

## Cutting Loose

“Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us” (Psalm 62:8).

“We cannot trust to our own wisdom, our own experience, our own knowledge of the truth; we must be daily learners, looking to our heavenly Teacher for instruction, and then, without regard to ease, pleasure, or convenience, we must go forward, knowing that He is faithful who has called.”—Our High Calling, p. 362.

Suggested Readings: Steps to Christ, pp. 105–113, Testimonies, vol. 4, pp. 20–28.

Sunday January 4 1. A COMMON DILEMMA

**a. What is the very nature of human beings apart from Christ?**

**Deuteronomy 28:66. Who is the author of this? Genesis 3:1.**

**Deu 28:66**

**[66]** And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life:

**Gen 3:1**

**[1]** Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

“There is nothing that [Satan] desires more than to destroy confidence in God and in His word. Satan stands at the head of the great army of doubters, and he works to the utmost of his power to beguile souls into his ranks. It is becoming fashionable to doubt.”—The Great Controversy, p. 526.

**b. Is it easy to trust in an uncertain future? Describe the lives of two men who have shown us by example how to respond to God’s call.**

**Hebrews 11:7, 8.**

**Heb 11:7-8**

**[7]** By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

[8] By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

**c. How can we overcome doubt today? Matthew 21:21; Romans 10:17.**

**Mat 21:21**

[21] Jesus answered and said unto them, **Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this *which is done to the fig tree*, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.**

**Rom 10:17**

[17] So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

“Disguise it as they may, the real cause of doubt and skepticism, in most cases, is the love of sin. The teachings and restrictions of God’s word are not welcome to the proud, sin-loving heart, and those who are unwilling to obey its requirements are ready to doubt its authority.”—Steps to Christ, p. 111.

Monday January 5 2. YOU WANT ME TO CHANGE?

**a. Men and women often want what is familiar. What problem did Israel have shortly after leaving Egypt? Numbers 11:5; Acts 7:39.**

**Num 11:5**

[5] We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick:

**Act 7:39**

[39] To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust *him* from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,

“As [Israel] at one time hankered after the leeks and onions of Egypt, and murmured because they did not have everything to gratify their appetites, and declared their choice to go back into bondage rather than deny their appetites, so they now insulted God to His face in throwing off His wise rule.”—1888 Materials, p. 922.

**b. How did God deal with their attitude? Numbers 11:10, 18–21; 14:26–35.**

Num 11:10

[10] Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased.

Num 11:18-21

[18] And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the LORD, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for *it was* well with us in Egypt: therefore the LORD will give you flesh, and ye shall eat.

[19] Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days;

[20] *But* even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the LORD which *is* among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?

[21] And Moses said, The people, among whom I *am, are* six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month.

Num 14:26-35

[26] And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,

[27] How long *shall I bear with* this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.

[28] Say unto them, *As truly as* I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you:

[29] Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me,

[30] Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, *concerning* which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

[31] But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.

[32] But *as for* you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness.

[33] And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness.

[34] After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, *even* forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, *even* forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.

[35] I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.

“God gave the people that which was not for their highest good, because they persisted in desiring it; they would not be satisfied with those things that would prove a benefit to them. Their rebellious desires were gratified, but they were left to suffer the result. They feasted without restraint, and their excesses were speedily punished. ‘The Lord smote the people with a very great plague’ (Numbers 11:33). Large numbers were cut down by burning fevers, while the most guilty among them were smitten as soon as they tasted the food for which they had lusted.”—Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 382.

**c. What is the primary goal of God’s dealing with us? Is it to change our location only, or our attitude too? Deuteronomy 8:1–6.**

**Deu 8:1-6**

[1] All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers.

[2] And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, *and* to prove thee, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

[3] And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every *word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

[4] Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.

[5] Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, *so* the LORD thy God chasteneth thee.

[6] Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.

“I was shown the conformity of some professed Sabbathkeepers to the world. Oh, I saw that it is a disgrace to their profession, a disgrace to the cause of God. They give the lie to their profession. They think they are not like the world, but they are so near like them in dress, in conversation, and actions, that there is no distinction. . . . Why is it so hard to lead a self-denying, humble life? Because professed Christians are not dead to the world. It is easy living after we are dead. But many are longing for the leeks and onions of Egypt. . . .They do not enter through the straight gate and narrow way.”—Testimonies, vol. 1, p. 131.

Tuesday January 6

### 3. THE WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

**a. What experience did Moses have that enabled him to be used by God? Exodus 2:15.**

**Exo 2:15**

[15] Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well.

“When Moses was feeding his flock in the pastures of Midian, the Lord was preparing him for a position of great responsibility; he was to be a laborer together with God. Educated in the court of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, he was imperfectly qualified to take his place as the leader of a suffering, tempted people, to help them in their oppression, sympathize with their sufferings, and conduct them through a rough and dangerous desert to the land of promise. The Lord in His providence took Moses from the king’s court and gave him the humble work of a shepherd, that, while caring for the sheep in the desert, he might be trained for the trials and hardships and perils of the wilderness and qualified for the office of a shepherd of his own flock, for a church whose God was the Lord. Forty years was Moses in this training school in the mountains.”—The Signs of the Times, August 24, 1891.

“[Moses] had also been fitted for his duties by long years of quiet meditation and communion with God in the wilderness of Horeb.”— Ibid., May 6, 1886.

**b. Could Israel have entered the Promised Land sooner than they did? What was the underlying reason for God giving them forty years in the desert? Hebrews 12:7–11.**

**Heb 12:7-11**

- [7] If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?
- [8] But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.
- [9] Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?
- [10] For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness.
- [11] Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

**c. What lesson did God teach many in the wilderness? Are we in need of the same lesson? Colossians 3:2.**

Col 3:2

[2] Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

“Spiritual prosperity continues only so long as man depends wholly upon God for wisdom and for perfection of character. And those who feel most their need of dependence upon God are usually those who have the least amount of earthly treasure and human honor on which to depend.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 147.

“We should be continually loosening our hold upon earth, and fastening it upon Heaven.”—*The Signs of the Times*, August 14, 1884.

Wednesday January 7

4. WHO REAPED THE BENEFITS?

**a. Did the adults who left Egypt reap any benefits from their wilderness wanderings? Why or why not? Hebrews 3:8, 9, 17–19.**

Heb 3:8-9

[8] Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

[9] When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

Heb 3:17-19

[17] But with whom was he grieved forty years? *was it* not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

[18] And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

[19] So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

“The wilderness wandering was not only ordained as a judgment upon the rebels and murmurers, but it was to serve as a discipline for the rising generation, preparatory to their entrance into the Promised Land.”—Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 407.

**b. Could they have had a different experience? Hebrews 3:7; 4:1, 2.**

Heb 3:7

[7] Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice,

Heb 4:1-2

[1] Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left *us* of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

[2] For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard *it*.

“When Moses made known to Israel the will of God concerning them, they seemed sincerely to repent of their sinful conduct. But the Lord knew that they sorrowed because of the result of their evil course, rather than from a deep sense of their ingratitude and disobedience. But their repentance came too late; the just anger of God was awakened, and their doom was pronounced, from which there was no reprieve. When they found that the Lord would not relent in His decree, their self-will again arose, and they declared that they would not return into the wilderness.”—Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 153.

**c. What is our great need and why? Psalm 4:5.**

Psa 4:5

[5] Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.

“The conflict before us calls for the exercise of a spirit of selfdenial, for distrust of self and for dependence on God alone, for the wise use of every opportunity for the saving of souls.”—Prophets and Kings, p. 74.

“When we have a realization of our weakness, we learn to depend upon a power not inherent. Nothing can take so strong a hold on the heart as

the abiding sense of our responsibility to God. Nothing reaches so fully down to the deepest motives of conduct as a sense of the pardoning love of Christ. We are to come in touch with God, then we shall be imbued with His Holy Spirit, that enables us to come in touch with our fellowmen.”—The Desire of Ages, p. 493

Thursday January 8

## 5. WHAT ABOUT ME?

**a. How can we know the condition of our heart? Jeremiah 17:9. Whom should we ask to search it? Psalm 139:23, 24.**

**Jer 17:9**

[9] The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

**Psa 139:23-24**

[23] Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

[24] And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

**b. If I find that I have been unwilling to follow any of God’s counsels, what should I do? Ezekiel 18:30; Psalm 51:6–10.**

**Eze 18:30**

[30] Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn *yourselves* from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

**Psa 51:6-10**

[6] Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

[7] Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

[8] Make me to hear joy and gladness; *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice.

[9] Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

[10] Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

“Oh, how many lose the richest blessings that God has in store for them in health and spiritual endowments! There are many souls who wrestle for special victories and special blessings that they may do some great thing. To

this end they are always feeling that they must make an agonizing struggle in prayer and tears. When these persons search the Scriptures with prayer to know the expressed will of God, and then do His will from the heart without one reservation or self-indulgence, they will find rest. All the agonizing, all the tears and struggles, will not bring them the blessing they long for. Self must be entirely surrendered. They must do the work that presents itself, appropriating the abundance of the grace of God which is promised to all who ask in faith.”—Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 165.

**c. Are there any promises that I can claim as I seek to know and to do God’s will? 2 Chronicles 7:14; Isaiah 41:9, 10; 1 John 1:9.**

**2Ch 7:14**

**[14]** If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

**Isa 41:9-10**

**[9]** *Thou* whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou *art* my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.

**[10]** Fear thou not; for I *am* with thee: be not dismayed; for I *am* thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

**1Jn 1:9**

**[9]** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.