



PREPARING TO STAND

Number 66 — January, 2013

“In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord.” SW 3-21-1905

THE TWO PATHS

by Ellen White

from *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings*, pages 138-144

“Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life.”

Matthew 7:14.

In the time of Christ the people of Palestine lived in walled towns, which were mostly situated upon hills or mountains. The gates, which were closed at sunset, were approached by steep, rocky roads, and the traveler journeying homeward at the close of the day often had to press his way in eager haste up the difficult ascent in order to reach the gate before nightfall. The loiterer was left without.

The narrow, upward road leading to home and rest furnished Jesus with an impressive figure of the Christian way. The path which I have set before you, He said, is narrow; the gate is difficult of entrance; for the golden rule excludes all pride and self-seeking. There is, indeed, a wider road; but its end is destruction. If you would climb the path of spiritual life, you must constantly ascend; for it is an upward way. You must go with the few; for the multitude will choose the downward path.

In the road to death the whole race may go, with all their worldliness, all their selfishness, all their pride, dishonesty, and moral debasement. There is room for every man's opinions and doctrines, space to follow his inclinations, to do whatever his self-love may dictate. In order to go in the path that leads to destruction, there is no need of searching for the way; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad, and the feet naturally turn into the path that ends in death.

But the way to life is narrow and the entrance strait. If you cling to any besetting sin you will find the way too narrow for you to enter. Your own ways, your own will, your evil habits and practices, must be given up if you would keep the way of the Lord. He who would serve Christ cannot follow the world's opinions or meet the world's standard. Heaven's path is too narrow for rank and riches to ride in state, too narrow for the play of self-centered ambition, too steep and rugged for lovers of ease to climb. Toil, patience, self-sacrifice, reproach, poverty, the contradiction of sinners against Himself,

was the portion of Christ, and it must be our portion, if we ever enter the Paradise of God.

Yet do not therefore conclude that the upward path is the hard and the downward road the easy way. All along the road that leads to death there are pains and penalties, there are sorrows and disappointments, there are warnings not to go on. God's love has made it hard for the heedless and headstrong to destroy themselves. It is true that Satan's path is made to appear attractive, but it is all a deception; in the way of evil there are bitter remorse and cankering care. We may think it pleasant to follow pride and worldly ambition, but the end is pain and sorrow. Selfish plans may present flattering promises and hold out the hope of enjoyment, but we shall find that our happiness is poisoned and our life embittered by hopes that center in self. In the downward road the gateway may be bright with flowers, but thorns are in the path. The light of hope which shines from its entrance fades into the darkness of despair, and the soul who follows that path descends into the shadows of unending night.

"The way of transgressors is hard," but wisdom's "ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace." Proverbs 13:15; 3:17. Every act of obedience to Christ, every act of self-denial for His sake, every trial well endured, every victory gained over temptation, is a step in the march to the glory of final victory. If we take Christ for our guide, He will lead us safely. The veriest sinner need not miss his way. Not one trembling seeker need fail of walking in pure and holy light. Though the path is so narrow, so holy that sin cannot be tolerated therein, yet access has been secured for all, and not one doubting, trembling soul need say, "God cares nought for me."

The road may be rough and the ascent steep; there may be pitfalls upon the right hand and upon the left; we may have to endure toil in our journey; when weary, when longing for rest, we may have to toil on; when faint, we may have to fight; when discouraged, we must still hope; but with Christ as our guide we shall not fail of reaching the desired haven at last. Christ Himself has trodden the rough way before us and has smoothed the path for our feet.

And all the way up the steep road leading to eternal life are well-springs of joy to refresh the weary. Those who walk in wisdom's ways are, even in tribulation, exceeding joyful; for He whom their soul loveth, walks, invisible, beside them. At each upward step they discern more distinctly the touch of His hand; at every step brighter gleamings of glory from the Unseen fall upon their path; and their songs of praise, reaching ever a higher note, ascend to join the songs of angels before the throne. "The path of the righteous is as the light of dawn, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Proverbs 4:18, R.V., margin.

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate."
Luke 13:24.

The belated traveler, hurrying to reach the city gate by the going down of the sun, could not turn aside for any attractions by the way. His whole mind was bent on the one purpose of entering the gate. The same intensity of purpose, said Jesus, is required in the Christian life. I have opened to you the glory of character, which is the true glory of My kingdom. It offers you no promise of earthly dominion; yet it is worthy of your supreme desire and effort. I do not call you to battle for the supremacy of the

world's great empire, but do not therefore conclude that there is no battle to be fought nor victories to be won. I bid you strive, agonize, to enter into My spiritual kingdom.

The Christian life is a battle and a march. But the victory to be gained is not won by human power. The field of conflict is the domain of the heart. The battle which we have to fight--the greatest battle that was ever fought by man--is the surrender of self to the will of God, the yielding of the heart to the sovereignty of love. The old nature, born of blood and of the will of the flesh, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The hereditary tendencies, the former habits, must be given up.

He who determines to enter the spiritual kingdom will find that all the powers and passions of an unregenerate nature, backed by the forces of the kingdom of darkness, are arrayed against him. Selfishness and pride will make a stand against anything that would show them to be sinful. We cannot, of ourselves, conquer the evil desires and habits that strive for the mastery. We cannot overcome the mighty foe who holds us in his thrall. God alone can give us the victory. He desires us to have the mastery over ourselves, our own will and ways. But He cannot work in us without our consent and co-operation. The divine Spirit works through the faculties and powers given to man. Our energies are required to co-operate with God.

The victory is not won without much earnest prayer, without the humbling of self at every step. Our will is not to be forced into co-operation with divine agencies, but it must be voluntarily submitted. Were it possible to force upon you with a hundredfold greater intensity the influence of the Spirit of God, it would not make you a Christian, a fit subject for heaven. The stronghold of Satan would not be broken. The will must be placed on the side of God's will. You are not able, of yourself, to bring your purposes and desires and inclinations into submission to the will of God; but if you are "willing to be made willing," God will accomplish the work for you, even "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:5. Then you will "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Philippians 2:12, 13.

But many are attracted by the beauty of Christ and the glory of heaven, who yet shrink from the conditions by which alone these can become their own. There are many in the broad way who are not fully satisfied with the path in which they walk. They long to break from the slavery of sin, and in their own strength they seek to make a stand against their sinful practices. They look toward the narrow way and the strait gate; but selfish pleasure, love of the world, pride, unsanctified ambition, place a barrier between them and the Saviour. To renounce their own will, their chosen objects of affection or pursuit, requires a sacrifice at which they hesitate and falter and turn back. Many "will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Luke 13:24. They desire the good, they make some effort to obtain it; but they do not choose it; they have not a settled purpose to secure it at the cost of all things.

The only hope for us if we would overcome is to unite our will to God's will and work in co-operation with Him, hour by hour and day by day. We cannot retain self and yet enter the kingdom of God. If we ever attain unto holiness, it will be through the renunciation of self and the reception of the mind of Christ. Pride and self-sufficiency must be crucified. Are we willing to pay the price required of us? Are we willing to have our will brought into perfect conformity to the will of God? Until we are willing, the transforming grace of God cannot be manifest upon us.

The warfare which we are to wage is the "good fight of faith." "I also labor," said the apostle Paul, "striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily." Colossians 1:29.

Jacob, in the great crisis of his life, turned aside to pray. He was filled with one overmastering purpose--to seek for transformation of character. But while he was pleading with God, an enemy, as he supposed, placed his hand upon him, and all night he wrestled for his life. But the purpose of his soul was not changed by peril of life itself. When his strength was nearly spent, the Angel put forth His divine power, and at His touch Jacob knew Him with whom he had been contending. Wounded and helpless, he fell upon the Saviour's breast, pleading for a blessing. He would not be turned aside nor cease his intercession, and Christ granted the petition of this helpless, penitent soul, according to His promise, "Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me." Isaiah 27:5. Jacob pleaded with determined spirit, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." Genesis 32:26. This spirit of persistence was inspired by Him who wrestled with the patriarch. It was He who gave him the victory, and He changed his name from Jacob to Israel, saying, "As a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." Genesis 32:28. That for which Jacob had vainly wrestled in his own strength was won through self-surrender and steadfast faith. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 1 John 5:4.

LEG WRAPS

While reading various historical accounts, I have ran across some references to people who, usually due to their poverty, had to use strips of cloth to keep their legs warm. These references intrigued me. How did they keep their legs warm with strips of cloth? I imagined multiple strips of cloth hanging down the legs sort of like a grass skirt, which didn't seem like it would be very warm at all.

Then, in a book called "*A Pilgrim's Journey*," a collection of articles by Mark A. Baker, I ran across a chapter on the various styles of leggings worn on the American frontier. It included a diagram and instructions for 'leg wraps.' These were simply a strip of wool cloth about 6 in / 15 cm wide, and 6 ft / 180 cm long. These strips are wrapped around the lower leg much like an Ace Bandage, and tied at the top with a leather or woven strap to keep them in place.

I just had to experiment. Searching through my wool scraps I found a strip of blanket cloth that had been ripped off in the process of making a 'half blanket.' It was about 12 in / 30 cm wide and the length of the blanket. Perfect! So I ripped it in half length-wise, rolled up the strips, and wrapped them around my legs, tying them at the top with some bucktanned leather laces. Although they may not be very 'stylish,' and I thought they would slide down or unwrap themselves as I walked around and did other activities, they stayed up just fine, and *they were warm!*

Impressed by this initial experiment, I have continued to 'play' with leg wraps for the last couple winters, and I continue to be impressed. Since then I have made another pair of leg wraps from some lighter weight wool which I keep in my backpack. Leg wraps work well with the 'layering' concept of adding or removing clothing

depending on the weather. For example, when things gets cooler it is easy to put a jacket on to keep your upper body warm, but what about your lower body? You have to practically get undressed to put on a pair of 'long-johns,' and since this isn't always convenient, or possible, the legs frequently remain cold —or, as the day warms up, the lower body stays hot because it is not practical to take the 'long-johns' off. However, a pair of leg wraps can easily be put on or taken off without removing other clothing. (The hardest part is rolling the strips so they are ready to use next time.)

Making a pair of leg wraps is relatively easy to do. Find some warm cloth, wool is probably best, but something like the synthetic 'fleece' would probably also work. Strips for leg wraps could also be knit, which I suspect was probably the case in the historical references. Make two strips about 6 in / 15 cm wide and 5½ to 6 ft / 165-180 cm long. (If using 'fleece' or a similar fabric that is more stretchy in one dimension than the other, it will probably work best to have the stretchiness run length-wise.) And, since everyone's legs aren't the same length or thickness, you may need to experiment a bit with the length of the strips, so it wouldn't hurt to make them a little longer to begin with. Roll each strip to make it easier to put them on. You will also need two straps or laces about 36-42 in / 90-110 cm long to tie the wraps at the top. Bucktanned leather works well as it has just a little bit of stretch to it and the roughness of the suede helps to grip the cloth and hold things in place.

Put the leg wraps on by beginning the wrap as low on the ankle, (as close to the foot), as possible. Make one complete turn around the ankle, then wrap it snugly up the leg overlapping about half of the width of the strip as you go up. Finish just below the knee with another complete turn around the leg. Hopefully the last part of the strip will end up on outside of the leg so the end of the strip and the ties of the two legs won't rub against each other as you walk. Tie the wrapping in place with one of the straps, going around the leg twice for more grip. Make these ties snug, but not so tight that they block circulation.

The 'roughness' of the wool apparently grips itself, and as long as strips are wrapped snugly I have had no problem with them working loose or not staying up. For what it is worth, I have also heard of wrapping the leg from the top down. This would allow the end of the wrap to be tucked inside your boot, so you would not need to tie it. But my experiments with this method simply haven't worked. Possibly a material that is stretchier than blanket cloth could be used this way.

