

Knowing the Goldsmith's (God's) Face



SABBATH—OCTOBER 20

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Job 23:1–10; Daniel 12:1–10; Matthew 5:16; Matthew 25:1–12; 1 Corinthians 4:9; Ephesians 3:10; Ephesians 4:11–16.

MEMORY VERSE: “Our faces are not covered with a veil. We all display [show] the Lord’s glory. We are being changed to become more like him so that we have more and more glory. And the glory comes from the Lord, who is the Holy Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18, NIV).

“**AMY CARMICHAEL TOOK A GROUP OF CHILDREN** to a goldsmith¹ in India. In the middle of the goldsmith’s charcoal fire was a curved roof tile. On the tile was a mixture of salt, tamarind fruit,² and brick dust. In this mixture was gold. As the fire melted the mixture, the gold became purer. The goldsmith took the gold out with tongs. If the gold was not pure enough, he replaced it in the fire with a new mixture. But each time the gold was replaced, the heat was increased. The group of children asked, ‘How do you know when the gold is made pure?’ The goldsmith replied, ‘When I can see my face in it.’ ”—Adapted from Amy Carmichael, *Learning of God* (Fort Washington, Pa.: Christian Literature Crusade, 1989), p. 50.

God is seeking to make us pure like gold. He wants to change us into His image. That is a surprising goal. It seems even more surprising that we can develop a Christlike character when we pass through life’s crucibles (trials).

THIS WEEK’S LESSON UP CLOSE: What part does suffering have in the cleansing method? How do we understand all this against the background of the great controversy (war) between Christ and Satan?

1. goldsmith—a person who melts solid gold into liquid gold.

2. tamarind fruit—a tart (sour) fruit that comes from a tropical tree with hard yellowish wood and red-striped yellow flowers.

SUNDAY—OCTOBER 21**“IN HIS IMAGE” (Romans 8:29)**

In the beginning, God made us in His image (likeness) (Genesis 1:27). But that image has been spoiled by sin.

In what ways do we find that God's image has been destroyed in men and women?

It is clear: We all have been hurt by sin (Romans 3:10–19). But God's desire is to restore us to what we should have been in the first place. This is where our verse today fits in. It shows God's plan for those who surrender (give) their lives to the Holy Spirit, that they may “become like his Son” (Romans 8:29, NIV).

But there is more we need to know. “The likeness of God is to be redone in man. The honor of God and Christ is shown in the perfection of the character³ of His people.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.

How do you understand what Ellen G. White is saying to us? Read also Job 1; Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 4:9; Ephesians 3:10.

As Christians, we must never forget the whole universe⁴ is watching the great controversy (war) between Christ and Satan happening all

around us. The battle takes many shapes and is fought in many ways. Much about this battle is hidden from us. But as followers of Christ, we have a part to play in this controversy. In this way we can bring honor to Christ through our lives.



The whole universe is watching the war taking place between Christ and Satan on planet Earth.

Imagine being on the field of a huge stadium. Sitting in the bleachers (benches) on one side are angels loyal to the Lord. On the other side are angels who have fallen with Lucifer. If your life for the past 24 hours was played out on that field, which side would have more to cheer about? What does your answer tell you about yourself?

3. character—who you are; all the things a person does, feels, and thinks are what a person is made of; your character is the sum of the choices you make, such as the choice to be honest or to cheat.

4. universe—all the matter (things), light, and energy (forces in nature that do work) that have been discovered (found) or that we know of.

MONDAY—OCTOBER 22**FAITH DURING THE REFINING
(PURIFYING) FIRE
(Hebrews 11:27)**

To be in a battle is one thing. But not being able to see the armies in the battle is another story. In a sense, this is what we as Christians deal with. We know that the armies are out there. We can feel them in our lives. But we have to go ahead in faith and trust Him “who is invisible [unseen]” (Hebrews 11:27, NKJV).

What is the important part of Job's struggle in Job 23:1–10? What does he not know? At the same time, what does he take on faith, even if he has trials (troubles)?

Even when he had terrible trials, Job trusted in the Lord. Job decided to keep on trusting God. And one of the things that kept him going was gold. It was not a gold medal. Instead, Job was looking into the future and understood that if he held on to God, he would win—he would come out like gold. We do not know how much Job knew of what was happening in the unseen world. No matter what Job did not know, he passed the test of fire anyway.

Do you fear the fire? Do you worry about the heat in which events happen? Perhaps, as with Job, the heat of God may not be explained. It could be a hard time learning to do a new job or

living in a new home. It could be having to survive abuse at work or even within your own family. It could be illness or financial loss. It may be hard to understand, but God can use these trials to test you and make you pure. He does this to bring out His image (likeness) in your character.

Being proven to be gold seems to be a good reason for Job to continue to have hope. It is something for Job to keep his eyes upon and that helps pull him through his troubles. It is a powerful testimony⁵ to Job's character. This is because Job was suffering pain, but he could sense that God was testing him. Also, Job did not understand everything that was happening to him, but he knew that these trials would make him purer.



Job may not have known why he was suffering, but he knew his fiery trials would make him pure.

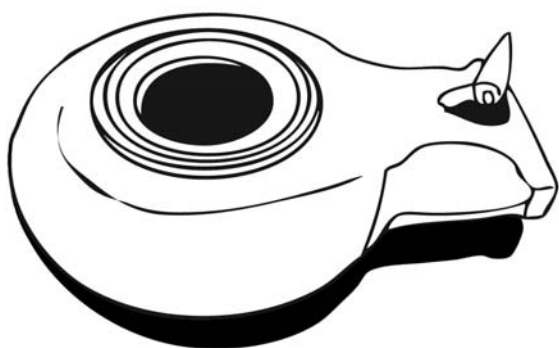
In your own experience, how do trials make you purer? What other ways could you be made pure other than through suffering?

5. testimony—what you tell others that God has done for you.

TUESDAY—OCTOBER 23**JESUS' LAST WORDS
(Matthew 25:1–13)**

Jesus was in Jerusalem, about to die. In his Gospel, Matthew writes that Jesus spends His last hour before Passover⁶ teaching His disciples parables (stories). The two parables are about the ten virgins and the sheep and the goats. These stories are about the way we should live as we wait for Jesus to come. They are very important to us today because we have the signs of Jesus' soon coming all around us.

In the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1–12), many Bible thinkers point out that the oil is a symbol (word picture) for the Holy Spirit. Ellen G. White agrees but also says that this oil is a symbol for character or who we are. The oil is something no one can get for us.



In the parable of the ten virgins, the oil in the lamp represents a Christlike character.

6. Passover—Jewish holiday in memory of the freeing of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt.

7. salvation by works—the belief that good deeds can save us.

8. plan of salvation—what God has done and is doing to save us from sin.

Read the parable in Matthew 25:1–13. In what ways does the meaning of the story change? It depends on whether you think oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit or of character. What does this story mean to you if the oil represents the Holy Spirit or a Christlike character?

Read the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:31–46. How are the sheep and the goats to be separated?

Notice that the king separates the sheep and the goats based on their works and their character. Jesus is not teaching salvation by works⁷ here, but we can see how important character growth is in the plan of salvation.⁸ It is also important how those who are saved by Christ show this salvation through their lives and characters.

“Character is what a person is doing in the dark.” What kind of person are you when no one is looking? What does that answer tell you about changes that need to be made?

WEDNESDAY—OCTOBER 24**“THE WISE” (Daniel 12:1–10)**

Yesterday we studied how important character is for those waiting for the Second Coming. Today we will study how important character is for those who are alive at the second coming of Jesus.

What is the message in Daniel 12:1–10? At what time in earth's history is this? Most important, what can we tell from these verses about the character of God's people alive at this time? How are they to be judged as compared to the wicked? Read also Revelation 22:11.

Daniel is told that just before Jesus comes, there will be a time of trouble that has no equal to any other time of history. In Daniel 12:3,10, we are given a picture of the righteous (saved) and the wicked during this time. Notice how the wicked “shall do wickedly” (verse 10, NKJV) while the righteous, in verse 2, will shine brightly. This is perhaps because the righteous have been “made pure in the fire” (verse 10, NIV) during this “‘time of terrible suffering’ ” (Daniel 12:1, NIV). The wicked do not understand, but the righteous are “wise” and do understand.

Understand what? Math, science, higher criticism?⁹ Proverbs says that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7, NKJV). Perhaps, in this way of thinking, the “wise” are wise because they understand these final events (the time of trouble) as they happen. The wise are not taken by surprise. From their study of the Word, the wise know the time of trouble is coming. And most important, they know enough to let this time of trouble make them pure in the fire. But the wicked are just made more stub-

born in their rebellion.¹⁰ So they continue in their wickedness.

The important point is that we have a picture of a people who have been through cleansing fire.

We have studied these verses in Daniel with the last days in mind. But what principles (rules) do we find here that can help us now better understand what the cleansing fire is all about, even for us today?

THURSDAY—OCTOBER 25

CHARACTER AND COMMUNITY¹¹ (Ephesians 4:11–16)

A song goes like this: “I am a rock, I am an island.” Have you ever felt like that? Wanting to stand alone? You may have even heard people say, “Well, my walk with God is private. It is not something I want to talk about.”

What point is Paul making in Ephesians 4:11–16? What importance does he place here on community?

When Paul writes to the Ephesians, he describes the church as a body. Jesus is the Head, and His people make up the rest. If you read verse 13, you will notice the greatest purpose of living in such a community. It is to experience “the whole measure [amount] of the fullness of Christ” (NIV). And for that we need one another!

9. higher criticism—a method (way) of analyzing (understanding) and criticizing (judging) the Bible.

10. rebellion—a fight or struggle against any kind of power.

11. community—a group of people living, working, or worshipping together.



Paul describes the church as a body. Jesus is the Head, and His people make up the rest (Ephesians 4:11–16).

It is possible to be a Christian all alone. Many people who have suffered for Christ have stood alone. This is a powerful witness¹² to the power of God that men and women do not weaken under the pressures around them. But Paul wants to point out a very important truth: The fullness of Christ is fully shown when we are working together in fellowship with one another.

In today's verse, what does Paul say must happen before the fullness of Christ may be shown in our Christian community?

How is the witness of a community that shows the fullness of Christ different from a person showing the fullness of Christ? What does this mean when we think about the great controversy

(war between Christ and Satan)?
Read Ephesians 3:10.

It is easy to be nice when you are by yourself or with strangers. But it is much harder being nice to people you know very well or do not like. This means that when we still show these people kindness, we give witness to the truth about God.

FRIDAY—OCTOBER 26

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, "God Promises Us a New Heart of Flesh," p. 100, in *Sons and Daughters of God*; "To Meet the Bridegroom," pp. 405–421, in *Christ's Object Lessons*; "The Time of Trouble," pp. 613–634, in *The Great Controversy [War]*.

"Character building is the most important work God has given to humans. Never before has its careful study been so important as now. Never before has any past generation¹³ been called to meet issues so important. Never before have young men and young women faced dangers so great as they face today."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 225.

"In the parable, the foolish virgins are shown to be begging for oil and failing to receive it. The foolish virgins are those who have not prepared themselves by developing [forming] a character to stand in a time of trouble. It is the same as their going to their

12. witness—when the Christian life is an example for God.

13. generation—all the people born about the same time. Your parents belong to one generation. You and your friends your age belong to another generation.

neighbors and saying, 'Give me your character, or I shall be lost.' Those who were wise could not give their oil to the fading lamps of the foolish virgins. Character cannot be transferred [given] from person to person. It is not to be bought or sold. It is to be earned. The Lord has given to every person an opportunity [a time] to obtain [form] a righteous [holy] character through the hours of testing. But the Lord has not given a way for a person to share with another person his hard-earned character. Each person develops character by going through hard experiences, by learning lessons from the great Teacher [Jesus]. With this character, he can show patience under trial, and use faith so that he can remove mountains impossible to move."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Youth's Instructor [Teacher]*, January 16, 1896.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ What does "character building" mean? How can you do this? How important is character building in your own life and your church community?

❷ Thursday's study talked about the important part of community in the life of a Christian. How well does your local church work as the body of Christ? How well do you represent the Lord as a community? As a class, talk about what you can do to improve.

❸ As a class, talk about the question of why character building is important even if we are saved by faith alone in Jesus. If Jesus' perfect character is what saves us, then why do we need to develop (form) character?

❹ Helen Keller was deaf and blind from an early age. She wrote, "Character cannot be developed [formed] the easy way. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be made stronger. Vision is also cleared, ambition is inspired, and success is reached."—Adapted from *Leadership*, volume 17, number 4. Do you agree? Discuss how character is related to suffering and the great controversy.