



# PREPARING TO STAND

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“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

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## IS IT WORTH-IT TO WORSHIP?

by Jim Buller

Is it worth-it to worship? In a very real way the whole *great controversy* is all about this question. It all began when Lucifer and a third of the angels, (remember, they were originally were in heaven, fully experiencing all that God had to offer), decided that it wasn't worth-it. (See Isaiah 14:12-15, Ezekiel 28:12-19, Revelation 1 2:3-4, 7-9). Ever since then, beginning with Adam and Eve at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, (see Genesis 3:4-5), they have been trying to persuade all the rest of us that it isn't worth-it either.

Although I am saddened as I hear of people deciding that it is no longer worth-it, and giving up on the church, I can definitely relate. Let me tell you a bit of my story: I am at least a fourth-generation Seventh-day Adventist, with pastors, missionaries, conference, and General Conference workers in my family tree. As I was growing up, attending the Adventist church and going to Adventist schools, I kept hearing that as an Adventist Christian, people would recognize that I 'had something' that they wanted, and as they asked me about it, it would give me an opportunity to share Jesus with them.

Well, after academy, (Adventist high schools are called 'academies'), I attended the local community college for a couple years. It was close to home, and it saved money. Around the campus, I saw notices about an interdenominational Christian group that meet on Sunday evenings. At first I ignored these notices because their meeting place was near the college, and I was living clear across town; but also because I had been warned about other Christian groups who don't have 'the truth,' and therefore *must* be a mixture of truth and error which could lead one astray. However, the Holy Spirit kept impressing me to go.

So one Sunday evening I went. It was a simple meeting. A large room was filled with college aged kids. Although there were a few couches around the walls, most of them were sitting on the floor. The group was singing when I walked in, so I stepped over to a nearby empty spot and as I sat down, someone threw a songbook my way. After a few more songs, there was a prayer, and then about three short testimonies, followed by a simple appeal. After the program, there was light refreshments and a lot of fellowship.

These kids didn't have to be here, and they definitely weren't just going through the motions. Their singing was real, and from their hearts. From the way they sang, and from what they said, I could tell there was some actual substance to their Christianity.

*They had what I wanted!*

So I continued to go to their meetings. I also attended some of the other studies they offered to see what I could learn from them. In a study about the role of the indwelling Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian, John 15:4-5 was examined.

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

Based on the wording in these verses, the question was asked, 'Are you trying, or are you abiding?' This question struck home with me. I realized that the emptiness and lack of power I had been experiencing up to that point was because *I* had been trying to live the Christian life, rather than allowing the Holy Spirit to fill me and work through me. Instead of *trying* to be a Christian, I needed to focus on "*abiding*" or staying connected to Jesus. It is the power of the Holy Spirit, not our own power, that makes real Christianity happen in those who abide. Thus, the command to, "Be filled with the Holy Spirit," (Ephesians 5:18), was also stressed in this study along with the promise of Acts 1:8.

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

The power to live a productive Christian life comes from being continually filled with Holy Spirit. But this power is not for our selfish use. It is for witnessing, for sharing God's love and helping others. Therefore, as I focused on remaining in Jesus, by daily spending time with Him in His Word, and as I allowed the Holy Spirit to work in me "causing" me to obey, (see Ezekiel 36:26-27), and let Him use me to bless others, I did not need to worry about 'being ready for Jesus to come,' but could claim the promise in Philippians 1:6.

Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Obviously, my head was full of questions about my church. These people had what, up to that point, I had not found in Adventism. Had I been deceived? Should I leave 'the church?' While praying about what God wanted me to do about all this, the Holy Spirit impressed me to just sit tight for a while, that in time everything would become plain.

Jesus had told the demoniac of Gergesa, "Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." (Luke 8:39.) And as mentioned earlier, the Holy Spirit gives us His power to enable us to witness. So I learned that I shouldn't go to church necessarily 'expecting to be fed,' for now I had a direct connection to the

'Vine' and I was to receive spiritual nourishment directly from Him. Instead, I should go to church as a 'missionary,' looking for opportunities to share what God had shown me.

In time, and after further study and thought, I came to realize that the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist church are quite solid. Unfortunately, because people are human, and the church has been the object of Satan's special attacks, the majority of the people in it have become quite 'lukewarm.' But it was prophesied that this would happen. The Laodicean Message, (Revelation 3:14-22), the parable of the Ten Virgins, (Matthew 25:1-13), the parable of the Wheat and the Tares, (Matthew 13:24-30), as well as a few other scriptures, all accurately describe the condition of the church. According to these prophecies, there will be many people *in the church*, who consider themselves to be God's end-time people, and who are looking forward to Jesus' second coming and expecting to get into the kingdom —yet, if they don't open their hearts and lives completely up to Jesus, desiring and receiving an "extra" portion of the His Spirit, and allow Him to fill them, change them, and use them to bless others, if they don't determine to be productive "wheat" rather than, like the "tares," being content to just be in the God's 'field,' they will be 'spewed out' in the end, and told, "I never knew you."

If I were to leave the church, it wouldn't really help things at all. From outside the church I would not be in a position where God could use me effectively to witness to the 'foolish' people who are in the church, hopefully influencing them to become 'wise.' Therefore I could accomplish more good working within the framework of the organization than I could from being outside it. Interestingly enough, this is essentially the same position that Jesus took while He was here on earth. Even though the Jewish 'church organization' at that time was so completely corrupt that they were deliberately will to kill God, Jesus still worked within the framework of that organization. He attended, and taught in their synagogues, went to their feast gatherings in Jerusalem, and instructed the people in the temple. What's more, even after the formation of the Christian church, when the Jews are no longer God's special people, (see Daniel 9), the apostle Paul continues with essentially this same practice! Therefore, in spite of all that is 'wrong' with the church, in spite of the things that happen in it that, 'I just can't be a part of,' it is still more efficient to work within the system.

But, getting back to my story, from contacts at the group connected with the college, I found out about another interdenominational Christian group that met in another part of town which was closer to us. So for several years, although we continued to attend the local Adventist church and share as we were able, we went to these interdenominational gatherings for Christian fellowship.

A couple years later God lead us to become involved with a 'small group.' Here we experienced 'church' in a whole new way. The group's activities were centered around a mid-week Bible study gathering, but we frequently got together on Sabbath for lunch and for outings into nature. We also worked together on various ministry projects. In the course of things we studied about spiritual gifts, and realized that God had placed all of the gifts within our group, and that the Holy Spirit was working through each of us in a different way to build up the body as a whole. It took a while to soak in, but we came to understand that what we were experiencing in our small group was God had in mind for His church all along. Even though we weren't meeting on Sabbath mornings in the 'church' building, our small group *was church* —a functioning church 'body' / church *family*.

So yes, the church as a whole is not what it should be. Except possibly for early apostolic times and a few other more or less isolated incidents throughout history, such as the last few months of the Millerite movement, for the most part it probably never has been. However it is worth noting, that these exceptions were characterized by people being very deliberate and intentional about their spirituality —just the opposite of being content with a lukewarm, complacent, Laodicean church experience. Jesus wants us to come out of this type of experience. He says,

I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. (Revelation 3:18-19.)

Remember, it has also been prophesied that, “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 Great Controversy*, page 464.) Since we are living near the end, let's determine to be a part of this revival! Let's allow the Holy Spirit to work through us to help make it happen!

With this in mind, please read the following selection from *Selected Messages Book 1*, pages 127-128 carefully. Notice that the last paragraph of this quotation is the classic quote about revival and reformation. But also notice what the rest of this passage says —especially the parts about spiritual feebleness and the cause of our feebleness, about how the way we do church has contributed to our Laodicean condition, about the relationship of spiritual gifts to revival and reformation, and that we need both revival *and* reformation —a change in the way we have been doing things. We can't expect to have this revival by doing things the same way we always have. Let's work toward structuring our worship gatherings so that the Holy Spirit can 'manifest' Himself in “each one for the profit of all.” (1 Corinthians 12:7.)

In many hearts there seems to be scarcely a breath of spiritual life. This makes me very sad. I fear that aggressive warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil has not been maintained. Shall we cheer on, by a half-dead Christianity, the selfish, covetous spirit of the world, sharing its ungodliness and smiling on its falsehood? —Nay! By the grace of God let us be steadfast to the principles of truth, holding firm to the end the beginning of our confidence. We are to be “not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord” (Romans 12:11). One is our Master, even Christ. To Him we are to look. From Him we are to receive our wisdom. By His grace we are to preserve our integrity, standing before God in meekness and contrition, and representing Him to the world.

Sermons have been in great demand in our churches. The members have depended upon pulpit declamations instead of on the Holy Spirit. Uncalled for and unused, the spiritual gifts bestowed on them have dwindled into feebleness. If the ministers would go forth into new fields, the members would be obliged to bear responsibilities, and by use their capabilities would increase.

God brings against ministers and people the heavy charge of spiritual feebleness, saying, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" (Revelation 3:15-18). God calls for a spiritual revival and a spiritual reformation. Unless this takes place, those who are lukewarm will continue to grow more abhorrent to the Lord, until He will refuse to acknowledge them as His children.

A revival and a reformation must take place, under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend. (*Review and Herald*, Feb. 25, 1902.)

So, if the church doesn't seem interested in revival and reformation, what can we do?

(1) Determine that rather than being "lukewarm," we will be fruitful "wheat," not prickly "tares." Develop the habit of "abiding," or staying connected, to Jesus by daily spending time with Him in His Word—and then, in His power put into practice what we read.

(See Matthew 7:24-27 and James 1:22.) Do whatever "extra" we need to do so we will be "wise" and not "foolish." "In all your ways acknowledge Him," and let Him "direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6.)

(2) Allow His Holy Spirit to work in and through us to share God's love and be a blessing to others. Get involved in various ministry/witnessing projects.

(3) Don't forsake "the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."

(Hebrews 10:25.) But don't go to church just to 'be fed,' you can have your own direct connection to The Source. Ask God to lead you to other people who are pursuing a deeper spirituality and start a small group, or join an already established small group that is seeking revival and reformation.

(4) Study the subject of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12-14, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4. Notice what the Word says about what these gifts are, and how they are to be used. Discover what your spiritual gift is, and how the Holy Spirit wants to manifest Himself through you. Then cooperate with Him as He uses you and your gift, "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:12-13 margin.)

## SOME THOUGHT ON GROWING GRAINS

When we think of 'raising our own provisions,' (see *Country Living*, pages 9-10), most of us probably picture growing a garden. Some of us might also include a berry patch, and a small orchard of fruit and nut trees in our thoughts. But only a few of us would probably think about growing our own grains—in spite of the fact that grains, in their various forms, make up a large portion of most of our diets. So we should probably think a bit more seriously about growing some grains. Therefore, we've been doing some experimenting.

Most of our property is wooded and somewhat steep. However on the lower part, there is a relatively level section where we've put our garden and orchard. There is also a small field, (about half an acre), in this lower area. But it had been neglected for several years before we got the place, and it looked more like a rough pasture. As of late fall, a year ago, we had only been able to clear out some wood, brush, and a few of the rocks, and then disc it once.

During last year's Christmas season we were away visiting family and friends, and in the course of things we went to a health food store in another city. In their bulk sales section, they had some 'soft wheat,' so we bought about ten pounds to plant in the field. Most wheat nowadays is 'hard' wheat. It has been developed so that the kernels will shatter easily when they are run through the high powered commercial grinding equipment that is used to make flour. On the other hand, 'soft' wheats are earlier varieties which are easier to grind with small scale home grinding equipment. Chewing on the kernels of hard wheat might make you worry about breaking some teeth, but the grains of soft wheat can easily be chewed. It was probably a variety of soft wheat that was involved in the story in Matthew 12:1 where Jesus' disciple were plucking and eating heads of grain on the Sabbath.

So when we got back home, we disced up the field once more, and broadcast the seed we had bought on a part of it. By now it was about mid-January—for our area 'winter wheat' should have probably been planted at least back in the first part of October. Even though last year was an exceptionally dry year, the wheat grew. By early summer, it had produced a crop—even though the grains weren't as plump and full as they could have been. So, in spite of minimal soil preparation, being planted a couple months late, and less than normal rainfall, we were able to grow some grain! Wheat, and similar grains such as barley, oats, and rye, are really easy to grow! In many areas they will grow through the winter rainy season, so they don't even require any irrigation.

However, harvesting the grain crop turned out to be another story. Our wheat ripened nicely by early summer. We would pick a heads or two, rub them together in our hands, blow off the chaff, and eat the grains. They tasted good! But how could we harvest the whole plot in a way that would be an effective use of our time? We have a sickle, but it must have been lost in our move as we have not been able to find it. We also used to have a scythe, but have not been able to locate it either. So, while thinking about what to do, looking for misplaced equipment, taking care of other necessary projects, and working on various ministry programs, summer steadily marched past. With the fall rains on the way, I quickly went out cut about a 12 ft by 12 ft / 4 m by 4 m section of the wheat with my bush knife.

As I was harvesting that small patch, the many Bible references to growing and harvesting grains, such as Ruth gleaning in Boaz' field, and the parable of the wheat

and the tares, took on a whole new meaning. The hymn, "Bringing in the Sheaves," was soon ringing in my head. I also learned several things. One of these was the reason why sickles are curved. As you hook the sickle around a section of stalks, the curved shape causes the stalks to all bend in toward the center. This allows you to easily grasp the bundle you are about to cut. But even though my bush knife has a slight curve to it, I still had to hook the stalks between the knife and my wrist to cause them to come together so I could grasp the bundle before cutting it. If I didn't, the stalks would scatter all over the place, and then I would have to pick them up individually. Cutting the stalks by hand without a curved sickle was slow. Even with a sickle it probably wouldn't have been a whole lot faster. So if I was going to be able to harvest the whole field, I would have to find another way—and I started dreaming of a 'cradled' scythe. But that wasn't going to happen this time around. As I cut the stalks, I just laid them on a piece of canvas. Then, until I could figure out what to do next, I wrapped everything in the canvas and put it in a shed.

Back in the day, harvest time was a major group effort! The grain had to be cut a couple weeks before the seed heads were completely dry. Otherwise the kernels might be shaken out of the heads when the stalks were cut. So, bundles of stalks were tied into 'sheaves,' which were then stacked in 'shooks' to finish drying. To harvest even a moderate sized field, it would take a lot of people with sickles to cut the stalks and tie them into sheaves. Other people would come along behind them stacking the sheaves in shooks.

The height of manual grain harvesting technology was the development of the 'cradled' scythe. As the stalks were cut, they would be held in the cradle until the person swinging the scythe, or 'mower,' would dump them out of the cradle all ready to be tied into a sheaf. Typically, several mowers would follow each other cutting grain. Each mower would then be followed by a couple of people tying sheaves, and another person or two yet to stack the sheaves in shooks. Thus the field would literally be full of people!

After the sheaves had finished drying, they were brought in, threshed, and winnowed, to separate the kernels of grain from the rest of the plant. A flail would be used to beat the kernels out of the seed heads on a threshing floor. Then the grain/chaff mixture would be tossed in the wind, which would blow away the chaff, and leave behind relatively clean kernels of grain. This was also a major group effort. For each person swinging a flail, there would be several others bringing in sheaves, laying them out on the threshing floor, scooping up the shattered grain/chaff mixture, and moving the leftover straw out of the way so fresh sheaves could be brought in and threshed. And there would be another crew yet winnowing the grain.

Nowadays however, grain is harvested by one person driving a 'combine' which does all these processes mechanically. They cut the grain in front, spew out the leftover straw in back, and periodically pour the grain into a waiting truck. Combines are built for harvesting huge fields, and they are quite expensive.

But we are considering a much smaller scale operation. Just growing enough grain for our own use, or maybe enough for three or four other families. And we might be pretty much limited to trying to do all this by ourselves. So we need some different options.

After doing a little research on the internet, I found out several things. Yes, they do make small scale combines. But these are still too expensive for what we are talking

about, and maintenance might also be an issue —especially after not being able to buy or sell.

Scythes are still available, although most people use them for cutting weeds nowadays. Nobody sells scythes with cradles anymore. However, another option is to fit the scythe with a simple 'bow' (also known as a 'boyle') that has one or more 'pegs' attached to it. One section of a video on YouTube shows this working very well. At the end of each scythe swing, the stalks all fell in a nice bundle, all ready to be gathered up, joined together with other bundles, and tied into a sheaf. We have ordered a scythe, and are planning to attach a bow to it for next years harvest.

On the internet I also found a simple way to thresh grain using a 5 gallon plastic bucket. A couple lengths of light chain are cut just a little shorter than the inside diameter of the bottom of the bucket. The middle of these chains are then bolted to one end of a ¼ in. /5 mm 'all thread' rod. A hole is drilled in the center of the lid of the bucket and the other end of the rod is passed through the hole, then clamped in the chuck of a drill. Fill the bucket with dry heads of grain, the lid put on, and run the drill. The whirling chains knock the grain free from the heads. Although this method is slow, as the heads must be individually picked off of the stalks, it works fairly well for small batches.

From the wheat I harvested we got about 7 gal / 25 lt. of mixed wheat and chaff. Since we are living on the side of a hill, the wind patterns in our area turned out to be too gusty to winnow out the chaff. What's needed is a steady breeze. So one afternoon when there wasn't much wind, I spread out a tarp, and poured the grain/chaff mixture in front of an electric fan. We ended up with about 2 gal / 8 lt. of grain from that 12 ft by 12 ft / 4 m by 4 m patch!

However, by now it is mid December, and we want another crop of grain to experiment with next year. So in between rains, we disced the field again, including the rest of the wheat that hadn't been harvested, (hopefully it won't come up too thick in that area), threw the grain we harvested out on the next section of the field, and ran a harrow over it all to cover the grain.

So, here's what we have discovered so far: Growing grains is easy! But to efficiently and effectively harvest the grain on your own, either you will need some simple equipment and a lot of people to help you, or you will need more specific equipment —at least a scythe and a small scale threshing machine. To use the grain, you would also need and a grain grinder. We already have a grain grinder, and we have ordered a scythe. But we still need to do some more research, and come up with an economical small scale threshing machine.

So, although this isn't what I would necessarily consider a 'success story,' I have shared what we've learned for four basic reasons: (1) To encourage you to at least start *thinking* about growing your own grains, and what equipment you would need to harvest it. (2) If there is still time in your area, I hope you try planting at least a small patch of grain yet this season. (3) If nothing else, please understand that growing and using your own grain, like many other things in the area of country living and raising your own provisions, isn't something you would be able to easily do without some prior knowledge, a little experience, and a few key items of equipment. In other words, don't expect to be able to wait until the national Sunday law and transition easily to raising your own provisions in the country. (4) If you have, or come across information about a economically priced, small scale grain thresher, please let the rest of us know!

For more informations:

- Google and/or YouTube: 'small scale grain harvesting'
- The 'One Scythe Revolution' website has a lot of good information.  
<http://onescytherevolution.com/>
- Machete Specialists carry relatively inexpensive sickles and scythes  
[www.machetespecialists.com](http://www.machetespecialists.com)

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