



2026 1Q Christ in Philippians and Colossians

Lesson 5 Shining as Lights in the Night

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read first paragraph,

- God told the Hebrews to obey because that obedience “is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people’ ” (Deut. 4:6, NKJV). *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, p. 36.

Is **all** obedience to God’s law wise? Is there an obedience to God’s law that is foolish, in fact, it is actually disobedience?

Can you describe the obedience to God’s law that actually causes disobedience and why this happens?

Consider these two quotation from one of the founders of the SDA church, and as always, these quotes are not being presented as proofs, as something we must believe, but for us to consider, think, and determine for ourselves whether we think what is written here is in fact true or not. As Paul said in Romans 14:5 every person must be fully persuaded in their own minds.

So, consider, do you think what these quotes describe is true, and if so, why?

And if it is true, does it speak to our question—is all obedience to God’s law wise or is there an obedience to God’s law that is foolish, in fact, is actually disobedience?

- A **sullen submission** to the will of the Father will **develop the character of a rebel**. By such a one service is looked upon as drudgery. It is not rendered cheerfully, and in the love of God. **It is a mere mechanical performance. If he dared, such a one would disobey**. His rebellion is smothered, ready to break out at any time in bitter murmurings and complaints. Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul. *Signs of the Times*, July 22, 1897, emphasis mine.

What kind of obedience is described here? Mechanical, unwilling, forced, or pressured, compliance, “do this or else!” What kind of law leads to this? Imposed law with external enforcement through punishment.

When we teach God’s law functions like human law, that He has made up rules that require Him to police and enforce through inflicted punishments, then it leads to this type of legal, behavioral, forced obedience that hardens the heart in rebellion against God. This is Satan’s goal, and history proves this

to be true, just look at the legalistic law-keeping Jews who crucified Christ. And look for those same types of teachings and actions in our church today.

Here is the second quote:

- The man who **attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely--because he is required to do so--**will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. [What type of law is this? Obligation, required to do so, not freely done? Imposed under threat up punishment. And notice the author states “attempts to keep the commandments.” Because one cannot actually keep them with this motive. The Jews who were attempting to keep the Sabbath holy by their legal behaviors actually perverted and profaned the Sabbath in the most grotesque ways by teaching the Sabbath is a legal test of obedience. Do Adventists who present the Sabbath in this legal light do any different?] When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, **we may know that the life is not a Christian life.** [What makes one a true Christian? Joining a Christian denomination? Going through the ceremony of baptism? Believing the right doctrines? No! Being born again with the Spirit of Christ so that Christ lives within and we are in heart, in my, Christ-like! The people described here are seeking to obey God’s law with an unrenewed spirit, operating upon the spirit of fear and they resent it, resent the burden of the Sabbath, all the things they can’t do, but do it because they don’t want to get punished in the judgment for their Sabbath breaking. Notice what the quote states next] **True obedience is the outworking of a principle within.** [This is conversion, a change of heart, the spirit of fear and selfishness is replaced by the Spirit of love and trust and that causes the actions to come from a different motivation, heart, attitude.] **It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God.** The essence of all righteousness is **loyalty to our Redeemer.** This will lead us to do right because it is right--because right doing is pleasing to God. *Christ’s Object Lessons* p. 97, emphasis mine.

God wants our love and loyalty—and that cannot be achieved through imposed law and law enforcement, which is the corruption, infection, perversion, distortion that has happened to Christianity. The lie that God’s law functions like human law and justice is God using power to punish law breakers. The message that is to go to the world today is that God’s law is not like this and God is not the source of pain, suffering, and death, stop judging God to be like His enemy and start worshiping Him as Creator, the maker of the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water. We are called to come out of Babylon, symbolic of that system of legal Christianity, worshiping a god who makes up laws like creatures use and uses his power to punish law breakers. All of Christianity has been help captive by this false system, like the Jews were held captive in Babylon thousands of years ago. But God calls His people out of this system.

We come out not by changing denominations, but by changing our hearts and minds about God and His law, by rejecting the imposed law lies and returning to worshiping God as Creator and being transformed within to become in reality the righteousness of God. Then we let our light shine within the darkness in the churches we are attending, the dark and perverse ideas taught about God, like God is the source of death, like we need something done to God to pay Him for our sins etc.

And just as only a remnant of about 50,000-60,000 Jews left captivity when God opened the way for them to leave, only a minority of people will leave the penal legal lies behind and actually return to worshiping God in truth. This is why the end-time message of Revelation calls people back to worshiping God as Creator, and as they do this, rejecting the imposed law lies, the next message is for HIS people to come out of Babylon, because the hearts and minds of His people have been held captive in this false legal system of theology. And they will fulfill in reality what the Jews demonstrated theatrically.

After they left Babylon they set about repairing the breach in the protective wall around the temple and rebuilding the temple.

- If you haven't read our small pamphlet [Repairers of the Breach](#) I encourage you to do so. You can get free copies from our store or download the pdf or read it online.

The temple had to be rebuilt and the walls repaired because when the people were taken captive Babylon broke down the protective walls and destroyed the temple.

This is an object lesson and the Bible teaches this spiritual warfare against the people of God, who are His true temple.

- The little horn of Daniel 7:21 and the beast of Revelation 13:7 warring against the saints and taking them captive describe the same events. (If you would like to know more about the beasts of Revelation, read our magazine [Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation 13 & 17.](#))

The apostle Paul describes this same breach, the same taking captive of hearts and minds, in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, where he describes the man of lawlessness setting himself up in God's temple and proclaiming himself to be God.

This happened when the Constantine converted and the lie that God's law functions like human law entered Christianity.

That lie broke down the wall of protection, which is God's eternal design law, and allowed the imposter, Satan, to enter the hearts and minds of believers as the god whom they worship—a god that makes up rules, uses coercive force to enforce rules, is the one who is the source of death and uses his power to kill those who don't obey him. This is the history of the Dark Ages church, following their false god into the Crusades, Inquisition, burning people at the stake, controlling hearts and minds through restrictions of truth, keeping the Bible away from people and through declarations, claims, i.e., propaganda.

Thus God gave prophecy through Isaiah that the breach in the wall would be repaired:

- If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you

shall delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken.
Isaiah 58:13,14 NKJV.

Isaiah identifies one of God's commandments in connection with the repairing of the breach. This suggests that the wall of protection may be connected to God's law. Jeremiah and the writer of Hebrews go further than Isaiah; they identify the entire law of God as pivotal to our restoration in the new covenant:

- This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the LORD. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:10 NIV84.

The old covenant was formed at Sinai when the Israelites chose a covenant of law and performance over a covenant of love and trust. In other words, the Israelites believed and practiced the idea that God's law functions like human-imposed law, rules instituted upon them that they were to obey, and if they didn't, their sense of justice would demand that they be punished; but if they did obey, then they believed they would earn rewards. This is the covenant that Paul exposes as false in the books of Romans and Galatians—the legal, rules-oriented, works-based system of law-keeping rather than faith, rather than love and trust that comes from reconciliation with God and living in harmony with how He built life to operate.

The old covenant was based on the people's false belief that God's law is imposed and that righteousness is to be found in their law-keeping, which earns either rewards or punishments meted out justly by a "just God." But as can be seen in the Jeremiah and Hebrews texts above, while God's new covenant is not legal, it also has law involved—but in the new covenant, the people recognize and embrace the truth that God's laws are design laws, the laws the Creator has built reality upon and not rules like humans make up. God's laws must become the principles upon which hearts and minds operate, not merely rules to govern external behavior. Jeremiah makes clear how God's laws function:

- This is what the LORD says: "If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the **fixed laws of heaven and earth**, then I will reject the descendants of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his sons to rule over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For I will restore their fortunes and have compassion on them" Jeremiah 33:25, 26 NIV84, my emphasis.

God's laws are "the fixed laws" that govern heaven and earth! God's laws are the laws the Creator has built reality to operate upon, such as the laws of physics, health, and the moral laws. Created beings cannot speak reality into existence and, therefore, we make up rules that we call "laws," but our rules require external enforcement through the infliction of punishment.

This is how Satan, a created being, governs. Imposed laws with imposed punishments are how the kingdoms of this world function—and Jesus said His kingdom is not of this world! (John 18:36). His kingdom does not function like human kingdoms; it is not built upon made-up rules that require the

infliction of external punishments. Jesus is the Creator, His kingdom is reality itself, and His laws are the laws that govern and sustain that reality.

The wall of God's protection is the wall of reality, of design law, of the protocols He built reality to function upon. When we understand and appreciate God's design laws, it always causes us to worship God as Creator and to understand that sin, breaking God's design laws, is the cause of pain, suffering, and death, while God is the source of life, healing, and salvation (Romans 6:23; Galatians 6:8; James 1:15). But when we exchange God's design laws for Satan's imposed-law system, we exchange the truth of God's character for Satan's and teach that God is the source of torture and death, which He inflicts upon the unrepentant as "just" punishment for sin. Thus, the lawless one, the one who denies and replaces the design laws of God with made-up, imposed rules, sets himself up in God's temple (human hearts and minds) proclaiming himself to be God.

Just like the remnant of Israelites who left Babylon under the leadership of Nehemiah, this end-time remnant will leave the systems of imposed-law theology.

Those who cling to the imposed law lies and worship an imperial dictator god with legal systems of salvation end up engaging in **obedience that does leads to rebellion of heart and actual disobedience to God**, while they claim to be obedient, just like the Jews in Christ's day. And they get really angry, just like the Jews in Christ' day, when all their hard work at law keeping and law enforcement is pointed out as worthless and wrong.

This type of Christianity is a fraudulent Christianity that Jesus and Paul described where people claim a belief in Jesus or claim to be godly but who are not connected to Jesus and therefore are without the transforming power of His Spirit in their lives (Matthew 7:22-23; 2Timothy 3:1-5).

Jesus taught true Christianity in contrast to the counterfeit in the parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25 (virgins representing the church), all ten virgins had lamps, representing the Bible—but only five were wise and had oil in their lamps, representing the Holy Spirit. The five foolish had their lamps but no oil. This is the fraudulent Christianity that teaches religious dogma and doctrines (which may be factually correct—like the Jews who crucified Christ had the factually correct Sabbath day) but devoid of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart that transforms lives.

And this type of legal obedience to rules is powerless, fraudulent, and doesn't not result in salvation, and epidemiological data documents that there is no difference in the rates of child abuse (physical and sexual), spouse abuse, addictions, and porn use in Christian homes versus non-Christian homes. It is a form of godliness without power.

True obedience only happens from hearts and minds transformed by the indwelling Holy Spirit!

Mechanical legal performance of right rules leads to worsening condition if the heart is not persuaded it is right.

The apostle Paul takes up this entire misdirected legal focus to obedience in Romans and contrasts the obedience that comes from law with the obedience that comes from faith or trust. He starts out the book of Romans with:

Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. Romans 1:7 NIV84.

Faith or trust is not something that can be ordered, legislated, commanded, or obtained by law and law enforcement. Trust is built upon real-world trustworthiness that requires evidence, which must be understood and experienced. Trust cannot be established by proclamation, claims, edicts, directives, rules, and orders, and it will be undermined by threats and inflicted punishments. Try getting someone's trust by threatening to harm them, punish them, if they don't trust you. It is an impossibility! Imposed law and law enforcement cannot win hearts and minds and, ultimately, will turn those who practice such methods as a means of pursuing righteousness into rebels.

So there is an obedience that is wise and there is an obedience that is foolish—and sadly, it appears that the majority of obedience being taught today is the foolish form of fear-based law and law-enforcement that leads to greater distrust and rebellion.

We are to be the lights of the world and that is only possible if we have the oil in our lamps, the Holy Spirit, which brings us the life of Christ who lives in us, if we attempt to keep the law, with our Bibles (lamps) without the oil of the Holy Spirit, we end up Pharisaical legalists who abuse the righteous.

SUNDAY

Read fourth paragraph,

- Without question, salvation is God's work, and we can take absolutely no credit for it ourselves. Even faith itself is a gift, encouraged through the work of the Holy Spirit. Our own works cannot save us; however, through the new birth, God re-creates us spiritually, enabling us to do good works. God's Spirit works in us, empowering our will to choose the right, to resist temptation, and to make right choices. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, p. 37.

Let's take this paragraph by sections, first sentence, "Without question, salvation is God's work, and we can take absolutely no credit for it ourselves," what does it mean?

God, through Christ, who is not only fully human but fully God, singly and alone saved the species human because Jesus became fully human and as a human lived a sinless life, purged the spirit of fear and selfishness and restored in humanity the Spirit of love and trust. He became the second Adam, a human being who through the exercise of human abilities lived a sinless life and developed a sinless human character and purged the corrupt animating spirit of fear and selfishness. And all of us, who are won to trust, open our individual hearts to Christ and receive from Him His gift via the Holy Spirit,

who takes what He achieved and applies it, reproduces it in us so we are reborn with a new life, a new spirit, the Spirit of Christ. We become partakers of the divine nature, and it is no longer our old fear-based selfish spirit directing us and forming our identity, but rather we are new creatures living in trust to Jesus and being formed into His likeness. This is not legal adjustment, it is actual reality-based transformation. All things are made new, the old is gone, the new has come.

Jesus is the vine and we are the branches grafted in by faith and receiving the new life, symbolically the blood, which is His spirit, the animating energy of Christ through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

We take no credit for any of this because we are terminal in our natural birth, born dead in trespass and sin. We are not the source of salvation, remedy, solution, we are recipients of this great and wonderful salvation, freely given to us at infinite cost to the Godhead.

What does the next sentence mean: “Even faith itself is a gift, encouraged through the work of the Holy Spirit”?

What kind of a gift is this? Is this gift of faith the same kind of gift as eyesight, hearing, musical talent, intelligence—an innate gift given to everyone, or is it a gift like the gifts of the Holy Spirit, like gift of prophecy, apostleship, teaching, preaching, given only to those who are converted?

If it is given only to those who are converted does that mean we can be converted without faith? Or does conversion require the exercise of faith, choosing to trust? So does everyone have the gift of faith and some exercise it for salvation and others do not?

What do we mean by “faith”? Do we mean only genuine saving faith in God, in Jesus? Saving faith is a gift brought by the Holy Spirit that requires our acceptance—because that faith is based upon truth and love that wins our hearts to trust.

We cannot of ourselves find truth, produce genuine love, and in our sinful state truth and love are the work of God poured out upon this dark world. So if we mean the gift of faith is saving faith then this is a gift offered but not inherent in us, which is built upon the truths and works of God manifest in the three threads of evidence He has provided, Scripture, science/nature, and life experiences.

But if we mean the gift of faith is the ability to have faith or trust in someone or something, then that is inherent in our being and everyone has it. All humans exercise faith in something, faith in themselves, faith in science, in money, in pagan gods, in political parties, in nations, in luck charms.

So I am making the distinction between the capacity for faith, the ability to exercise faith, which I believe is an ability that is built into our beings, and is given to all humans like all humans have the gift of seeing or hearing, or thinking, but where we place our faith—that determines whether it is saving faith or not.

Saving faith is choosing to place our faith or trust in God and we cannot do that with our abilities alone, it is a gift, in the same way God has given us the gift of reasoning ability. But human reasoning

alone, unaided by the Holy Spirit, cannot find God, cannot reason out eternal truths, truth must be revealed to us by God and then we can choose to say yes or no to it.

What does this sentence mean, “Our own works cannot save us; however, through the new birth, God re-creates us spiritually, enabling us to do good works”?

Do we have work to do in our salvation, or is it as some Reformers taught we have no work to do, we are saved by grace and not by works and therefore we just claim Jesus as our legal substitute, trust in His grace, His blood payment to pay our legal debt in the heavenly courts and we will be saved, nothing else to do to be saved? Or is there work for us to do? And if so, what is our work?

Can God save a person without their participation? Can a person be saved without God’s participation? So, is it a cooperative arrangement between God and the sinner for their salvation?

Do both have a work to do? Can you define God’s work and our work? Are they different? Do we ever get them confused where we are either trying to do God’s part or we are waiting for Him to do our part?

Can you differentiate who is responsible for what work in our salvation?

Would the following be God’s work:

- All that we described that Jesus accomplished in His person?
 - becoming incarnate—taking this damaged condition upon Himself and purging the spirit of fear and replacing it with a sinless and holy Spirit?
 - Destroying death and the one who holds its power Heb 2:14
 - Exposing Satan as a liar (prince of this world cast out)
 - Revealing the truth about God, the cause of death, the way God governs?
 - Restraining the powers of darkness external and internal, (enmity between Satan and sinners) the work of the Holy Spirit upon hearts
 - The revelations of truth through all His avenues
 - He leads us to decision points and leaves free to choose
 - Then provides a new life, the Spirit of Christ, and then
 - Leads to new decision points and leaves us freed to choose and
 - Then provides divine power to succeed in the choice
- What would our work be?
 - Going to God?
 - Responding to the prompting of the HS by seeking truth?
 - Thinking, reasoning, praying?
 - Choosing to trust God and open our hearts to Him?
 - And then, in trust, do we have a work in wrestling against the old habits through the ongoing application of trust in God?
 - Choosing what we bring into our minds what we watch, read, games we play?

- Choosing what we bring into our bodies?
- Choosing what we do with our bodies—present our bodies as living sacrifices?
- Choosing whom we trust, whom we associate with, what boundaries in relationship we apply to ourselves?
- Choosing to fulfill His calling, sharing, teaching, preaching, ministering, loving others?
- Forgiving those who have wronged us?

Are there works for us to do in our salvation?

What do we understand salvation to be? If we understand salvation to be legal adjustment then some teach there is no work, there is only faith, accepting the legal payment by faith and that is salvation. They might argue the rest is not salvation, it is maturing, sanctification, but not justification.

But if we understand salvation to be healing, which is the actual meaning of being saved, it means being healed, then we understand salvation requires both the restoration of trust in our Savior, our Creator, but also our active participation in the application of the Remedy, the application of the Spirit of Christ in our hearts and minds. We must be fully persuaded in our own minds and we must choose truth by truth as the HS brings truths to our hearts and minds. And these truths chosen by us in faith will result in painful moments as we detox, crave our old comforts, grieve separation from toxic people we are attached to, experience the pain of forming healthy habits, whether aching muscles from new exercise, or aching brain from new studies. But all this healing is not us saving ourselves, it is our individuality receiving and applying through faith the free remedy and salvation provided by God.

It is like a person born HIV positive because both their parents were HIV positive, such a person has done nothing wrong, they are not guilty for this condition, but they still have a terminal condition. This is every human since Adam and Eve, we are born in sin conceived in iniquity. We do not have a legal problem, we have a lethal problem. And none of us can cure this condition.

Now, that HIV infected individual is offered a free remedy, antiviral meds that will put the HIV into remission. This person didn't work to produce the cure, there is nothing they can take credit for, but do they have a work to do in participating in this free remedy? They must exercise their faith in their doctor, believe he has a remedy that can cure them, and then that faith must work, it must cause the patient to go to the doctor, meet with him, listen to him, and choose to take the remedy freely provided. And when the HIV positive patient takes the free meds something happens in them they cannot do for themselves. They are not saving themselves, they do not get any credit for this wonderful salvation, but the work of the doctor to provide this free remedy doesn't do them any good if they don't take it, if they don't choose to participate. And this is not a legal declaration, but an actual application in the life of the person.

So too, with us, we have done nothing to provide this wonderful salvation, remedy to sin, but we must choose to meet with Jesus, to trust Him, and in trust we must choose to surrender, open the heart, and then say yes to every truth He brings and trust Him with the outcome.

MONDAY

Read second paragraph,

- On a moonless night, away from the glare of cities and street lights, more stars are visible, and they seem to shine much more brightly. It's the contrast that makes the difference. The blacker the sky, the more clearly the stars stand out. It's the same with our witness. The greater the moral darkness around us, the starker the contrast between the lives of God's true followers and that of worldlings. How important it is, then, not to let the artificial lights of worldly ideas, pressures, and practices cause our witness to fade into the background or to disappear entirely. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, p. 38.

I found this sentence quite profound: "How important it is, then, not to let the artificial lights of worldly ideas, pressures, and practices cause our witness to fade into the background or to disappear entirely."

What do you think is the number one way the church has allowed the artificial lights of worldly ideas to impact its witness?

Nothing has been more impactful in corrupting Christianity with an artificial light, a fantasy, a fraud, a lie that the lie that God's law functions like human law and perverted Christianity into a penal legal theology with a god who has the character of God's enemy. That is why the final message to the world is a call for people to return to worshiping God as Creator, and stop worshiping the dictator artificial god that dominates Christianity. This requires we recognize all of God's laws are design laws.

Read last paragraph,

- We should never fear being different—our faith should increasingly set us apart. The goal is to "shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15). The only way to do that is to reject conformity to this world (Rom. 12:2) by "holding fast the word of life" (Phil. 2:16, NKJV). Our choices determine whether we have lived with "the day of Christ" in view or have "run in vain" (Phil. 2:16, NKJV; compare 1 Cor. 9:24–27). *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, p. 38.

We should never fear being different, to be set apart from the world. No doubt, we do not want to be controlled by the spirit of fear, to live in fear of what others think and therefore compromise our integrity and loyalty to God because we fear what others will think. Yes, we do not want to live in fear of being different.

But what does this look like? Wouldn't the Amish, Orthodox Jews, Muslims, and Buddhists all fit this description? Don't they all refuse to conform to the world by various aspects of specified and required segregation, conduct, dress, food, associations, and laws?

Do these people then fulfill and meet what our quarterly is suggesting we should be doing? Why or why not?

Did Jesus set Himself apart as distinct and different from the religious leadership of the Jewish nation?

Did Jesus do this by:

- Isolating away from associating with sinners?
- By eating a different diet than they did?
- By wearing culturally different clothing?
- By seeking to draw attention in some way that was obviously seen by society?

How did Jesus set Himself apart from the world?

Consider these instructions by Jesus:

- “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” Matthew 6:2-4 NIV84.
- “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” Matthew 6:5-8 NIV84.
- “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” Matthew 6:16-18 NIV84.

How are people to be different from the world? By external religious garb or conduct designed to draw attention to self and show how holy and different they are?

How much of religious activity is designed to draw attention to self under the guise of honoring God? But in reality it functions to promote the carnal heart, the unconverted spirit of fear and selfishness. It functionally says, “look at me, look at how righteous and good I am. See how much better I am than you. I am on God’s side, and you people are infidels, you are pagans, you are unholy, you are Gentiles,

while I am a holy and special child of God—can't you tell by my clothing, my hair, my food choices?" But in reality God is dishonored for the message is not one of love, but of rules, conduct, and elitism, judgmentalism.

Jesus taught that people should not seek to make self the center, don't live your devotion to God in a way that artificially makes yourself the focus and then makes God out to be an imperial rule making and enforcing dictator.

Jesus gave another way we are to let our light shine:

- “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Matthew 5:43-48 NIV84.

And this is not possible through rules, impose law, law-keeping, individual hard work. It is only possible when trust in Jesus has been restored, distrust of self has been realized, and the individual surrenders self to God and are reborn with a new heart and right Spirit so they in reality have a new life, a life motivated by love and trust in God. And then they live not to bring attention to self, but to glorify God and lead others to know Him so they can experience this same healing of heart and mind.

TUESDAY

The lessons asks us to read Romans 12:1-2:

- Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1-2 NIV84.

What does this mean?

What is the pattern of this world? Fear driven survival of the fittest—me first, imposed law and law enforcement through coercion, inflicted punishments.

We are not to conform to this, and only when we reject this made up system of rules with artificially inflicted punishments for rule breaking as justice, and return to worshipping God as Creator realizing all His laws are design laws will we have our minds renewed and only then will we be able to test and approved what God's will is.

As long as people cling to the lie that God's law functions like human law then they misconstrue Scripture and fail to comprehend the will of God, in fact they end up working against Him, while claiming they are honoring Him—the Pharisees and Sadducees who crucified Christ, the church of the Dark Ages, the Muslims who seek to kill infidels etc.

WEDNESDAY

Read the last paragraph,

- It is the difficult experiences of life that test our mettle and demonstrate who we are on the inside. Ellen G. White puts it this way: “Life is disciplinary. . . . There will be provocations to test the temper; and it is by meeting these in a right spirit that the Christian graces are developed. If injuries and insults are meekly borne, if insulting words are responded to by gentle answers, and oppressive acts by kindness, this is evidence that the Spirit of Christ dwells in the heart.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 344. She goes on to say that if “the hardships and annoyances that we are called to bear” are “well endured, they develop the Christlike in the character and distinguish the Christian from the worldling.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 344. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, p. 40.

Do you agree with this? That it is the challenges, the difficulties, the things that rub us the wrong way that are useful in our character development? Any Scripture to support this?

- We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. Romans 5:3-5 NIV84
- In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 1 Peter 1:6–7 NIV84.

What do these texts mean? How do trials and difficulties help us mature?

It is when things happen that challenge us, don't fit our understanding, cause emotional distress that we are motivated to seek better answers, meaning, connection with God, and our minds reexamine things and grow. When these things occur because of some immaturity in us it is opportunity for us to let go the old way and embrace God's way and mature. When it is not due to immaturity in us, it is opportunity to exercise faith and apply God's methods of truth, love, grace, forgiveness, etc. and as we exercise those qualities we mature, we grow stronger in our faith and become ever more settled or sealed into loyalty to God. It is how reality works.

Is there anything that has been happening in our society the last couple of decades that actively interferes with this? Wokeism, which focuses upon feelings and teaches the lie that anything that hurts someone's feelings is violence and harmful and people need safe spaces to protect them from ideas that upset them. The lie that everyone's opinion is truth, "your truth is your truth but this is my truth" which isn't truth at all it is a psychological defense mechanism created by the father of lies to enslave minds into dysfunction and destruction under the guise of being truthful or genuine.

The truly righteous are those who have renewed minds, those who understand design law, how reality works, and will not surrender their minds to fantasy, fiction, and such distortion.

But those who don't want truth, because the truth will necessarily expose where they are wrong, which will hurt their pride, their ego, will require them to admit they were wrong, to humble self, and that will hurt their feelings, and instead of being lovers of truth, they reject truth, seek to silence through intimidation and social pressure any who would speak truth to them so they can live their delusional lives.

The righteous don't seek confrontations with such people. We don't seek to cause problems, but we will not surrender governance of ourselves to their irrational and often evil demands. We will be lights, living temples of truth and love. And those in darkness will not love the light, for their evil is exposed by the righteous and godly lives of people living the truth. So the righteous in history always end up being persecuted by those whose consciences convict them but whose pride is such they will not repent.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The God of Reality: Separating Truth from Fiction Seminar: August 13-16 2026 Orlando, Florida—More information coming soon.

REMEDY APP: Totally redesigned and updated with many new features, including the ability to listen to the Remedy Audio Book in the app!

AFRICA: Our first shipment of resources has arrived in Kenya, *Could It Be This Simple?* Wycliffe has been passionately sharing this end-time message about God with great success and Jacques van den Heever, our Come and Reason Ministries Director in South Africa has been able to produce and get him these resources. It is through the support of you our friends that he has been able to do this. If you are in Kenya or know someone there who would like this book email kenya@comeandreason.com Also Jacques has been translating many of our materials into Afrikaans for some time, but has now just provided our first blog translated into Swahili. More will be coming. If you want to access any of our ministry website and click the languages tab.

New Pamphlet: *The Trap of Perfectionism and The Fear of Making Mistakes*. These are available for free shipped to any US Postal address, they will also be in our resource section under the publications to print and share. You can read this online, download pdf, share with others, print your own. If you are not in the US, we anticipate our various hubs (Australia and South Africa) will eventually get this in print also, but until then, please use the online resource.

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