

Beyond the Impossible

MEMORY VERSE: “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

“To the soul weary of a life of sin, but knowing not where to find relief, present the compassionate Saviour. Take him by the hand, lift him up, speak to him words of courage and hope. Help him to grasp the hand of the Saviour.”—[The Ministry of Healing](#), p. 168.

Suggested Reading: Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, pp. 263-267. (At the bottom of this page)

1. TENDER HOPEFULNESS

Sun, Sep 27

a. How can we be inspired by Paul’s salutation from a Roman dungeon? Philippians 1:1-5.

Philippians 1:1-5

Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: 2 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 ¶ I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, 5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

“Paul’s letter to the Philippians, like the one to the Colossians, was written while he was a prisoner at Rome.”—[The Acts of the Apostles](#), p. 479.

“Paul wrote to these brethren as ‘saints in Christ Jesus;’ but he was not writing to those who were perfect in character. He wrote to them as men and women who were striving against temptation and who were in danger of falling. He pointed them to ‘the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep.’ He assured them that ‘through the blood of the everlasting covenant’ He will ‘make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ.’

“When one at fault becomes conscious of his error, be careful not to destroy his self-respect. Do not discourage him by indifference or distrust. Do not say, ‘Before giving him my confidence, I will wait to see whether he will hold out.’ Often this very distrust causes the tempted one to stumble. . . .

“We become too easily discouraged over the souls who do not at once respond to our efforts. Never should we cease to labor for a soul while there is one gleam of hope.”—[The Ministry of Healing](#), pp. 167, 168.

2. TRUSTING THE POWER OF GOD

Mon, Sep 28

a. How can our attitude toward our faulty, erring associates reveal the depth of our faith in the power of God? Philippians 1:6-8.

Philippians 1:6-8

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: 7 ¶ Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. 8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

“We should strive to understand the weakness of others.

“We know little of the heart trials of those who have been bound in chains of darkness and who lack resolution and moral power. Most pitiable is the condition of him who is suffering under remorse; he is as one stunned, staggering, sinking into the dust. He can see nothing clearly. The mind is beclouded, he knows not what steps to take. Many a poor soul is misunderstood, unappreciated, full of distress and agony—a lost, straying sheep. He cannot find God, yet he has an intense longing for pardon and peace.

“Oh, let no word be spoken to cause deeper pain! . . .

“Precious souls cost our self-sacrificing Redeemer too dear a price to be lightly given up to the tempter’s power. . . .

“We need to put ourselves in the place of the tempted ones. Consider the power of heredity, the influence of evil associations and surroundings, the power of wrong habits. Can we wonder that under such influences many become degraded? Can we wonder that they should be slow to respond to efforts for their uplifting?

“Often, when won to the gospel, those who appeared coarse and unpromising will be among its most loyal adherents and advocates. They are not altogether corrupt. Beneath the forbidding exterior there are good impulses that might be reached. Without a helping hand many would never recover themselves, but by patient, persistent effort they may be uplifted. Such need tender words, kind consideration, tangible help. They need that kind of counsel which will not extinguish the faint gleam of courage in the soul.”—[The Ministry of Healing](#), pp. 168, 169.

b. With what aims should we study God’s word? Philippians 1:9-11.

Philippians 1:9-11

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; 10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; 11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

“Every means of grace should be diligently improved that the love of God may abound in the soul more and more, ‘that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness.’ Your Christian life must take on vigorous and stalwart forms. You can attain to the high standard set before you in the Scriptures, and you must if you would be children of God. You cannot stand still; you must either advance or retrograde.”—[Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 264](#).

3. SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

Tue, Sep 29

a. Describe how God often uses persecution and difficulties to spread His wonderful message of love and grace. Philippians 1:12-14.

Philippians 1:12-14

But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; 13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; 14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

“It could not be expected that Paul, a poor and friendless prisoner, would be able to gain the attention of the wealthy and titled classes of Roman citizens. To them vice presented all its glittering allurements and held them willing captives. But from among the toilworn, want-stricken victims of their oppression, even from among the poor slaves, many gladly listened to the words of Paul and in the faith of Christ found a hope and peace that cheered them under the hardships of their lot.

“Yet while the apostle’s work began with the humble and the lowly, its influence extended until it reached the very palace of the emperor.”—[The Acts of the Apostles, p. 461](#).

“The grace of God sustained Paul in his imprisonment, enabling him to rejoice in tribulation. With faith and assurance he wrote to his Philippian brethren that his imprisonment had resulted in the furtherance of the gospel. . . .

“There is a lesson for us in this experience of Paul’s, for it reveals God’s way of working. The Lord can bring victory out of that which may seem to us discomfiture and defeat. We are in danger of forgetting God, of looking at the things which are seen, instead of beholding by the eye of faith the things which are unseen. When misfortune or calamity comes, we are ready to charge God with neglect or cruelty. If He sees fit to cut off our usefulness in some line, we mourn, not stopping to think that thus God may be working for our good. We need to learn that chastisement is a part of His great plan and that under the rod of affliction the Christian may sometimes do more for the Master than when engaged in active service.”—[ibid., pp. 480, 481](#).

b. If tempted to feel disappointed over unconventional ways by which seeds of truth may be sown, what should we remember? Philippians 1:15-18.

Philippians 1:15-18

Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: 16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: 17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. 18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

“By the efforts of Satan to destroy it, the ‘incorruptible’ seed of the word of God, ‘which liveth and abideth forever’ (1 Peter 1:23), is sown in the hearts of men; through the reproach and persecution of His children the name of Christ is magnified and souls are saved. Great is the reward in heaven of those who are witnesses for Christ through persecution and reproach.”—[Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, p. 34.](#)

4. HAVING ETERNITY IN VIEW

Wed, Sep 30

a. Why can we be inspired by the amazing testimony of Paul? Galatians 6:14; Philippians 1:19-21.

Galatians 6:14

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

Philippians 1:19-21

For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. 21 ¶ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

“The one who stands nearest to Christ will be he who on earth has drunk most deeply of the spirit of His self-sacrificing love—love that ‘vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, . . . seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil’ (1 Corinthians 13:4, 5)—love that moves the disciple, as it moved our Lord, to give all, to live and labor and sacrifice, even unto death, for the saving of humanity. This spirit was made manifest in the life of Paul. He said, ‘For to me to live is Christ;’ for his life revealed Christ to men; ‘and to die is gain’—gain to Christ; death itself would make manifest the power of His grace, and gather souls to Him. ‘Christ shall be magnified in my body,’ he said, ‘whether it be by life or by death.’ Philippians 1:21,20.”—[The Desire of Ages, p. 549.](#)

“Paul was a living example of what every true Christian should be. He lived for God’s glory. . . . He who was once a persecutor of Christ in the person of His saints now holds up before the world the cross of Christ. Paul’s heart burned with a love for souls, and he gave all his energies for the conversion of men. There never lived a more self-denying, earnest, persevering worker. His life was Christ; he worked the works of Christ. All the blessings he received were prized as so many advantages to be used in blessing others.”—[The SDA Bible Commentary \[E. G. White Comments\], vol. 6, pp. 1112, 1113.](#)

“ ‘For to me to live is Christ,’ [Paul] declared. This is the most perfect interpretation in a few words, in all the Scriptures, of what it means to be a Christian. This is the whole truth of the gospel.”—[ibid., vol. 7, p. 903.](#)

b. What perspective should we have regarding our duties here on earth, in anticipation of Christ’s return? Philippians 1:22-24; 2 Timothy 4:8; John 14:3.

Philippians 1:22-24

But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. 23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: 24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

2 Timothy 4:8

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

John 14:3

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

“While the great final reward is given at Christ’s coming, true-hearted service for God brings a reward, even in this life. Obstacles, opposition, and bitter, heartbreaking discouragements, the worker will have to meet. He may not see the fruit of his toil. But in face of all this he finds in his labor a blessed recompense. All who surrender themselves to God in unselfish service for humanity are in cooperation with the Lord of glory. This thought sweetens all toil, it braces the will, it nerves the spirit for whatever may befall.”—[Christian Service, p. 270.](#)

5. FORTIFIED THROUGH FAITH

Thur, Oct 1

a. How can the attitude of Paul generate hope in us? Philippians 1:25-28.

Philippians 1:25-28

And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; 26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again. 27 ¶ Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; 28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

“God’s faithful messengers are to go steadily forward with their work. Clothed with the panoply of heaven, they are to advance fearlessly and

victoriously, never ceasing their warfare until every soul within their reach shall have received the message of truth for this time.”—[The Acts of the Apostles, p. 220.](#)

b. How does the example of Christ strengthen us? Philippians 1:29, 30; Isaiah 53:8-11.

Philippians 1:29, 30

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; 30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

Isaiah 53:8-11

He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. 9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. 10 ¶ Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

“What sustained the Son of God in His betrayal and trial? He saw of the travail of His soul and was satisfied. He caught a view of the expanse of eternity and saw the happiness of those who through His humiliation should receive pardon and everlasting life. He was wounded for their transgressions, bruised for their iniquities. The chastisement of their peace was upon Him, and with His stripes they were healed. His ear caught the shout of the redeemed. He heard the ransomed ones singing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

“We must have a vision of the future and of the blessedness of heaven. Stand on the threshold of eternity, and hear the gracious welcome given to those who in this life have cooperated with Christ, regarding it as a privilege and an honor to suffer for His sake. . . .

“There the redeemed ones greet those who directed them to the uplifted Saviour. They unite in praising Him who died that human beings might have the life that measures with the life of God. The conflict is over. All tribulation and strife are at an end. Songs of victory fill all heaven as the redeemed stand around the throne of God.”—[Testimonies for the Church, vol. 8, pp. 43, 44.](#)

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

Fri, Oct 2

1. Why must we persevere with fallen souls having at least a glimmer of hope?
2. How many times have I seen stubborn, wayward souls amazingly changed?
3. How can God use our trials to accomplish His good purpose?
4. Describe what was essentially the motto of Paul’s existence.
5. In what ways should I better reflect the life of Paul and above all, Christ?

Chapter 27—Christian Growth

I have been shown that those who have a knowledge of the truth, and yet allow all their powers to be absorbed in worldly interests, are unfaithful. They are not, by their good works, letting the light of truth shine to others. Nearly all their ability is devoted to becoming sharp, skillful men of the world. They forget that their talents were given them of God to be used in advancing His cause. If they were faithful to their duty, the result would be great gain of souls to the Master, but many are lost through their neglect. God calls upon those who know His will to be doers of His word. Weakness, halfheartedness, and indecision provoke the assaults of Satan; and those who permit these traits to grow will be borne helplessly down by the surging waves of temptation. Everyone who professes the name of Christ is required to grow up to the full stature of Christ, the Christian's living head.

We all need a guide through the many strait places in life as much as the sailor needs a pilot over the sandy bar or up the rocky river, and where is this guide to be found? We point you, dear brethren, to the Bible. Inspired of God, written by holy men, it points out with great clearness and precision the duties of both old and young. It elevates the mind, softens the heart, and imparts gladness and holy joy to the spirit. The Bible presents a perfect standard of character; it is an infallible guide under all circumstances, even to the end of the journey of life. Take it as the man of your counsel, the rule of your daily life.

Every means of grace should be diligently improved that the love of God may abound in the soul more and more, "that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness." Your Christian life must take on vigorous and stalwart forms. You can attain to the high standard set before you in the Scriptures, and you must if you would be children of God. You cannot stand still; you must either advance or retrograde. You must have spiritual knowledge, that you "may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ," that you may "be filled with all the fullness of God."

Many who have an intelligent knowledge of the truth, and are able to defend it by arguments, are doing nothing for the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom. We meet them from time to time, but they bear no fresh testimonies of personal experience in the Christian life; they relate no new victories gained in the holy warfare. Instead of this you notice the same old routine, the same expressions in prayer and exhortation. Their prayers have no new note; they express no greater intelligence in the things of God, no more earnest, living faith. Such persons are not living plants in the garden of the Lord, sending forth fresh shoots and new foliage, and the grateful fragrance of a holy life. They are not growing Christians. They have limited views and plans, and there is no expansion of mind, no valuable additions to the treasures of Christian knowledge. Their powers have not been taxed in this direction. They have not learned to view men and things as God views them, and in many cases unsanctified sympathy has injured souls and

greatly crippled the cause of God. The spiritual stagnation that prevails is terrible. Many lead a formal Christian life and claim that their sins have been forgiven, when they are as destitute of any real knowledge of Christ as is the sinner.

Brethren, will you have a stunted Christian growth, or will you make healthy progress in the divine life? Where there is spiritual health there is growth. The child of God grows up to the full stature of a man or woman in Christ. There is no limit to his improvement. When the love of God is a living principle in the soul, there are no narrow, confined views; there is love and faithfulness in warnings and reproofs; there is earnest work and a disposition to bear burdens and take responsibilities.

Some are not willing to do self-denying work. They show real impatience when urged to take some responsibility. "What need is there," say they, of an increase of knowledge and experience? This explains it all. They feel that they are "rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," while heaven pronounces them poor, miserable, blind, and naked. To these the True Witness says: "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." Your very self-complacency shows you to be in need of everything. You are spiritually sick and need Jesus as your physician.

In the Scriptures thousands of gems of truth lie hidden from the surface seeker. The mine of truth is never exhausted. The more you search the Scriptures with humble hearts, the greater will be your interest, and the more you will feel like exclaiming with Paul: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" Every day you should learn something new from the Scriptures. Search them as for hid treasures, for they contain the words of eternal life. Pray for wisdom and understanding to comprehend these holy writings. If you would do this you would find new glories in the word of God; you would feel that you had received new and precious light on subjects connected with the truth, and the Scriptures would be constantly receiving a new value in your estimation.

"The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly." Jesus says: "Behold, I come quickly." We should keep these words ever in mind, and act as though we do indeed believe that the coming of the Lord is nigh, and that we are pilgrims and strangers upon the earth. The vital energies of the church of God must be brought into active exercise for the great object of self-renovation; every member must be an active agent for God. "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." This is a particular work, which must be carried forward in all harmony, in unity of Spirit, and in the bonds of peace. No place should be given to criticisms, doubts, and unbelief.

The Upper Columbia and North Pacific Conferences [See footnote on page 249.] are years behind. Some who ought to be strong and established in Christ are as babes in understanding and experimental knowledge of the workings of the Spirit of God. After years of experience they are able to comprehend only the first principles of that grand system of faith and doctrine that constitutes the Christian religion. They do not comprehend that perfection of character which will receive the commendation: "Well done."

Brethren, your duty, happiness, future usefulness, and final salvation call upon you to sever the tendrils of your affections from everything earthly and corruptible. There is an unsanctified sympathy that partakes of the nature of lovesick sentimentalism and is earthly, sensual. It will require no feeble effort for some of you to overcome this and change the course of your life, for you have not placed yourselves in connection with the Strength of Israel and have become enfeebled in all your faculties. Now you are loudly called upon to be diligent in the use of every means of grace, that you may be transformed in character and may grow to the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus.

We have great victories to gain, and a heaven to lose if we do not gain them. The carnal heart must be crucified; for its tendency is to moral corruption, and the end thereof is death. Nothing but the life-giving influences of the gospel can help the soul. Pray that the mighty energies of the Holy Spirit, with all their quickening, recuperative, and transforming power, may fall like an electric shock on the palsy-stricken soul, causing every nerve to thrill with new life, restoring the whole man from his dead, earthly, sensual state to spiritual soundness. You will thus become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust; and in your souls will be reflected the image of Him by whose stripes you are healed.