

1. The Church at Ephesus

Biblical material: *Acts 19, 20:17-38.*

Quotes:

- The early church leader Augustine was once accosted by a heathen who showed him his idol and said, “Here is my god; where is thine?” Augustine replied, “I cannot show you my God; not because there is no God to show but because you have no eyes to see Him.” *Source unknown*
- We treat God as the police treat a man when he has been arrested; whatever He does will be used in evidence against him. *C.S. Lewis*
- It were better to have no opinion of God at all than such an one as is unworthy of him; for the one is only unbelief--the other is contempt. *Plutarch*

Questions

Which god—Diana (Artemis) or Christ? Why did the crowd riot in Ephesus—what was their preoccupation? How would you try to present the true God in that situation? What of our world today and its many idols—how do we share the truth about God? What is significant in the way Paul describes his mission (Acts 20:24)?

Discussion

In our Christian-based world-view, it is all too easy to miss the impact of Jesus on the pagan world. If you know just a little of ancient mythology, you’ll recognize the immense difference between the God Jesus came to reveal, and the gods of Greek and Rome—and the rest. It all does come down to your picture of God, and as Jesus revealed to us the true face of our heavenly Father, we can come to Him who is truly worthy of our love and admiration.

The Devil has done a remarkable job of defacing the image of God. If you take a while to stroll around the museums, or visit ancient temples, then you see gods in all their demonic vindictiveness—like the Mayan gods and their bloodthirsty demands for human sacrifice I saw in the Guatemalan Mayan city of Tikal.

In the New Testament we first come across the city of Ephesus during Paul’s journeys, as recorded in the book of Acts. Right away we see the conflict that illustrates the Great Controversy in this center of pagan belief. For what is at the heart of false worship but a demonic picture of God?

Paul knows those in the church of Ephesus. He has visited with them, he is aware of their successes and their challenges. Even as he is imprisoned for his faith, he thinks of others and wants to provide encouragement and counsel. For despite his own circumstances, he still recognizes that all-important truth: only God really matters, and our relationship with him. The essence of the Great Controversy is over the character of God—his use of power, how he treat those who disagree, what difference does truth and right really make. While we are looking at a situation very different to our own, we can apply the same principles in our own lives and our local churches, seeking to make a difference as we represent God to those around us. The question for us is the same as for the Ephesians: what do they see?

For the real difference between true and false religion is not about idols or rituals or dogma, but about the kind of God you believe in, the real God who is there.

Comment

“EPHESUS is the metropolis of Asia. It was dedicated to Diana, whom especially they worshipped there as their great goddess. Indeed so great was the superstition of her worshippers, that when her temple was burnt, they would not so much as divulge the name of the man who burnt it. The blessed John the Evangelist spent the chief part of his time there: he was there when he was banished, and there he died. It was there too that Paul left Timothy, as he says in writing to him, “As I exhorted thee to tarry at Ephesus.” (1 Tim. i. 3.)

“Most of the philosophers also, those more particularly who flourished in Asia, were there; and even Pythagoras himself is said to have come from thence; perhaps because Samos, whence he really came, is an island of Ionia. It was the resort also of the disciples of Parmenides, and Zeno, and Democritus, and you may see a number of philosophers there even to the present day. These facts I mention, not merely as such, but with a view of showing that Paul would needs take great pains and trouble in writing to these Ephesians. He is said indeed to have entrusted them, as being persons already well-instructed, with his profoundest conceptions; and the Epistle itself is full of sublime thoughts and doctrines.” John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople, (347-407AD). [This document is from the [Christian Classics Ethereal Library](#) at [Calvin College](#), generated on demand from [ThML](#) source]

“We like to think that we develop our image of God from the Bible and teachings of the church, not from our relationships -- some of which have been painful. It’s easier if our God image is simply based on learning and believing the right things. Yet, intensive clinical studies on the development of peoples’ images of God show that it is not so simple. One psychologist found that this spiritual development of the God image is more of an emotional process than an intellectual one. She brings out the importance of family and other relationships to the development of what she calls one’s “private God.” She says that, “No child arrives at the ‘house of God’ without his pet God under his arm.” And for some of us the “pet God” we have tied on a leash to our hearts is not very nice, nor is it biblically accurate. This is because our negative images of God are often rooted in our emotional hurts and destructive patterns of relating to people that we carry with us from our past. Imagine a little girl of seven who has known only rejection and abuse from her father whom she loves dearly. At Sunday School she is taught that God is her heavenly Father. What is her perception of Him going to be? Based on her experience with her natural father, she will see God as an unstable, rejecting, abusing person she cannot trust.” H. Norman Wright.

Ellen White Comments

Ephesus was a popular center for the worship of Diana. The fame of the magnificent temple of “Diana of the Ephesians” extended throughout all Asia and the world. Its surpassing splendor made it the pride, not only of the city, but of the nation. The idol within the temple was declared by tradition to have fallen from the sky. {AA286}

It is fondly supposed that heathen superstitions have disappeared before the civilization of the twentieth century. But the word of God and the stern testimony of facts declare that sorcery is practiced in this age as verily as in the days of the old-time magicians. The ancient system of magic is, in reality, the same as what is now known as modern spiritualism. Satan is finding access to thousands of minds by presenting himself under the guise of departed friends... The dead do not hold communion with the living. But true to his early cunning, Satan employs this device in order to gain control of minds. {AA 289}

2. Ephesians: Themes in Relationships

Biblical material: *Isa. 14:12; Acts 26:9-19; Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; Gal. 1:11-17; Eph. 3:11, 12; Col. 1:20, 21; Rev. 12:7.*

Quotes:

- On a starry night Prince Lucifer awoke. / Tired of his dark dominion swung the fiend.
George Meredith
- But I'd have to side with Lucifer. Angels were created first, did nothing but revere Him, and then God went and created new playthings, and put them above his initial creations. Lucifer had a point, that's for sure, and a very valid reason to be ticked.... The war in heaven would have been started by God's favoritism, not Lucifer's rebellion. Think about it.... *Gazrok, belowtopsecret.com*

Questions

What is it that God most wants? How do you view the whole issue of relationships? What really makes any difference? What is the significance of being "in Christ"? The quarterly's emphasis is much on unity—why would you see this as being important? Recognizing the social situation that Paul is dealing with in Ephesus and elsewhere, why are relationships important?

Discussion

The very first text cited is Isaiah 14:12—referencing Lucifer under the symbol of the King of Babylon. This is interesting—and very significant, for it reveals the framework of the very first broken relationship in God's universe. Revelation 12 is also mentioned—the start of the war in heaven.

Take a brief moment to review the background to this broken relationship. Why did it happen? Who was to blame? On what did Lucifer base his arguments? What did he charge against God? How does God respond? In thinking along these lines we see how God deals with the unfolding of the Great Controversy.

Paul, recounting his own experience, speaks of his hostility to God in the person of Jesus (see Acts 26:9). Such an attitude is surely based on defective concepts of God—believing as he did that God would endorse his persecution of the followers of "the Way." Once again the basic problem in the defective relationship is a misperception of what and who God truly is, and what he wants and approves of.

Other texts reveal what God truly is looking for—a loving relationship with his created children. Such a picture of God has been so badly defaced by Lucifer, and God's character so totally defamed, that generally God is not even considered as a partner in a positive relationship, but rather (if he is believed in at all) as a hostile being to be feared.

Wednesday's lesson: "Read the above two verses. (*Eph. 1:9, 10, RSV*). Notice the basic theme there: unity. Whom does the Lord plan to unify? How does your understanding of the great controversy, including the fall of Lucifer and humanity, help you understand the need for this unity?"

God is ever the one looking to restore the relationship, to heal the breach, to bridge the divide. For this reason "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." He is the loving Father, running down the avenues of space to his prodigal children, saying "I want you back."

Comment

We believe in God. But how do we describe him? How do we speak of him? What do we say God is like? How do we show in our lives the character of God? What are we going to say about GOD?

Think carefully of your own picture of God and your understanding of his nature—and about how you show this God of yours to others.

For our image of God determines what we believe. People down through the ages have tried to picture God, to describe what he's like. And almost always, they end up saying bad things - they are speaking evil of God.

I was walking through the British Museum looking at the many things from ancient times. Suddenly, as I turned a corner I came face to face with a horrible sight! A being was staring down at me with a severe, condemning look in his eyes. A god called the Judge of Hell. Glaring at me with a green face and an angry expression of hate in his face. A real shock!

When I looked at the name tag I found he was the one charged with bringing the case for the prosecution, the one who condemned the wicked to their final end in a type of torturing hell. But this was God—or should I say, a god. And I began to think of how we picture God, and of what that means. For if God is really like that awful green threatening face, then I don't want to know him. I'd rather stay as far as possible from him and never ever get near such an enemy!

The Museum is far more interesting than you first think: You can easily see that very often human beings have been speaking terrible things of God. The picture of this divine being is grossly distorted, and full of terrible things from animal-gods to human sacrifices; full of all kinds of sins that are really ours. It seems that so often we've ended up making God in *our* image—full of all the wicked ideas that *we* have.

In case you think that this only applies to the “heathen,” that because we have “the truth” we know better, think again. For very often we say equally terrible things about God. How do we go around speaking evil of God?

- By all the wrong things we do, even though we call ourselves Christians.
- By being angry and cruel and hating—illustrating the God we believe in.
- By misrepresenting God when we are really trying to speak *for* him!

Sometimes I think God would prefer it if we didn't say anything than some of the terrible ways we speak when we think we are “helping” him! Take a good look again at what we believe. How *could* we say bad things about God through such Bible truths? Can we really be misrepresenting God like the Devil does? You answer...

Ellen White Comments

It is through the social relations that Christianity comes in contact with the world. Every man or woman who has tasted of the love of Christ and has received into the heart the divine illumination is required of God to shed light on the dark pathway of those who are unacquainted with the better way.... Social power, sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, must be improved to win souls to the Saviour. --4T 555 (1881). {2MCP 622}

Christ came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and when His love reigns in the heart, we shall follow His example... Mutual forbearance is called for. We should love and respect one another notwithstanding the faults and imperfections that we cannot help seeing; for this is the Spirit of Christ. Humility and self-distrust should be cultivated, and a patient tenderness with the faults of others. This will kill out all narrowing selfishness and make us large-hearted and generous.--ST Mar. 5, 1885. {PaM 95}

3. What God has Done

Biblical material: *1 Cor. 2:7; Rom. 8:15, 16; Eph. 1:3-14; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8.*

Quotes:

- If God thinks this state of war in the universe a price worth paying for free will...then we may take it it is worth paying. *C. S. Lewis*
- Spiritual death is not a punishment from God, but rather the natural result of man's free choice to separate himself from God and His will. Adam unplugged himself from God spiritually and the result was that he was cut off from God permanently. Adam had poked out his own spiritual eyes and there was nothing he could do to restore them. *Alan Scholes*

Questions

How are we set free by the death of Christ? How did God choose us before the world was made? Does Ephesians 1:10 suggest that all will be saved? What is the assurance that God will do what he promises? How do we know God is trustworthy? Despite all the praise for the blessings, how should we relate to all that God has done?

Discussion

Ephesians 1 is a great hymn of praise to God for what he has done, especially Jesus and his death on the cross "by which we are set free." But how? Let's think about this...

Comment

My grandmother was a Catholic. I have many memories of her saying her rosary and kissing her crucifix. I loved my gran, and I admired her faith. I would never ever wish to speak badly of her. She followed what she believed to be right, sincerely and faithfully. I can still remember her saying her prayers under her breath, and kissing that wooden crucifix with its silver image of Christ pinned to it. No mistaking her devotion. But why? Why did she do it? What did it all mean? The cross, what does it really mean?

You see lots of crosses in the world today. They decorate all kinds of churches as the common symbol of the crucified Lord. And I have no reason to speak against that. Though the cross symbol may come from a pagan, just like Easter itself, it is the meaning that you put into the symbol that counts.

I once had the most vituperative letter from someone in East Anglia who believed it was his responsibility to go around denouncing all churches who had a cross on them, for this was the sign of the pagan God Tammuz and was associated with heathen Babylon and all that. Some of what he was saying was true—but that doesn't take away from the value of the cross as a symbol of Christianity—at least, not for me!

Then there are other crosses. Little gold crosses that people wear around their necks. Little silver crosses that people wear on bracelets. Little enamelled cross that people wear as brooches. I often wonder about those crosses. Are they worn because the person is superstitious, and the metal cross is a good luck charm? Like the St. Christophers people carry with them to protect them while travelling? Do such things bring you good luck? Should a Christian be trusting in good luck charms, even if it is in the shape of a cross? You answer!

Then there are crosses that really are used as a magic devices. You can get rid of vampires by holding a cross out at them. Did you know that? Oh, a clove of garlic will do just as well. Or a silver bullet, a holly stake or two. Or if you want to exorcise demons, you take along your cross. Or if you're a clergyman at a heretic burning, you hold out a cross to the person in the flames with the hope that they will change their minds. On and on—the cross used in so many ways that hardly speaks well of why Jesus had to die! Think of it. Even crosses on your Hot Cross Buns! Meaning what? Always ask the meaning!

Most of all the cross is God's most complete answer to all the questions he's been asked. The cross is full of meaning. Not just some ritual, or ceremony, or system. God on the cross is speaking to you. What is he saying? Look, and listen!

1. How much I love you! says God. You mean so much to me that I will go to the limit...
2. Is the most complete demonstration of nature of God.
3. Shows us what sin really is, and what it does. The Devil said we wouldn't die. God came to show that sin does result in death. He experienced death as a inherent result of sin. Christ on the cross is God proving that sin kills you!

4. Reveals the Devil for what he truly is—a liar from the beginning. It proves God right and the Devil wrong. For the Devil is the one who kills God.

5. Shows to all the universe that God is right, and true, and trustworthy. He is not as the Devil has said, but really is good and true and loving. The cross proves that without a shadow of a doubt. No longer can anybody believe the Devil might be right when he says God is hostile and unloving.

6. Shows that God upholds his own laws, that there is no other way to live. Without God, you die, which is why Jesus cried out: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me'? God can't change his laws, because they are an expression of his very character. His laws are for the good, and never for evil. The cross upholds all his laws by showing they can never be altered without altering God himself!

All the universe watches. They got the message of the cross. For though the loyal angels trusted God, they need to have their trust confirmed. The only way God could get what he wanted—loving trust—was to show himself loving and trustworthy, and to demonstrate that the Devil was completely wrong in all his charges against God. The cross settles the Great Controversy between God and Satan throughout the universe. What went wrong in the first place? We distrusted God, and trusted the Devil. So what needs to be changed? Our rebellious, distrustful attitude to God—which is what sin is. That's what the cross does. That's what it means. By his death, Jesus answers our questions and proves himself totally trustworthy.

Ellen White Comments

Hanging upon the cross Christ was the gospel. Now we have a message, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." Will not our church members keep their eyes fixed on a crucified and risen Saviour, in whom their hopes of eternal life are centered? This is our message, our argument, our doctrine, our warning to the impenitent, our encouragement for the sorrowing, the hope for every believer. If we can awaken an interest in men's minds that will cause them to fix their eyes on Christ, we may step aside, and ask them only to continue to fix their eyes upon the Lamb of God. They thus receive their lesson. Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. He whose eyes are fixed on Jesus will leave all. He will die to selfishness. He will believe in all the Word of God, which is so gloriously and wonderfully exalted in Christ. {6BC 1113}

4. Praise and Prayer

Biblical material: *Luke 1:37*; *Col. 4:5*; *Eph. 1:15-23*; *James 2:20, 26*; *3:13, 17*.

Quotes:

- If there were no God, who would you thank? *Christina Rossetti*
- The worst moment for the atheist is when he feels thankful and has no one to thank.
Dante Gabriel Rossetti
- Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery that it is. Touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it because in the last analysis all moments are sacred moments and life itself is grace. *Frederick Buechner*

Questions

Why is it important to give thanks? How does Paul make his thanks specific? What is important in Paul's prayer for the Ephesians (1:18)? Paul speaks about God's power being at work in us—what is it doing, and for what purpose? What is important about the Father's exaltation of his son? What does this say about the way God runs his universe?

Discussion

This portion of Ephesians 1 is really a prayer of praise for the believers in Ephesus. No doubt they were, like us, far from perfect. But even so, Paul can give praise to God for them, and for what has been accomplished.

Interestingly though, he does not dwell on emotion, but very specifically prays "that your minds may be opened to see his light" (1:18 TEV). This shows the true perspective of the Christian outlook, wanting to have enlightenment and understanding of God. Also, when he speaks of God's power, Paul is not admiring power for its own sake, but the way in which God uses power for good—not of himself, but for all creation.

That Christ is exalted speaks volumes about the Father. It reveals that God himself does not seek power and position, but demonstrates a spirit that is totally selfless. God, surely, could be expected to demand his position as supreme ruler, and in reality cannot cede that because of who he is. But in the deliberate placing of all things under Christ's feet, God the Father shows how he honors true humility and selfless service.

But even that is not enough. Here Paul brings in the church, showing that without us, God and Christ experience incompleteness! Only as the church is Christ's body is all made complete—God does not want to settle for less than the totality of the experience of the universe. What does it say about God that he is completed through oneness with us?!

For this reason, Paul desires his hearers to know God more and more, as he really is. He specifically prays, "I remember you in my prayers and ask the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, to give you the Spirit, who will make you side and reveal God to you, so you will know him." Eph. 1:16, 17 TEV.

"God's revelation makes possible "the knowledge of him" (*Eph. 1:17*), but "we cannot rightly understand or appreciate divine revelation without the aid of that Spirit by whom the word was given."—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 241. Hence Paul prays for the enlightenment of "the eyes of your understanding [heart]" (*vs. 18, NIV*). Believers need more than rational knowledge. They need spiritual insight..." (Monday's lesson). So what is the difference between "rational knowledge" and "spiritual insight," and how are they obtained?

Comment

As we look up into the immeasurable immensity of space, and recognize our minuteness in the grand scale of the cosmos, it's easy to be overwhelmed. If we are just accidental, without intent or created purpose, then truly we are less than dust.

But if we are more—if we are the children of God—then we see with different eyes. “When I look at the galaxies on a clear night—when I look at the incredible brilliance of creation, and think that this is what God is like, then instead of feeling intimidated and diminished by it, I am enlarged . . . I rejoice that I am a part of it,” says Madeleine L. Engle.

The truth is that we *are* here for a reason. More than that, we were not made for this world alone. And ultimately, the heart of joy and satisfaction and meaning is in knowing that God made us, and saves us.

When I reflect on those times when I have felt so close to God, I realize that my delight has not been in achievements we so often define as success. Nor is there the lasting satisfaction in the things we usually chase after for enjoyment—the physical simply does not last, and eventually every earthly pleasure cloys. Ultimately all our grasping after feeling good leaves us empty, unsatisfied.

For this life cannot be all there is. “Our Creator would never have made such lovely days, and given us the deep hearts to enjoy them, above and beyond all thought, unless we were meant to be immortal,” says Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Meant to be immortal. That's why we seem so out-of-harmony here, in this world of sin and death where nothing lasts. God planned for us to live with him forever. As C. S. Lewis writes, “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”

There's nothing wrong in looking for gratification, except that we want it instantly and seek it wrongly. What God offers is gratification beyond this world, a sense of pleasure and enjoyment and fulfillment that is not temporary and unfulfilling, but permanent and everlastingly satisfying. Not instant gratification. *Eternal* gratification

Ellen White Comments

Educate the soul to cheerfulness, to thankfulness, and to the expression of gratitude to God for the great love wherewith He hath loved us. . . . Christian cheerfulness is the very beauty of holiness. {CG 146-7}

The peace of Christ, the peace of Christ--money cannot buy it, brilliant talent cannot command it, intellect cannot secure it; it is the gift of God. The religion of Christ--how shall I make all understand their great loss if they fail to carry its holy principles into the daily life? The meekness and lowliness of Christ is the Christian's power. It is indeed more precious than all things which genius can create or wealth can buy. Of all things that are sought, cherished, and cultivated, there is nothing so valuable in the sight of God as a pure heart, a disposition imbued with thankfulness and peace. {CH 403}

Cultivate the habit of speaking well of others. Dwell upon the good qualities of those with whom you associate, and see as little as possible of their errors and failings. When tempted to complain of what some one has said or done, praise something in that person's life or character. Cultivate thankfulness. Praise God for His wonderful love in giving Christ to die for us. It never pays to think of our grievances. God calls upon us to think of His mercy and His matchless love, that we may be inspired with praise. {GW 479}

5. The Church: God's Workmanship

Biblical material: *Rom. 3:24-28; 6:8-11; Eph. 2:1-10; Eph. 2:8, 9; 2 Cor. 5:18; Col. 2:12, 13.*

Quotes:

- The grace of God does not find men fit for salvation, but makes them so. *Augustine*
- It takes grace to accept grace. *Robert Horn*
- The essence of the doctrine of grace is that God is *for us*. *T. H. L. Parker*
- Grace is the freeness of love. *Thomas Goodwin*

Questions

What is the cause of spiritual death? While it is surely the graciousness of God that brings us back to life, how does this work? "Saved by grace through faith"—how do you explain this to someone who doesn't know what this means? If God has made us what we are, and has prepared us to do good, why didn't he do this in the first place?

Discussion

This part of the book of Ephesians contains the phrase that meant so much to Luther and the Protestant Reformation. Saved by grace, through faith. But what does it mean? We always need to look for the meaning, and not be content with repeating slogans, however good they may be. While this "motto" is undeniably true, perhaps we have not spent time thinking it through, merely accepting it—which turns this vital concept into a truism.

So let's look at the way the lesson quarterly defines both grace and faith in Wednesday's lesson. Do we agree or disagree, and why?!

"Grace refers to God's initiative and the basis of our redemption from sin. As sinners we deserve death, and God offers us life. We are separated from Him and from one another, and He offers us reconciliation. We are under bondage to sin and judgment, and He provides us freedom. We do not deserve any of what He offers, because we have sinned and stand in rebellion against God (*Col. 1:21*). Hence, grace is often defined as God's unmerited favor to us.

"Faith is the human response to God's provision. In a Christian sense, faith is not a virtue we develop on our own. It is a response of wonder at what God has done to redeem us from sin and a ready acceptance of God's operating in our lives. Saving faith is a change of allegiance—from self to God, from denial or indifference to God's claims to unreserved acceptance. Faith opens the heart to the indwelling of Christ. As such, it cannot originate in the carnal heart."

Perhaps as we look a little more closely at those involved in the process of salvation it makes things easier to understand. Instead of speaking about grace, which sounds like some object or substance that is needed, why not speak of the *graciousness of God*? For salvation comes from the heart of God himself—it is what he wants to do. So grace is not some *thing* we get or strive for; rather we look towards the graciousness of our loving God.

Similarly with faith. Faith is no more an object or substance than grace. It is faith in God, or trusting in God. It is the essential aspect of his character to be trustworthy, and so we can confidently place our trust in him. So being saved by grace through faith in reality means recognizing and accepting the trustworthy nature of God so that we do fully trust in him, and allowing him in his graciousness to take us and remake us into his image once more. That's not so hard to understand!

Comment

“These two letters are so similar, Ephesians and Colossians. What impressed you most with these two? Let me mention one thing for a start. I think the most important thing when reading the Bible is to have read the Book of Revelation before reading the other 65. That’s a privilege we have that the early Christians didn’t have, The generation that knew the apostles was all gone by then. Revelation, written in the 90’s, and only John left, And John was given this larger view of the war up in heaven, and that our predicament is just part of a much larger one. And to see that larger view makes so much greater sense and significance out of everything else we read in the Bible.

“Are there intimations before Revelation, though, of the larger involvement? Well, look at Ephesians 1:9, for example, When the audience that first heard this letter--read as a whole--how did they react to these words?

“(1:9) ‘He has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of His will, according to His purpose which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth...’

“That raises one’s sights above just what’s going on on this earth. Now, if you’ve read Revelation, you know there was a war up in heaven; and that’s not unity, that’s war, that’s division, that’s hostility. And God is purposing to unite all things. Though when you read the Book of Revelation; you realize He fails to win a great many of His children to re-unite, and He has to let them go, But His goal is unity.” A. Graham Maxwell, *The Picture of God in All 66* tape series, (Riverside).

Ellen White Comments

[Eze. 36:26 quoted.] . . . The youth especially stumble over this phrase, “a new heart.” They do not know what it means. They look for a special change to take place in their feelings. This they term conversion. Over this error thousands have stumbled to ruin, not understanding the expression, “Ye must be born again.”

Satan leads people to think that because they have felt a rapture of feeling, they are converted. But their experience does not change. Their actions are the same as before. Their lives show no good fruit. They pray often and long, and are constantly referring to the feelings they had at such and such a time. But they do not live the new life. They are deceived. Their experience goes no deeper than feeling. They build upon the sand, and when adverse winds come, their house is swept away. . . .

When Jesus speaks of the new heart, He means the mind, the life, the whole being. To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world, and fasten them upon Christ. To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives. What is the sign of a new heart?--a changed life. There is a daily, hourly dying to selfishness and pride (YI Sept. 26, 1901). {4BC 1164-5}

He who is rich in mercy has imparted His grace to us. Then let praise and thanksgiving ascend to Him, because He has become our Saviour. Let His love, filling our hearts and minds, flow forth from our lives in rich currents of grace. When we were dead in trespasses and sins, He quickened us into spiritual life. He brought grace and pardon, filling the soul with new life. Thus the sinner passes from death to life. He now takes up his new duties in Christ’s service. His life becomes true and strong, filled with good works. “Because I live,” Christ said, “ye shall live also.” . . . {AG 319}

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