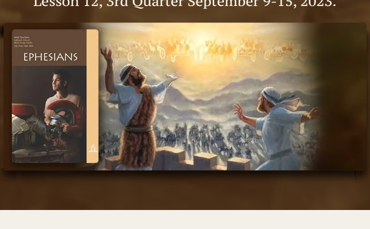
The Call to Stand

Lesson 12, 3rd Quarter September 9-15, 2023.



Sabbath Afternoon, September 9

Memory Text:

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. KJV — Ephesians 6:10, 11

Micah 6:5 – "O My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord."

Here we are told that to know the righteousness of the Lord is to remember God's dealings with our forefathers, for His love toward us is not less than it was toward them. He reminds us of the incident when Balak hired Balaam to curse Israel, and how He caused Balaam to speak for Him and to bless His people, that for their sake He brought the king's aim to nought and caused Balaam to proclaim to Balak: "And now, behold, I go unto my people: come therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days.... There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies: and Israel shall do valiantly." Num. 24:14, 17, 18.

In effect Balaam said to the king of Moab: "I have tried my best to obtain your favor and to curse Israel, but God has prevailed. Israel has won; you and I have lost. And further, let me tell you what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days: He that is to rule Israel shall smite Moab on all sides, and Israel shall do valiantly."

Thus was Balaam impelled to predict Christ's birth and His ruling, causing Israel to do valiantly against Moab and his neighboring peoples in the latter days.

To know all this is to know the Lord our righteousness; that if He is for us then no one can win a thing against us; that the battle is the Lord's; that we have no need to fear our enemies; that whatever we do shall prosper regardless who is for or against us.

Sunday, September 10

Battle Speech

Study Paul's ringing conclusions in his letter, Ephesians 6:10-20. What does Paul's battle cry mean to us today, as combatants in the great controversy?

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." Isa. 60:1-3.

In the power-crazed, rule-or-ruin, war-bent and hell-bent, self-destructive course of mankind, in the angry and catastrophic upheavals and out-breakings of the elements of nature, and in the cumulative fulfillment of the fast unfolding prophecies in the Word of God, the signs of the times thunder the warning appeal that we arise in God's light and make haste to rescue His people from the ills which threaten to devastate the world. If such is not the Church's great mission and duty at this crisis hour, what need, then, do the Lord and the world have of her? But what can the Church do unless her members, both lay and clerical, arise together as one man, and throw their all into the conflict?

Well knowing as we do the answer to these urgent questions, what excuse will we have if we do not now arouse ourselves and all saints in Christendom along with us to do what the gospel commands us to do? Regardless how dramatic and impressive any demonstrations the church may put on, it is no secret that even if she is not pushed out of any place or country, still at her present pace of preaching the gospel of the Kingdom a temporal millennium will not suffice her in which to warn the world, finish the work, and bring the Kingdom in. And every enlightened mind knows this to be the inevitable truth.

Just look at the brute, predatory forces loose and lurking everywhere, and causing the whole earth to erupt with violence, tumult and terror. Verily, they are making "men's hearts [to fail] them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth...." Luke 21:26. Will not all Christians everywhere be aroused by these things to "put on the whole armour of God" and to "take...the sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:11, 17) while following the Lord as He leads ahead? If not, then certain it is that the Church and the World as well are hopelessly doomed. To be sure, though, the few who do arouse to make the total surrender which the hour demands, God will save from, the conflagration to come.

How, though, shall He deliver any one who fails to heed the signs of the times, the thunderings of the dread drums of Doom's Day, now flashing in our eyes and rumbling in our ears with warning more awful than the flaming thunders of Sinai? No, He could no more deliver such spiritually blind, deaf, and dumb incurables than He could have delivered the antediluvians who failed to go into Noah's ark.

Monday, September 11

Finding Strength in Christ

Read again Ephesians 6:10-20. How do you see the reality of the great controversy, which involves literal supernatural powers, as central to Paul's point? Why is keeping this crucial truth before us so important in our own daily walk with God?

"And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." Matt. 3:16, 17.

Having been baptized by immersion, and coming straightway out of the water, Jesus was immediately led to be tempted of the Devil.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the Devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and sitteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the Devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve. Then the Devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him. Matt. 4:1-11.

Here is our example. After water baptism, temptations and victories are to be our lot, too. Jesus, you see, met the Devil with a "Thus saith the Lord," with what was written. If we cannot interest ourselves in the Bible as much as He was interested in It, if we do not study to know what He would have us to do, how, then, can we face our temptations and come out victorious? Is it any wonder that many after baptism fall out of the way? The very thing that would make them strong in the faith as they see God giving them glorious victory, they shrink from, not knowing that after a storm of rain and wind, there comes sunshine and a calm. Job was tried to the limit, but gained the victory, and afterwards received double for all his losses. Why can not we?

Having gotten the victory over His temptation, Jesus was never again troubled by the Devil. And Job and all God's great men by experience found the same relief from Satan.

Our position against sin, therefore, must be definite, without the slightest wavering. We, too, must let the Devil know that we mean business, if we are ever to find peace.

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame." Heb. 6:1-6. To make reservation for sin, is as it were to dig your own eternal grave.

Tuesday, September 12

The Great Controversy in Paul's Letters

Read Romans 13:11-14, 1Thessalonians 5:6-8 and 2Corinthians 10:3-6. How do these verses compare with Ephesians 6:10-20? Why do you think Paul uses this kind of imagery?

In order for Christians to be victorious they must possess (1) faith -- Hebrews 11; (2) courage -- Joshua 2; (3) action -- Exodus 14.

Ex.14:11-16 -- "And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.

"And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. .

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto Me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea."

Here we see a picture of all Israel with no courage just at a time when they so much needed it. To solve their problem did God command them to sit down and pray? -- No, the command was that they go forward, that Moses first lift his rod and stretch forth his hand to divide the sea, and that the multitude go on through. To all human reasoning this command would seem utterly foolish in the face of their predicament, but God knew all about it. He knew what He was doing when He led them there, too. He was about to bring to pass so great an event that it would bring fear upon the heathen and thus help make possible God's people taking the land of their promise, as well as to relieve them of the pursuing Egyptians.

This lesson shows that unfailing faith, courage, and action is the cooperation that is required from the converted Christian every advance step of the way in God's leading, and it always brings success.

The Midianites also lost courage and they were defeated. Yes, discouragement does bring defeat. Discouragement is one of the snares of the Devil to bring defeat to God's people if they allow it.

In the days of King Belshazzar there was a war in which the Medes and Persians wanted to break through the walls of Babylon and subdue her under their rule. You recall that the Babylonians suddenly lost out because they were over-confident. Yes, they had placed all their confidence in their strong walls!

To bring this lesson down to our time we find from Holy Writ that the cause of the Laodiceans' downfall is due to the operation of the same principle that brought Babylon's defeat -- over-confidence. Yes, they say they are rich in Truth and have need of no more although God says that they are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Thus they have fallen into the Devil's trap for them.

In warfare you know that each side tries to confuse its enemy and break their morale with the end in view of weakening the enemy and thus making its own victory easier. And when they plan their attacks and invasions they attempt to make them in the places they think their enemy would least suspect.

In the spiritual warfare the Christians' Adversary does not nap. He, too, seeks his opportunity to break down their courage and morale and thus make sure to accomplish their defeat as we saw demonstrated in the examples we have cited today. And do not think for a moment that he is not looking for the vulnerable point in us, too, that he might strike and cause our defeat. We could expect his assault upon us to come from the place we least expect it. So, unless we know what our weakest spot is how could we know where the Devil is going to attack us?

Wednesday, September 13

Standing on the Ancient Battlefield

Read through Ephesians 6:10-20, nothing each time Paul uses some form of the verb stand. Why is this idea so important to him?

"Satan's agents seek to deceive Christ's followers and allure them from their allegiance. They pervert Scripture to accomplish their object. The spirit which put Christ to death moves the wicked to destroy His followers. All this is foreshadowed in that first prophecy: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." GrH_c 5.5

"Why is it that Satan meets no greater resistance? Because the soldiers of Christ have so little real connection with Christ. Sin is not to them repulsive as it was to their Master. They do not meet it with determined resistance. They are blinded to the character of the prince of darkness. Multitudes do not know that their enemy is a mighty general warring against Christ. Even ministers of the gospel overlook the evidences of his activity. They seem to ignore his very existence. GrH_c 5.6

"This vigilant foe is intruding his presence in every household, in every street, in the churches, in national councils, in courts of justice, perplexing, deceiving, seducing, everywhere ruining the souls and bodies of men, women, and children. He breaks up families, sowing hatred, strife, sedition, and murder. And the world seems to regard these things as though God had appointed them and they must exist. All who are not decided followers of Christ are servants of Satan. When Christians choose the society of the ungodly, they expose themselves to temptation. Satan conceals himself from view and draws his deceptive covering over their eyes. GrH_c 5.7

"Conformity to worldly customs converts the church to the world, never the world to Christ. Familiarity with sin will cause it to appear less repulsive. When in the way of duty we are brought into trial, we may be sure God will protect us; but if we place ourselves under temptation we shall fall sooner or later. GrH_c 6.1

"The tempter often works most successfully through those least suspected of being under his control. Talent and culture are gifts of God; but when these lead away from Him, they become a snare. Many a man of cultured intellect and pleasant manners is a polished instrument in the hands of Satan. GrH_c 6.2

"Never forget the inspired warning sounding down the centuries to our time: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." 1 Peter 5:8; Ephesians 6:11. Our great enemy is preparing for his last campaign. All who follow Jesus will be in conflict with this foe. The more nearly the Christian imitates the divine Pattern, the more surely will he make himself a mark for the attacks of Satan. GrH_c 6.3

"Satan assailed Christ with fierce and subtle temptations; but he was repulsed in every conflict. Those victories make it possible for us to conquer. Christ will give strength to all who seek it. No man without his own consent can be overcome by Satan. The tempter has no power to control the will or force the soul to sin. He can cause distress, but not defilement. The fact that Christ conquered should inspire His followers with courage to fight the battle against sin and Satan." GrH_c 6.4

Thursday, September 14

Wrestling Against Evil Powers

What do you judge to be Paul's purpose in listing a variety of titles for the evil spiritual powers depicted in Ephesians 1:21, Ephesians 3:10, and Ephesians 6:10-20?

"We are soldiers of Christ; and those who enlist in His army are expected to do difficult work, work which will tax their energies to the utmost. We must understand that a soldier's life is one of aggressive warfare, of perseverance and endurance. For Christ's sake we are to endure trials. We are not engaged in mimic battles. We have to meet most powerful adversaries; for 'we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.' Ephesians 6:12. We are to find our strength just where the early disciples found their strength: 'These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul."' Acts 1:14; 4:31, 32. 6T 140.2

"As we near the time when principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places will be brought into warfare against the truth, when the deceiving power of Satan will be so great that if it were possible he will deceive the very elect, we must have our discernment sharpened by divine enlightenment, that we may know the spirit that is of God, that we may not be ignorant of Satan's devices. Human effort must combine with divine power, that we may be able to accomplish the closing work for this time." 2SM 15.3

"Christ did not tell His disciples that their work would be easy. He showed them the vast confederacy of evil arrayed against them. They would have to fight "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in

high places." Ephesians 6:12. But they would not be left to fight alone. He assured them that He would be with them and by the help of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. He would make under the shield of Omnipotence. He bade them be brave and strong; for One mightier than angels would be in their ranks—the Captain of the armies of heaven. He made full provision for the prosecution of their work and took upon Himself the responsibility of its success. So long as they obeyed His word, and worked in connection with Him, they could not fail. Go to all nations, He bade them. Go to the farthest part of the habitable globe and be assured that My presence will be with you even there. Labor in faith and confidence; for the time will never come when I will forsake you. I will be with you always, helping you to perform your duty, guiding, comforting, sanctifying, sustaining you, giving you success in speaking words that shall draw the attention of others to heaven." AA 29.1

Friday, September 15

Further Thought

Does Satan cast a special stumbling block before the church as a body, or just attack its members individually?

Answer:—Since that tragic day in Eden when he introduced sin into the world and caused the fall of man, Satan has cast in the way of each redemptive Movement, a different stumbling block upon which multitudes have tripped and fallen. Most assuredly, therefore he must be expected to have some such distinctive danger planted in our way today. We, though, having the benefit of a tremendous advantage of knowing the respective pitfalls which have proved fatal to the multitudes in past Movements, shall suffer a proportionately greater condemnation and punishment if we fall into precisely ours. And what is more, if we fail, we shall witness thereby to the universe that we are the weakest of the weak. We must stand—stand against the most ingenious special trap set for our feet. Shall we do this? How shall we do this if we know not what it is or where it is?

To find the danger where it really lurks, let us briefly view in retrospect previous snares, by periods in which they occurred, beginning with the first recorded church Movement:

The Noatic Movement was ordained to build the ark both as a warning of the impending deluge and as a refuge from it. The special block of stumbling which Satan cast in the way of the antidulvians at that time, he made from the fact that never in all nature had man seen anything that lent the remotest evidence to the possibility of there ever occurring such a phenomenon as rain. Accordingly, leaning upon their finite knowledge of nature and its potentialities, they scoffed and scorned Noah's science and his warning of doom, and continued their eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away." Matt. 24:38, 39.

Their exalting human science and disregarding divine science, therefore, was the special snare which took the antediluvians. Their fate solemnly warns us carefully to avoid their mistake.

In the Abrahamic Movement, the father of the faithful was called to depart from the cities of the ancient world, in the hope that someday the Movement would triumphantly possess the promised land. Fully aware of this fact, Satan worked mightily to sidetrack the Movement into the cities of the nations along the way. On this block of stumbling he fell, with the result that when the Lord finally snatched him from the destruction of Sodom, as a brand plucked from the burning, he came out the poorest of the poor.

Thus the worldly cities were the quicksands to the first postdiluvians. May we not lose all therein, as did Lot.

The Mosaic Movement was led out of Egypt to possess the land of promise, and there to become a kingdom. Cunningly suiting his temptations to their predispositions, Satan inspired those who were of age when they left the land of Pharaoh, to continuous murmuring, complaining, office-seeking and rebelling, and finally to fearing the giant inhabitants of the promised land. Failing to see that their strength was "of God" they "spoke of God against Moses" and were consequently forced to wander forty long years in the desert, and there to leave parching the bones of all but two of their members who were of age when they left Egypt.

Unbelief, stiffneckedness, distrust of Divine leadership, office-seeking, and, therefore, were the block and stumbling monster that devoured the people of the Exodus. And these will devour every Present-truth believer who strays into their lair.

The Canaan Movement under Joshua was ridded of all sinners and commissioned to possess the land, drive out the heathen, and set up a world-ruling kingdom. Knowing that its continuance was contingent on their obedience to the Lord's instructions through His prophets, Satan moved upon the people to mock the messengers of God, despise His words, and misuse His prophets; "until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy" (2 Chron. 36:16), and He gave them back to captivity.

Hence to the subjects of the kingdom, the prophets were the great rock of offense—a rock upon which no age before or since has been free from stumbling. The wise today, therefore, will "despise not prophesyings." 1 Thess. 5:20.

The Apostolic Movement was brought forth to proclaim the transferring of the earthly sanctuary service to the heavenly "tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. 8:2), and to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19) all who should repent of their sins. But to frustrate its purpose, Satan set to work to fashion another deception, and with the departure of the apostles he quickly succeeded in causing the church corporately to close sight of both the truth of the priesthood of Christ and the truth of baptism, and to establish in their stead an earthly priestcraft and infant baptism.

Thus being led to disbelieve and disregard the sanctuary services and baptism, their very salvation, the Christian church fell through Satan's trapdoor into error. And that door is still set to take the feet of the unwary—all who disregard or lightly esteem the ever advancing Truth unfolded in the special sealing message for today.

The Protestant Movements were raised up to declare and to exploit the primacy of the Bible, because the pre-Reformation world was bound in darkness by the uninspired man's religious rule, disallowing the common people the right to possess a Bible, and making them dependent upon his private interpretation of it. Hence came the Protestant churches in their successes, to recover the down-trodden Truth, each protesting against these abuses and usurpations of human rights, each being called forth to make the Christian world realize the need of true Inspiration and freedom of religious thought, the right to own a Bible and to study for themselves, and the duty to make the Bible and the Bible only, the rule of their faith.

Being determined, though, to bring the Reformation to naught, Satan has from its beginning constantly worked to cause every church member to revel in private interpretation of the Scriptures and in wild Biblical theories. Consequently, Protestantism today finds itself following not merely in the way of the uninspired Bible interpretations of one man but in the ways of the uninspired interpretations of thousands of men and women. The result is that Christendom teems with schism and confusion unrivalled in history—evidence that the great work of the founding fathers of the Protestant Reformation has been perverted and turned into an undermining force for the frustration of God's special design for the church today.

Thus we see that the Reformation, which, originally under the direction of inspired men, lifted the church out of one morass, later under the direction of uninspired men, plunged her into another, wherein she has been foundering ever since. And unless we let the Truth extricate us from this fatal bog of confusion, we cannot defeat the Enemy of Inspiration in his tireless and powerful efforts to prevent the implementation of our salvation into weapons for our destruction.

The Seventh-day Adventist Movement was appointed to declare the sanctuary work: "Fear God, and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment [the harvest] is come" (Rev. 14:7) to remove from the Lamb's Book of Life, the names of those who had not filled their garments with extra oil (Matt. 25:3), and those who had not put on the wedding garment (Matt. 22:11), also those who had not doubled their talents (Matt. 25:14-30); and also to remove the tares from among the wheat (Matt. 13:30).

This proclamation concerning the dead was to prepare the living for the coming judgment. Upon this reason, Satan has employed his every device to lull Adventists into being merely hearers and preachers but not doers of the Word; into tithing mint and anise and cumin, as it were, but omitting the weightier matters of the law, in short, he has caused them to become wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked by falling on the one hand to be faithful themselves in doing what they teach others to do, and on the other hand to have fall back into thinking themselves rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing, and again become poor and in need of everything. Thus we see that while Satan has not been able to overthrow every Adventist member, he has, though, been able to overthrow every Movement to date.

Clearly, then, lukewarmness and the hallucination of being rich are the faults peculiar to the Laodiceans, and are the dangers which if not recognized and removed are finally to result in God's spuing them out of His mouth (Rev. 3:16). Thus again the Lord mercifully pleads with Present-truth believers to walk in the way of each lukewarm church, and to fall back into thinking themselves rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing, and again become poor and in need of everything. Thus we see that while Satan has not been able to overthrow every Adventist member, he has, though, been able to overthrow every Movement to date.

The Eleventh-hour Movement, being the very last, is consequently the greatest danger of all. What urgency then, that we keep our eyes wide open lest we, too, fall! This Movement, however, being the last gospel effort, must "give power and force" to the Third Angel's Message "and the whole earth with his glory" (Rev. 18:1; it must triumph, though every Movement before it has failed. It is destined, not to "prophesy again" to "many nations" (Rev. 10:11), but to "fall." And as it is to go to those who have not heard of His fame, and to bring to the house of the Lord all the saints "out of all nations" (Isa. 66:19, 20), it is consequently foreordained to endure. To effect this predetermined purpose, God is now taking the reins in His own hands (Testimonies to Ministers, p. 300), to purify the church by removing from it the tares, and to preserve it free from them henceforth, so that it may stand on Mount Zion with the Lamb. (Id.)