yet each time principle is compromised, we are doing just that. Of course, we know that in the end times, the question of worship will take centre stage under the banner of Sunday law and the mark of the beast. Yet do we realise that to whom we pay our worship is a question we face today? Do we recognise that in yielding to temptation, we are giving our honour

and loyalty to the very one who has caused our souls to ache?

It goes without saying that this is something none of us want. Yet in our search for a solution, we're often deceived into thinking that we must cease from sin and become righteous before we can seek our Saviour in prayer and be embraced in His arms. Is this what experience has taught us? On the contrary, our lives testify to the fact that we cannot gain victory by human effort alone, however well-intentioned it may be. Even the apostle Paul was not exempt from this fact, but proclaims it as a pharisee to the Gentile church.

Romans 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.



If the answer is not in our flesh, which Paul declares “dwelleth no good thing”, how can we find the power to resist sin? What can protect us from falling prey to the superficial plots of the devil?

Well, if sin results in the giving of our hearts to the enemy, then the opposite is also true. Giving our hearts to the Saviour is the only way to keep us from sinning. Without doubt, the clearest guide to godliness I’ve found is this:

“If the heart is right, your words, your dress, your acts will all be right.” {1T 158.1}

In a single sentence Sister White shows that right-doing follows the consecration of the sin-burdened heart to Jesus. When one daily surrenders their life and will to Christ, right-doing is the natural response. Just as the merchant man sold all that he had to buy the pearl of great price, he who counts Christ as their treasure will keep their attention steadfast on Him. It isn’t a chore or a burden - as the Christian life is so often represented - but the joy of one’s life.

The psalmist wasn’t lying when he said: “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart”. Psalm 40:8. Loving the commandments of God and cherishing the knowledge that your obedience makes your merciful Creator glad, is the natural state of the converted soul.

Indeed, in rebuttal to the false notion that the Christian life is one of constant trial and sorrow, Sister White writes:

“I would not dishonor my Master so much as to admit that a careless, trifling, prayerless person is a Christian. No; a Christian has victory over his besetments, over his passions.” {1T 158.1}

The Christian’s life is one of victory. His worship is from the heart. His obedience is uncontrived. And his prayers are earnest and contrite.

How do we partake of this experience? How do we generate a love for Jesus that is stronger than our cultivated tendencies for evil?

Every converted Christian has a different story, but one thing is certain. They all recognised their need for a Saviour. And through earnest, unyielding prayer, they were assured of Jesus’ love for them;

they felt the Comforter touch their weary souls; and they loved Him “because He first loved us”.

Times of trial can be our greatest blessings, because in them God leads us to recognise our need of Him. In opportunities such as these, Satan will seek earnestly to keep you from prayer, for he knows that he would suffer great loss.

“But you must say to Satan, “It is written” that “men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” We should pray until we do have the burden of our wants upon our souls; and if we persevere, we shall have it. The Lord will imbue us with His Holy Spirit. The Lord knows, and the Devil knows, that we cannot resist the temptations of Satan without power from on high. For this reason the evil one seeks to hinder us from laying hold upon Him who is mighty to save.” {RH October 30, 1888, par. 15}

Throughout her writings, Sister White stresses the importance of persevering in prayer until you receive the strength you desire. She implores us:

“Do not leave your closet until you feel strong in God; then watch, and just as long as you watch and pray you can keep these evil besetments under, and the grace of God can and will appear in you.” {1T 158.2}

Again she writes:

“Go daily to the Lord for instruction and guidance; depend upon God for light and knowledge. Pray for this instruction and this light, until you get it. It will not avail for you to ask, and then forget the thing for which you prayed. Keep your mind upon your prayer. You can do this while working with your hands. You can say, Lord, I believe; with all my heart I believe Let the Holy Spirit’s power come upon me.”—(Fundamentals of Christian Education, 531.) Pr 157.1

Sister White urges us to wrestle in prayer as Jacob did. She reminds us that “Jesus in the garden sweat great drops of blood; you must make an effort.”

“Jacob prevailed because he was persevering and determined. His victory is an evidence of the power of importunate prayer. All who will lay hold of God’s promises, as he did, and be as earnest and persevering as he was, will succeed as he

succeeded. Those who are unwilling to deny self, to agonize before God, to pray long and earnestly for His blessing, will not obtain it.” {GC 621.2}

Notice the energy, determination and earnestness which characterised Jacob’s struggle. As the statement continues, Sister White highlights the magnitude of wrestling with God in prayer.

“Wrestling with God—how few know what it is! How few have ever had their souls drawn out after God with intensity of desire until every power is on the stretch. When waves of despair which no language can express sweep over the suppliant, how few cling with unyielding faith to the promises of God.” {GC 621}

When we truly recognise our need for Jesus, when our souls are drawn out “with intensity of desire until every power is on the stretch,” and we persevere with importunate prayer, we will have a living experience of the strength and peace the Comforter brings. Then, we will be motivated by a power stronger than self. We will long to seek Him daily. We will want to share our story with others. We will strive to know him better, and develop a character which more and more reflects His love.

Search your heart and seek Him today. Don’t worry about tomorrow. Don’t fret about giving up the sins you enjoy. Don’t wait until your guilt resides. “Come unto me,” he says, “all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” For when you come to me in love, you’ll find that “my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”