



# 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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## “PRESS TOGETHER” IN CHRISTIAN UNITY

by Jim Buller

The following quotation from *Testimonies for the Church Vol. 6*, page 332 was shared in a recent issue.

We are in the shaking time, the time when everything that can be shaken will be shaken.

There is another very similar quote from *Review and Herald*, June 18, 1901. However, notice that it adds an important quality possessed by those who “stand the test.”

The time has come when everything that can be shaken will be shaken. We are in the shaking time. Be assured that only those who live the prayer of Christ for unity among His disciples, working it out in practical life, will stand the test.

Unfortunately, today there are issues facing the church that threaten to split it apart. In their attempts to strengthen their positions, judgmental attitudes turn various subjects into salvational issues. Even in the church, the “nations are angry!” It seems that people, and even leaders, would rather fight and argue than prayerfully seek a consensus. All this reminds me of the following description of things in Christ’s time from *Desire of Ages*, page 261.

Disputes between opposing sects were loud and long, and it was not unusual to hear on the streets the voice of angry controversy from learned doctors of the law.

Both the root of this problem, and the solution are described in the passages on the following three pages:

*Selected Messages Book 2, page 374*

Suppose we try daily to have our hearts united in the bonds of Christian love. "I have somewhat against thee," says the True Witness, "because thou hast left thy first love" (Revelation 2:4). And He says, "Except thou repent," "I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place" (Revelation 2:5). Why? —Because in our separation from one another we are separated from Christ. We want to press together. Oh, how many times, when I have seemed to be in the presence of God and holy angels, I have heard the angel voice saying, "Press together, press together, press together. Do not let Satan cast his hellish shadow between brethren. Press together; in unity there is strength."

*Testimonies for the Church Vol. 1, page 113-114*

November 20, 1855, while in prayer, the Spirit of the Lord came suddenly and powerfully upon me, and I was taken off in vision.

I saw that the Spirit of the Lord has been dying away from the church. The servants of the Lord have trusted too much to the strength of argument, and have not had that firm reliance upon God which they should have. I saw that the mere argument of the truth will not move souls to take a stand with the remnant; for the truth is unpopular. The servants of God must have the truth in the soul. Said the angel: "They must get it warm from glory, carry it in their bosoms, and pour it out in the warmth and earnestness of the soul to those that hear." A few that are conscientious are ready to decide from the weight of evidence; but it is impossible to move many with a mere theory of the truth. There must be a power to attend the truth, a living testimony to move them.

I saw that the enemy is busy to destroy souls. Exaltation has come into the ranks; there must be more humility. There is too much of an independence of spirit indulged in among the messengers. This must be laid aside, and there must be a drawing together of the servants of God. There has been too much of a spirit to ask, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Said the angel: "Yea, thou art thy brother's keeper. Thou shouldest have a watchful care for thy brother, be interested for his welfare, and cherish a kind, loving spirit toward him. Press together, press together." God designed that man should be openhearted and honest, without affectation, meek, humble, with simplicity. This is the principle of heaven; God ordered it so. But poor, frail man has sought out something different —to follow his own way, and carefully attend to his own self-interest.

Letter 16, 1893. (To W. F. Caldwell, June 11, 1893.)

Should not the words of Christ have any weight? "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matthew 7:15). "Lo here and lo there is Christ," will be multiplied. Let the believers heed the voice of the angel who has said to the church, "Press together." In unity is your strength. Love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous. God hath a church, and Christ hath declared, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). The messengers the Lord sends bear the divine credentials.

### **Power Delegated to the Church**

There has been altogether too much reliance placed upon independent, uninspired judgment. Self-sufficiency and self-esteem lie at the foundation of the greatest trials and discords that have ever existed among the people of God. The angel of God has said to me again and again, "Press together! Press together! Be of one mind, of one judgment, that God may be your leader. Follow His footsteps, and you will walk safely. The clean heart and the right spirit are the gifts of His Son, purchased with infinite cost."

God is teaching, leading, and guiding His people, that they may teach, lead and guide others. There will be, among the remnant of these last days, as there were with ancient Israel, those who wish to move independently, who are not willing to submit to the teachings of the spirit of God, and who will not listen to advice or counsel. Let such ever bear in mind that God has a church upon the earth, to which He has delegated power. Men will want to follow their own independent judgment, despising counsel and reproof; but just as surely as they do this, they will depart from the faith, and disaster and the ruin of souls will follow. Those who rally now to support and build up the truth of God, are ranging themselves on one side, standing united in heart, mind, and voice, in defense of the truth; while those who do not labor in harmony of purpose and action, who choose their own unsanctified human judgment as perfection of action, are ranging themselves on the side of Satan, and are defending his cause.

Satan will become their leader, and they will join him in his constant endeavors to tear down that which God is building up. None of these discordant elements will be able eventually to thwart the purposes of God in the preparation of a people to stand in the great day, and in the final completion of the plan of salvation. . . .

It is a delusion of the enemy for anyone to feel that he can disconnect from agencies which God has appointed, and work on an independent line of his own, in his own supposed wisdom, and yet be successful. Although he may flatter himself that he is doing God's work, he will not prosper in the end. We are one body, and every member is to be united to the body, each person working in his respective capacity. Men must be like-minded with God —pure, holy, sincere; not one is to be shut up to himself, to live for himself.

### **Unity, With Diverse Dispositions**

You have not all the same stamp of character, and each will be inclined to think that the work must be molded according to his own ideas and views. Unconsciously to yourselves, this spirit will be cherished, and you will seek to introduce methods of your own. The workers should first obtain the grace of Christ, so they will be enabled to sink self out of sight; then there will be unity, even among a diversity of dispositions. . . .

Each worker is to use his God-given ability to the utmost for the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom on the earth. We each have an individuality in manner and bearing, and this is as it should be; but this need not prevent our working together in perfect harmony. ...

Be sure to pray and counsel together before laying your plans, and then, in the Spirit of Christ, push the work unitedly. If one of your number decides that he cannot cooperate with his brethren, and has no desire to work because of differences of opinion, the course to be pursued is without a question. Humble yourselves before God and resort to prayer, for you cannot and must not attempt to work at variance.

From any one who persists in stubbornness and self-will, God will remove His Spirit, and another will wear the crown that was for him. God accepts only those who will learn of Christ, those who study His word, learning lessons of meekness and lowliness of heart, lessons of obedience, willingness to do his work in God's way, not their finite way. . . .

Love of self, pride and self-sufficiency lie at the foundation of the greatest trials and discords that have ever existed in the religious world. Again and again the angel has said to me, "Press together, press together, be of one mind, of one judgment." Christ is the Leader, and you are brethren; follow Him. Walk in the light as He is in the light. Those who walk in the footsteps of Christ shall not walk in darkness, but those who draw apart in unsanctified independence cannot have God's presence and blessing in the work. . . .

Workers can easily place themselves where divine love and power and wisdom cannot reach them, where they cannot have help in counsel, in difficulties and trials, because they would not understand and rightly appropriate heaven's rich treasure. They would glorify themselves, and think their own ways perfect, and become established in self-righteousness.

*Selected Messages Book 3, page 18-19*

When anyone is drawing apart from the organized body of God's commandmentkeeping people, when he begins to weigh the church in his human scales and begins to pronounce judgment against them, then you may know that God is not leading him. He is on the wrong track.

Constantly, men and women are arising who become restless and uneasy, who want to set up some new contrivance, to do some wonderful thing. Satan watches his opportunity to give them something to do in his line. God has given to every man his work.

There are opportunities and privileges in the church to help those who are ready to die, and to inspire the church with zeal, but not to tear the church to pieces. There are plenty of opportunities in the church to walk in Christ's lines. If the heart is full of zeal to press on to a deeper sanctification and holiness, then work in that line in all humbleness and devotedness. The church needs freshness and the inspiration of men who breathe in the very atmosphere of heaven, to vitalize the church, notwithstanding the tares are among the wheat. . . .

## COULD SIMPLY A 'SUNDAY REST DAY' BE OUR "PROMISED SIGN?"

Not one Christian perished in the destruction of Jerusalem. Christ had given His disciples warning, and all who believed His words watched for the *promised sign*. "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies," said Jesus, "then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out." Luke 21:20, 21. ... Without delay they fled to a place of safety ... (*Great Controversy*, pages 30-31, emphasis supplied.)

In the first century, their "promised sign," was "Jerusalem compassed with armies." So, what is our "promised sign" in the end-times? it is pointed out in the following quotation from *Testimonies for the Church Vol. 5*, pages 464-465.

As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians, so the assumption of power on the part of our nation in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath will be a warning to us. It will then be time to leave the large cities, preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains.

We commonly call this the 'National Sunday Law.' But, what does this law need to consist of in order to be our "promised sign?" From my observations, many Adventists are looking for a law involving Sunday 'worship,' or a law that we will 'have to go to church' on Sunday.

However, the above quotation simply says: a "decree," "on the part of our nation," "enforcing the papal sabbath." Since the 'papal sabbath' is Satan's counterfeit for God's true Sabbath, let's look at the wording of the Sabbath commandment. Note that nothing is mentioned in it about 'gathering to worship' or even 'worship' in the typical sense.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it. (Exodus 20:8-11.)

Please don't misunderstand me here. I'm not attempting to downplay the importance of worship, or gathering to worship, or that worship is not involved in the Sabbath-Sunday issue, as these things *are* mentioned elsewhere. It is just that according to the commandment, all that we are required to do in order to 'keep the Sabbath holy,' is just to 'not do any work' and 'rest.' Therefore, a "decree enforcing the papal sabbath" could also just be a law enforcing 'not working' and 'resting' on Sunday—simply a 'day of rest' law—which is exactly what is currently being pushed!

My concern is that if the first National Sunday Law is simply a day of rest law, and we are waiting for a law enforcing Sunday 'worship,' our preconceived opinions might cause us to miss our "promised sign!" —and we know how preconceived opinions have caused major problems for God's people in the past!

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## WHEN TO FLEE WHERE

Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ...For then there will be great tribulation, ... (Matthew 24:15-16 and 21.)

The "Abomination that causes Desolation" marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation, or Time of Trouble, (see Daniel 12:1), and it is our signal to "flee to the mountains." But, where in the mountains are we to flee to? And what is the "Abomination that causes Desolation?" We'll address these questions in a minute, but first let's take a look at Luke's version of this same verse.

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, ... (Luke 21:20-21.)

"Jerusalem" being "surrounded by armies" was their signal to flee in the first century. But what is our signal in the end-times?

The time is not far distant, when, like the early disciples, we shall be forced to seek a refuge in desolate and solitary places. As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians, so the assumption of power on the part of our nation in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath will be a warning to us. It will then be time to leave the large cities, preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains. (*Testimonies for the Church Vol. 5*, pages 464-465.)

So a 'National Sunday Law' in the U.S.A. (see also Revelation chapter 13), is the "Abomination that cause Desolation." It marks the beginning of the Great Time of Trouble, and it is our signal to flee from the cities. But before we go any further, we also need to point out that there are two parts to the Time of Trouble. We find these two parts delineated in *Early Writings*, pages 85-86.

"The commencement of that time of trouble," here mentioned does not refer to the time when the plagues shall begin to be poured out, but to a short period just before they are poured out, while Christ is in the sanctuary. At that time, while

the work of salvation is closing, trouble will be coming on the earth, and the nations will be angry, yet held in check so as not to prevent the work of the third angel. At that time the "latter rain," or refreshing from the presence of the Lord, will come, to give power to the loud voice of the third angel, and prepare the saints to stand in the period when the seven last plagues shall be poured out.

So, Christ is still in the sanctuary and probation has not yet closed during the first part of the Time of Trouble. The second part of the Time of Trouble is after probation closes during the time that the plagues are being poured out.

And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled. (Revelation 15:8.)

Sometime during the first part of the Time of Trouble those who don't receive the mark of the beast will not be able to buy or sell.

He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. (Revelation 13:16-17.)

The following quotation from *Country Living*, pages 9-10 tells us what we are to do to prepare for not being able to buy or sell.

Again and again the Lord has instructed that our people are to take their families away from the cities, into the country, where they can raise their own provisions; for in the future the problem of buying and selling will be a very serious one. We should now begin to heed the instruction given us over and over again: Get out of the cities into rural districts, where the houses are not crowded closely together, and where you will be free from the interference of enemies.

So, at the beginning of the Time of Trouble we are to flee from the cities to country properties that we should already have set up in order to be able to 'raise our own provisions.' Here we will live throughout the first part of the Time of Trouble. During this time, things will be getting progressively worse. Then probation will close, and the plagues will be poured out.

I saw that the four angels would hold the four winds until Jesus' work was done in the sanctuary, and then will come the seven last plagues. These plagues enraged the wicked against the righteous; they thought that we had brought the judgments of God upon them and that if they could rid the earth of us the plagues would then be stayed. A decree went forth to slay the saints, which caused them to cry day and night for deliverance. (*Early Writings*, page 36-37.)

This Death Decree, as it is commonly called, happens by the time of the third plague, as pointed out in the following quotation from *Great Controversy*, page 628.

And “the rivers and fountains of waters . . . became blood.” [This is the third plague. See Revelation 16:4.] Terrible as these inflictions are, God's justice stands fully vindicated. The angel of God declares: “Thou art righteous, O Lord, . . . because Thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy” (Revelation 16:2-6). By condemning the people of God to death, they have as truly incurred the guilt of their blood as if it had been shed by their hands.

As the decree issued by the various rulers of Christendom against commandment keepers shall withdraw the protection of government and abandon them to those who desire their destruction, the people of God will flee from the cities and villages and associate together in companies, dwelling in the most desolate and solitary places. Many will find refuge in the strongholds of the mountains. (*Great Controversy*, page 626.)

So, in response to the Death Decree, which happens in connection with the first few plagues, we will flee from our country properties to the deepest wilderness we can get to where we will live until Jesus comes.