

A Diligent Walk with God

By John Thiel,

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 11:5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

I cannot, dare not walk alone.

Do you find yourself lonesome in this world? Do you find yourself looking for companionship and someone to talk with all day long? Or do you handle life's cares and responsibilities as a soul operator? And as you have to face the different responsibilities of life, there comes a point in time when this overwhelms you. It gets too much, and you can't cope anymore – you are ready to fold up because so much is on your shoulders. If only I had someone with me to talk to, and to counsel with, to help me, someone who can understand me... In the ministry that I am involved in, I come across this continually. People are grappling for companionship, someone that they can see, someone that they can talk with. And when they've come to me and I say to them, But there is the Lord! and I point out someone to walk with them, they quickly answer, But I need someone to see! someone I can touch, I can embrace, someone who can speak back to me, someone that I can hear talking to me, someone I can touch. And when they say this to me, my heart bleeds because they don't know my Jesus.

How real is God to you? How important is this subject that I am here sharing with you for those who are living at this time of earth's history? Is this an important doctrine? You know, we have so many doctrines that we uphold, the safeguarding of all the doctrines that have accumulated over the years, and we find ourselves in a protective mode of doctrines, and this particular subject is hardly touched.

The message I want to share is entitled, *Diligent Attention to God's Companionship*. How important is this, that I have diligence in attending to my companionship with God? To be among the 144,000 who are going to be translated when Jesus comes, to be among them, to be translated from among the living, under the three angels' messages, which are all those doctrines, we have an example. We have an example of someone that was translated, and we, if we will be the people of the three angels' messages, must be of that company that are translated like Enoch was.

Hebrews 11:5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

What a wonderful testimony – God was pleased with Enoch. Let us see why He was pleased with Enoch.

Genesis 5:24 Enoch walked with God: and he [was] not; for God took him.

You combine these two texts together and you can understand why he pleased God. God was pleased with the human who would walk with Him. That is why He took him, because He was so pleased that someone would walk with Him. To walk with God pleases God. He was translated because he walked with God.

We need to understand what pleases God, that we might be translated as was Enoch.

By faith Enoch "was translated that he should not see death; ... In the midst of a world by its iniquity doomed to destruction, Enoch lived a life of such close communion with God that he was not permitted to fall under the power of death. The godly character of this prophet represents the state of holiness which must be attained by those who shall be "redeemed from the earth" (Revelation 14:3) at the time of Christ's second advent. {PP 88.3}

And Revelation 14:3 is the 144,000.

Then, as in the world before the Flood, iniquity will prevail. Following the promptings of their corrupt hearts and the teachings of a deceptive philosophy, men will rebel against the authority of Heaven. But like Enoch, God's people will seek for purity of heart and conformity to His will, until they shall reflect the likeness of Christ. Like Enoch, they will warn the world of the Lord's second coming and of the judgments to be visited upon transgression, and by their holy conversation and example they will condemn the sins of the ungodly. As Enoch was translated to heaven before the destruction of the world by water, so the living righteous will be translated from the earth before its destruction by fire. {Ibid.}

As Enoch was translated, we are to be translated. Enoch was living in a corrupt society equal to ours, and he pleased God. There is so much to meditate upon here, and I hope that what is stimulated in our minds will continue to develop from hereafter. But ponder with me God's feelings, that it pleased Him. He was pleased because Enoch walked with Him. You know, Christians who lament of loneliness grieve the Spirit of God. Why? What pleases God? He yearns to walk with one who is lonesome. Are you lonely? His heart is touched with your loneliness. He wants to spend time continually with you. And as we keep on walking along lonely, and we lament about our feelings of wanting to have companionship, He is standing by and saying, "I'm here for you... Why are you walking on ignoring Me?" He yearns to be acknowledged as a real person with you. He longs for it.

Consider with me God's mind. Consider God in regards to this walking with Him.

Hebrews 11:16. But now they desire a better [country], that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

Like Enoch, God is not ashamed of these people, for many reasons. But it is all summarised in the one statement about Enoch, He *walked with God*. And those who are lamenting that they are lonely make God ashamed.

We can have what Enoch had. We can have Christ... {1BC 1087.6}

As our *companion*?

We can have Christ as our constant companion. Enoch walked with God, and when assailed by the tempter, he could talk with God about it. {Ibid.}

When you are tempted, do you stop to say, "O Lord, this temptation..."? Do you talk to Him about the temptation? That's what it says. He walked with God, *and when assailed by the tempter, he could talk with God about it.*

He had no "It is written" as we have, but he had a knowledge of his heavenly Companion. He made God his Counsellor, and was closely bound up with Jesus. And Enoch was honored in this course. He was translated to heaven without seeing death. And those who will be translated at the close of time, will be those who commune with God on earth. Those who make manifest that their life is hid with Christ in God will ever be representing Him in all their life-practices. Selfishness will be cut out by the roots. {Ibid.}

There is a fulfilment of the yearnings of the soul in a living person with you all the time. You don't have to rely upon any physical human being to have perfect companionship. And it is my prayer that we can know how to let that come into existence, if we haven't got it properly yet. How did Enoch walk with God?

It was in looking in faith to Jesus, in asking of Him, in believing that every word spoken would be verified, that Enoch walked with God. He kept close by the side of God, obeying His every word. . . . His was a wonderful life of oneness. Christ was his Companion. He was in intimate fellowship with God. {1BC 1087.9}

Intimate. It was Christ within. His life was hid with Christ in God. There are many variations of studying this subject of intimacy with God, because through the Holy Spirit God isn't just walking with me; He is actually inside of me. And I can walk with God in an intimacy that is much better than a marriage. How many people look for companionship in marriage and are frequently disappointed, because the yearning of an intimate real closeness is still not fully satisfied. God can be even closer. And while there are people who are yearning for a marriage partner, if they would learn to walk with God, they could be quite contented. We must learn to walk with God, as Enoch walked.

So is it possible that God could be ashamed of me if I profess to be a Christian and I don't know how to walk with Him? I make a profession that I'm a Seventh-day Adventist reformer, and I'm not walking with God; can God be ashamed of me? That's what it says; He was not ashamed of those that did walk with Him. So shun the thought! As we think of this, that we could make God ashamed of me who claims to be a safeguarding person of the doctrines for these last days, it provokes something. What does it provoke in your mind that God might be ashamed if I'm not walking with Him? Doesn't it provoke a diligent attention to such a subject? It creates in me the thought, Oh, if that's the case, then I've got to apply myself diligently to a companionship with Him; because He is yearning to walk with me. And me?

I'm walking alone, I'm lamenting about this, that, and the other thing, and God is standing by and saying, "Oh please... I love you. Why are you lamenting?"

Notice how Jesus prayed for such an intimate fellowship for His children. Jesus shows in His prayer that He wants this for us. I love John 17. If I had a favourite scripture, this would be it. But there are so many other precious ones; it's hard to find a favourite.

John 17:20 Neither pray I for these alone,

Right? Notice what He is praying. He is praying for His disciples, but then He says, I'm not praying for these alone,

John 17:20 ...but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, [art] in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

What is He praying for us who believe on Him through the disciples? That we might be as intimate with Him as the Father is with Him.

John 17:23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, ... 26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare [it]: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

What sort of a companionship is this talking about? It is a companionship of love. Not just somebody to walk with and talk with, but somebody who has perfect love to me, a love that generates a perfect love in my heart to Him, and that pulsates intimately within me. This is what we are here to contemplate.

So the question is, How focused are we? We have just had a conference over the Easter holidays. What was it entitled? *Fine-tuning into God's Voice*. Why did we study that? Here is the reason: so that we might be diligent in entering into a companionship with God, as Enoch did, and to be diligent and to be fine-tuned to hear Him speaking to me, like He spoke to Enoch.

Distinguishing the Voice of God

It requires earnest attention from us to distinguish the voice which speaks from God. {5T 68.4}

Fine-tuning. How focused are we? Are there so many other voices, so many other distractions around us, that we are not really knowing the presence of God and hearing His voice, when it's around me, and He is with me? In fact, it says, *In him we live, and move, and have our being*. He is so close that He is actually in my body, but my mind may not be in tune with Him. That is why I love feeling my pulse. I love feeling my pulse because if I let my mind dwell upon this fact that I am alive because my pulse is pumping, that means God is very close to me; and my mind can tune in to Him. That is one channel by which I walk with God.

So it requires earnest attention. I must be diligent. I must have diligent attention to focus upon my relationship with Him. Is God walking by our side? Is He? Is He close to us? I just emphasized the fact: *In him we live, and move, and have our being*. He is not very far away from us. His Spirit is speaking and working within. He is right there. Conscience is speaking. Remember, the voice of God is conscience? He is right there, He is speaking, and yet, what may be happening in my mind? What is the problem that leads people to say to me, I am so alone? I am so disappointed, I am so bereft because my partners are not with me anymore that I had hoped I would find companionship in. This subject is so important, because there are things in my and your life that, like the disciples in the time of Christ after His crucifixion, we can have Jesus right there with us, and we can be weeping and lamenting, thinking, Where is He?

When the disciples were on the road to Emmaus, they were walking along and lamenting, weren't they? They were lamenting, and look at this beautiful picture. Just let it really sink in, because this is our experience, believe it or not.

They [the disciples] had not advanced far on their journey when they were joined by a stranger, {DA 795.2}

Strange that. Who was that? It was Jesus! But He was a stranger to them. Is such a thing possible? that He, your Saviour, is to you a stranger? Indeed, I see it all the time. But why was He a stranger?

...they were so absorbed in their gloom and disappointment that they did not observe him closely. {Ibid.}

There it spells it out for you. What are you to do? You are to observe Him closely. But what prevented them from observing Him closely? They were absorbed in their lamentation! They were absorbed in their disappointments. Is that what happens to you? Are you at night sometimes bothered about all sorts of things that have disappointed you in your friends, in the church, in whatever it is, and you are occupied in your little mind with all the horrifying things that are happening to us? "Oh... I wished I had somebody to talk to;" and there's the stranger.

They continued their conversation, expressing the thoughts of their hearts. They were reasoning in regard to the lessons that Christ had given, which they seemed unable to comprehend. {Ibid.}

Have you ever come across that? "What does that mean? I don't understand this. I don't appreciate that. I don't know what's going on. I don't understand what God is saying..." They were doing that.

As they talked of the events that had taken place, Jesus longed to comfort them. {Ibid.}

God longs to walk with us and comfort us. He *longs* for that.

He had seen their grief; He understood the conflicting, perplexing ideas that brought to their minds the thought, Can this Man, who suffered Himself to be so humiliated, be the Christ? Their grief could not be restrained, and they wept. Jesus knew that their hearts were bound up with Him... {Ibid.}

Isn't that interesting? Their hearts were bound with Him, but they saw Him as a stranger. Can you see what the lesson is here? You might love Him, you might enjoy reading His word, but you are lamenting over the fears, and conflicts, and problems that are around you, and the bereavements, whatever it be, the disappointed hopes, they are piercing your soul, and you weep.

Jesus knew that their hearts were bound up with Him in love, and He longed to wipe away their tears, and fill them with joy and gladness. {Ibid.}

But what does it say?

But He must first give them lessons they would never forget. {Ibid.}

Do you still need lessons that you will never forget? When Jacob was in his time of Jacob's trouble, who touched him? Jesus. And there he learnt a lesson that he would never forget. Are we to enter through the time of Jacob's trouble? The Lord wants to teach us a lesson of how to walk with Him, to recognise Him in the experiences of life. He is yearning to comfort us.

There was another person who also wept in the presence of Jesus, as she was looking for Him.

In the garden, Mary had stood weeping, when Jesus was close beside her. Her eyes were so blinded by tears that she did not discern Him. And the hearts of the disciples were so full of grief that they did not believe the angels' message or the words of Christ Himself. {DA 794.4}

How many are still doing what these disciples did! How many echo Mary's despairing cry, "They have taken away the Lord, . . . and we know not where they have laid Him"! To how many might the Saviour's words be spoken, "Why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" He is close beside them, but their tear-blinded eyes do not discern Him. He speaks to them, but they do not understand. {DA 794.5}

Strange, isn't it? He speaks to them, and they do not understand. What is it? It is the calamities of life that shatter my focus upon Jesus. It is the burdens and the loneliness and the disappointed hopes; it is all these activities of life today that hide away the intimacy and the closeness of God, of Jesus, to us. It's very interesting in my experience, as I witness and as I study God's word with people, I can be giving them the very answers to their problems, and they are more excited about the wonderful prophecies and the wonderful displays of God in nature, etc., etc., in terms of facts of life around them, than in the intimacy that I'm trying to communicate with them. I've experienced this time and time again. There is one person that I studied with, I studied with him for a long time, and as I studied the beauty of the word to impart this beautiful relationship, this person kept on going into the doctrines, into the arguments, into the protection of the arguments, and was happy that I had answers to those

things; but when it came to the intimacy-relationship, it was nervously put aside. And this is not just one person. There are many, many people that do that. And it's interesting, when I study the word of God with people and we get on to the debating subjects, everybody comes alive. But the moment I come to this subject and the importance of a relationship with Him, there is a general lull. I find that incredible.

God is very solicitous of our attention. Without it we dwell in our own world, and are occupied with earnest attention and concentration on managing our affairs – soul operators. Oh yes, I've got to do my job, I've got to be diligent in my work, and I concentrate on that – a soul operator. I was trying to get this across to one couple as we were studying, and I tried to describe to them – she was a housewife, and she said, "I'm so busy, I can't concentrate on Jesus. I've got to wash the house, I've got to do all these jobs." I said to her, Look, while you are washing the dishes, just look out the window and talk to God. So I was describing to her that during her daily duties and chores which are so overwhelming, she could hold communion with God. And I know how overwhelming they are. You've got to think of a hundred and one things at once. Your child, your provision for food on time, and doing this, and doing that. I've been through it a little bit, because I tried to help my wife. While she was training to do home-schooling, I took a whole week and took her job on, with seven children. I tell you, I honoured her ever after. The need to fulfil all the different duties, and to get ready on time for a meal, and do all the other things, was just overwhelming. How can you walk with God when you have to concentrate on all those things? Now that is just a housewife. If you are a businessman, or whatever you are, there are so many things to think about – when can you think about God? Because we think that to think about God is to separate our thoughts from our activities to Him. But no. God wants to walk with me in the midst of my overwhelming circumstances. He wants to whisper to me, This is the way. And He wants me to look to Him to ask Him, How can I better do this? etc., etc. This is what Daniel did. This is what Joseph did. And He wants us to do that as Enoch did.

To deal with your problems requires counsel from God right there and then. Don't be a soul operator. It is for our sakes that He counsels us.

Drawing Nigh to God

James 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God.

What does that word *submit* mean? To place myself under His care.

James 4:7 ...Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse [your] hands, [ye] sinners; and purify [your] hearts, [ye] double minded.

This is the point. "Draw near to Me." Why? Why should I draw near to Him? Why should I have this companionship? Why? The answer is given there, *Resist the devil*. When can you resist the devil and he will flee from you? When you draw nigh to God. Why?

All the powers of Satan are set in operation to hold the attention to frivolous amusements, and he is gaining his object. He is interposing his devisings between God and the soul. ... Satan will manufacture his diversions that men may not think about God. {13MR 264.2}

That is why we must draw near to God, so that Satan will flee from us. We want to understand what the devices of Satan are. What is he trying to do? He wants us to be in the experience of Christians who are weeping and lamenting about their loneliness, and are yearning for someone to talk to. He wants to keep us separated from the One who wants to talk and walk with us.

Here is a beautiful revelation of this horrible work of Satan. Notice what is this problem that the disciples had and you have:

When the mind dwells upon self, it is turned away from Christ, the source of strength and life. {SC 71.2}

Satan knows that if I'm dwelling upon myself, he knows, Aha, this is where I can get them.

Hence it is Satan's constant effort to keep the attention diverted from the Saviour and thus prevent the union and communion of the soul with Christ. {Ibid.}

Union and communion – to walk with God as Enoch did. What does Satan want? He wants us to be occupied in our mind with self. And what else?

The pleasures of the world, life's cares and perplexities and sorrows, {Ibid.}

If that's not enough, here is more:

...the faults of others, or your own faults and imperfections--to any or all of these he will seek to divert the mind. Do not be misled by his devices. Many who are really conscientious, and who desire to live for God, he too often leads to dwell upon their own faults and weaknesses, and thus by separating them from Christ he hopes to gain the victory. {Ibid.}

I am very thankful for this revelation. You know, the reason why I believe in the Spirit of Prophecy, is because there is no other modern-day messenger who unveils Satan so perfectly. She could never have written these things if she was not inspired.

So what is Satan trying to do? He is trying to keep our mind upon the perplexing situations that pertain to the vicissitudes of life around us; he wants to turn our attention to the faults of others, to my own faults – I'm really conscientious, I really want to live for God! and he wants to keep me away from the One who is going to help me to live for Him, by occupying myself about my terrible self. "Oh, I'm such a terrible fellow; I'm never going to make it." People are saying this to me frequently. "This is too much, I can't cope anymore. I'm never going to make it; I can't be among the 144,000." People have said this to me, "If it's only a 144,000, that counts me out." Why? Why should it count you out? God yearns to walk with

me. The only reason why it counts people out is because they aren't walking with Him; that's all. It's as simple as that.

Therefore this subject is so important, that we come to terms with this so that we will be among the 144,000. Satan wants to occupy my mind with my depravities, so that I will not think of Jesus. Here is the reason why he wants to stop me from drawing near to Him:

He who feels his own danger is on the watch lest he shall grieve the Holy Spirit and then draw away from God because he knows that He is not pleased with his course of action. How much better and safer it is to draw nigh to God, that the pure light shining from His Word may heal the wounds that sin has made in the soul. {OHC 96.4}

What is it? My sins, my defects, etc., Satan turns my attention to them and wants to get me down. So he tries to do that, and, yes, I lament about them... Never forget this principle. When you see how sinful you are, when God brings home a true awareness of yourself, don't let Satan occupy your mind with this too much. What should I do? God is not pleased with my course of action. I've really messed up here. Have you messed up in your life? and it overwhelms you, and you think, I've messed up, it's too bad? But why?

How much better and safer it is to draw nigh to God, that the pure light shining from His Word may heal the wounds that sin has made in the soul. {Ibid.}

That is what He wants to do. But if I keep on lamenting about my fall, the pure word can't flow in.

The closer we are to God, the safer we are, {Ibid.}

Why?

...for Satan hates and fears the presence of God. {Ibid.}

Why does he want to separate you from God? Because he hates the presence of God. And the moment I draw near to God, Satan has to flee. He doesn't want to stay there. I know by personal experience how true that is. I came across a devil-possessed person, and by my focus upon the beauty of the message of the Lord and my personal walk with Him, I didn't even notice it, until it was drawn to my attention. Then, when I saw it, this cold chill went through my body, but I looked to the Lord, and it was removed. And then I saw how frequently Satan was there through the demonstration of this person, and how the Lord, by drawing near to Him, protects you from that. You can walk right through Satan's valley of shadow of death, and he can't touch you... if you are walking with God.

If we draw nigh to God, individually, then don't you see what the result will be? {OHC 96.6}

Do you have problems in the church? Do you feel sometimes in the church that nobody loves me? They're all doing their own thing. This comes across people in the church sometimes, especially when they are walking some faulty path. They think, Oh... and they withdraw

within themselves; because nobody understands them. I have seen this happen quite frequently. But it says here:

If we draw nigh to God, individually, then don't you see what the result will be? Can't you see that we will draw nigh to one another? We cannot draw nigh to God, and come to the same cross, without our hearts being blended together in perfect unity, answering the prayer of Christ that they may be one as He is one with the Father. And therefore we should seek in spirit, in understanding, in faith, that we may be one, that God may be glorified in us as He is glorified in the Son; {*Ibid.*}

How can you be at one with one another? Only if you are in companionship with God. Then we are together in the same companionship, and ah... I'm never alone. You know, when people say to me, "John, you're divorced. You poor fellow, you're alone. How can you cope?" I am never alone. I am never alone. Because I have known what it is to walk with God. I am never alone; I am never depressed, never. I don't know what depression is. I know the past of depressive thoughts, but they are wiped out in the presence of God. They're gone. I can sit in a room without anything to do, and be perfectly happy, because of this.

What does it mean then? Let us now round up this subject as to making sure that I know how I can actually make that contact with God, and make it continually and all day long, so that I am never alone. What does it mean to walk with Him by faith unto translation? I have here five important points.

Drawing Near to God through Nature

As we come close to the heart of nature, Christ makes His presence real to us, and speaks to our hearts of His peace and love. {COL 25.1}

Where can you draw near to God? Close to the heart of nature. What did Enoch do? We are told that he spent long periods of time away from people, away from the pressure of life, with God (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 85-86), and that he "*would not suffer the people to find him.*"

Enoch faithfully rehearsed to the people all that God had revealed to him by the spirit of prophecy. Some believed his words, and turned from their wickedness to fear and worship God. ... At length he chose certain periods for retirement, and would not suffer the people to find him, for they interrupted his holy meditation and communion with God. He did not exclude himself at all times from the society of those who loved him and listened to his words of wisdom; neither did he separate himself wholly from the corrupt. He met with the good and bad at stated times, and labored to turn the ungodly from their evil course, and instruct them in the knowledge and fear of God. He taught those who had the knowledge of God to serve him more perfectly. {3SG 56.1}

He would not segregate himself like a hermit, but he would spend time where he would not suffer the people to find him. I love that statement because I practise it; and I know how wonderful it is to have a retreat where nobody can find you. That is what Enoch practised.

And then you can go forth walking with God through the morass of trouble around you. It's a reality. So we should spend time in the nature, away from the harassments of people. That is one channel in which we are close to the heart of God; because you can see the activity of God through nature. You can see Him working, and you can open your heart, and you can actually see Him, you can feel Him, you can sense His words to you – He is really, really close. You are never alone.

Drawing Near to God through Prayer

The way to the throne of God is always open. You cannot always be on your knees in prayer, but your silent petitions may constantly ascend to God for strength and guidance. When tempted, as you will be, you may flee to the secret place of the Most High. His everlasting arms will be underneath you. We come to God by special invitation, and He waits to welcome us to His audience chamber. . . . We may be admitted into closest intimacy and communion with God. Pray with humble hearts. Seek the Lord often in prayer. In the secret place, alone, the eye sees Jesus and the ear is opened to Jesus. {HP 86.2-4}

You want to see somebody? You want to hear somebody? You want to feel somebody? There it is! You will feel Him in nature; you will hear Him in prayer. He will remain close to you, even if you're not on your knees. You may constantly be praying.

Temptations come, but you press closer and still closer to the side of Jesus and place your hand in His hand. Then you gain a rich experience, resting in His love and rejoicing in His mercy. The worries and perplexities and cares are gone, {Ibid.}

Have you ever experienced that? It has really overwhelmed you, and all of a sudden they're gone. Why, where are they gone?? Sometimes I have had to think to myself, Where did they go? and I try to dig them up again. But then I think, What am I doing? I'm so happy they're gone! And if you permit yourself, you can actually break the connection. But you don't do that. You concentrate on that prayer life, listening and hearing Him.

You come forth from the secret place of prayer to abide under the shadow of the Almighty. {Ibid.}

The soul is quick to hear the Father's voice, and you will commune with God. All criticism is banished, all judging of others has been expelled from the soul. {Ibid.}

You know, we say, "Stop judging!" We talk about doing all the right things. But these things will all come into place when you walk with God. That is the reason why Enoch became perfect. And that is the reason by which the 144,000 will become perfect. You don't have to stretch yourself into impossibilities to become perfect. It is the presence of God walking with you that will produce it, as we were just reading there, by a life of constant prayer. Not constantly on your knees. In the audience chamber of God, continually near to heaven by silent petitions constantly ascending to God for strength and guidance.

Then, as we know, Enoch didn't have the written word, God spoke to him. But we have something on top of that. This personal talking with God in my mind is enhanced because God is speaking to me in His word. So memorising certain beautiful scriptures, as you are reading God's word, is part of our drawing near to God.

Drawing Near to God through the Word

You need and I need that the spiritual vision shall be cleared and intensified to behold the scheme of redemption as we have never viewed it before. We want that our hearts should feel the mighty throbs of a Saviour's love. {ML 283.2}

To feel... Oh but we mustn't rely on feelings, must we? Just a moment. We rely on God, and He will give us feeling. Rely on God for the sense of His presence; rely on getting Him through nature, through prayer, and now, through the word.

We want that our hearts should feel the mighty throbs of a Saviour's love. In searching the Scriptures, in feeding upon the words of life, {Ibid.}

What does it mean to feed upon the words of life? You spend time with them. There are some people who can eat very fast around here, and it goes down the gullet; and then afterwards, someone is still eating and they're still enjoying their food, and you aren't. It's just down there. That's the reason why I eat slowly, because I enjoy my food. Eat slowly with God's word. Spend time to shew it over.

In searching the Scriptures, in feeding upon the words of life, consider it is the voice of God to the soul. We may be confused sometimes over the voice of our friends; but in the Bible we have the counsel of God upon all important subjects which concern our eternal interests, and in temporal matters we may learn a great deal. Its teaching will be always suited to our peculiar circumstances and calculated to prepare us to endure trial and fit us for our God-given work. {Ibid.}

The Bible is God's voice speaking to us, just as surely as if we could hear it with our ears. If we realized this, with what awe we would open God's Word and with what earnestness we would search its precepts. The reading and contemplation of the Scriptures would be regarded... {ML 283.3}

As what? As a relationship with God.

The reading and contemplation of the Scriptures would be regarded as an audience with the Infinite One. {Ibid.}

Then as you memorise certain scriptures, and you're walking through the day, those scriptures are God's voice speaking to you all the time. And sometimes it's only in a sense of what the Scriptures have said; you might not recall the exact words. But the sense of what those words were to you when you read them will come to you.

I am very poor in memorising exactly the words, but I have basked for years in what those words mean. And when I prepare a sermon or a study for anyone, it is the sense of those words that come to me, And now, Lord, where were they? Hmm... I thank God for these computers now, because I can think of a word or two and I'll punch it out, and there it is. I haven't got a good memory that I can remember all the references, but the Lord keeps the word constantly pulsating through my being.

We are to open the Word of God with reverence... {ML 283.4}

Now here is some important material. When you read the word and you want to walk with God in the word, don't just go, "Yeah, hmm, okay, oh yeah, interesting... hmm;" that sort of thing. No. God is in His word. Come to it with reverence,

...and with a sincere desire to know the will of God concerning us. The heavenly angels will direct our search. {Ibid.}

This is so precious. I have experienced that so many times. There was a real dilemma that I was in, and I have never spent all night in prayer, but on this occasion I thought, This is too serious. Lord, you've got to help me! I prayed, and I prayed, and I prayed, I kept on speaking to the Lord, from about 9 o'clock in the evening to 12 midnight; and I said, Lord, please answer me! He said, Well, you're doing all the talking. Oh... I want to talk to you, but you're doing all the talking. Okay. So I went to the bookcase, and I pulled out *Testimonies Vol. 2*. I opened it up, and there – you know how it is with the Testimonies, Sister White writes to certain people about their condition and their situation – as I opened it up, there was the direct guidance, down to the experiences of my own life, exactly. It was there, and God spoke to me. And I spent the rest of the night, from 12 midnight to 5:30 in the morning, just listening to Him. Then I went to my wife who was lying in bed, and I woke her up at 5:30, and said, Look at this. It hit her like a bombshell. It was our experience, exactly – where each one of us came from, our background, it was all there. Phenomenal. That's how God speaks to us. The angels will be there to direct our search.

God speaks to us in His Word. We are in the audience chamber of the Most High, in the very presence of God. Christ enters the heart. {Ibid.}

So spending time with the word is how I am going to walk with God, but focusing on Him in the word, not just on the information. That's what it means to read that word for the relationship.

Drawing Near to God by Contemplation

Draw nigh to Him by prayer, by contemplation, by reading His Word. {OHC 96.5}

Contemplation. This is what it means to shew over and eat slowly. Sister White tells us we are to read a sentence, a thought, and stop there until I have made that thought and that sentence, or that paragraph, my own. How many of us read through reams of readings? That is not shewing over, that's fast-eating. Fast-reading is fast-eating.

I gave a book once, *Steps to Christ*, to a man who I was studying with, a very intelligent man, and he started reading it, but then he gave it back and said, I can't read this book. So I said, What's the problem? He said, It's too hard to read. He's an intelligent man, so I thought, What's going on? Then he told me, I'm a fast-reader, and I cannot make any sense out of that book. That is what fast-reading does. You cannot make sense out of it. You must stop to digest. It will not feed you unless you *contemplate*. This is a most essential part of walking with God. Actually stop in prayer and contemplate what He is saying to you in your mind, and you will hear Him speaking to you.

Walk continually in the light of God. Meditate day and night upon His character. Then you will see His beauty and rejoice in His goodness. Your heart will glow with a sense of His love. You will be uplifted as if borne by everlasting arms. With the power and light that God imparts, you can comprehend more and accomplish more than you ever before deemed possible. {MH 514.3}

That is how. If you don't stop to meditate on what you're reading, to explore – like when somebody rockhounds; they cut rocks, they polish rocks, and then they look at it, and let the light sparkle on it; and they marvel, Oh, beautiful – If we don't do that with the word of God, we will miss out on walking with God.

Now comes a very serious element. If you want to walk with God, this is what you must do.

He That Loveth Father or Mother More than Me, Is Not Worthy Of Me

Jesus says, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me; {BEcho, March 19, 1894 par. 5}

He is talking about us being close to Him.

...and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not up his cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life, shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." The words that Christ addressed to His disciples, were addressed to us as well as to them. He presents before us the unwearied conflict that we must have on this earth as long as time shall last. {Ibid.}

What is the conflict? Now follow this very, very carefully, brethren and sisters.

We are to place no person before Christ in our affections. {Ibid.}

You want to walk with Jesus? You want to enjoy His affectionate closeness? Then you must not place any other person before Christ in our affections.

If a person who has been convicted by the Spirit of God smothers his convictions, and continues to trample under foot the commandments of the Lord, and reject the truth of

God simply because he sees it will bring disunion into his family relations, he shows that he loves the peace that is not of Christ, but of the world. {Ibid.}

This is a serious conflict. Brethren and sisters, I know this conflict very, very deeply. It kills you nearly, if you haven't walked and aren't walking closely with the Lord. It means I have to do it to walk closely with the Lord. And when there is a situation of another person in your life, and that person is affecting you as a preeminent influence over Jesus and what He is telling you, then this will prevent you from walking with Jesus. Your affections must be first for Jesus, to continue walking with Him. Because if you want to walk with them, and Jesus can't come with you in that, then Satan has come right between there.

...he shows that he loves the peace that is not of Christ, but of the world. He prefers to be in harmony with the world rather than to be in unity with Christ. {Ibid.}

Aren't we talking about companionship with Christ, a unity with Christ? Well, I need to segregate my affections and the hindrances that prevent me from walking close to Jesus. If I don't do that, my closeness to Jesus will not come into reality.

But in order to have the peace of Christ, it is necessary to place Christ and His service first. Those who yield their convictions of truth to please father or mother, sister or brother, husband or wife or children, prove themselves unworthy of Christ. They do not discern His excellency, and therefore they shun the cross. But there is a cross to be lifted by every one who by faith accepts a crucified and risen Saviour. {Ibid.}

Can you see why Enoch pleased God? How pleasing it is to God when we choose His companionship over those whose companionship is not in companionship with Him.

Whenever a soul falls in love with Jesus, every other affection is placed in subservience to this pure, refining principle of heavenly love. Pride, passion, and ambition, which have held sway over the natural heart, are surrendered to Jesus Christ. {Ibid. par. 7}

Passion – because passion is very important to us. But if that passion is indulged in outside of Jesus, it will separate me from Jesus. It says here that the passion, and pride, and ambition, which are natural to our natural heart, are surrendered to Jesus. Then I'm walking with Him.

This is now the beautiful appreciation that I want to summarise with in conclusion:

Your last thought at night, your first thought in the morning, should be of Him in whom is centered your hope of eternal life. {OHC 116.2}

Many seem to begrudge moments spent in meditation, and the searching of the Scriptures, and prayer, as though the time thus occupied was lost. I wish you could all view these things in the light God would have you; {OHC 116.3}

We see it now. Do you regard it as a time lost when it means I can walk with Jesus to heaven? It's not time lost. And He will help you in your daily chores to catch up with what you have to do if you've spent time with Him. Maybe you have had experiences that when you've really walked with Jesus and you've taken time, even though so much has crowded in upon you,

then afterwards everything falls into place quickly. But if you don't do that, everything goes awry.

The affections should center upon God. Contemplate His greatness, His mercy and excellences. {OHC 116.4}

Look at that precious pearl. Keep on contemplating it. Keep on looking at it. Oh! And it's a person, it's Jesus, it's God. It's closeness with the Father who loves us.

There is constant need of private communion with God. We must take in the spirit of Christ if we would impart it to others. We cannot meet satanic and human agencies combined unless we spend much time in intercourse with the Source of all strength. There are times when we should get away from the sounds of earthly toil and human voices, and in retired places listen to the voice of Jesus. Thus we may taste of His love and imbibe His spirit. Thus we shall learn to crucify self. This course of action may seem impossible to the human mind. "I have not time," you may say. But when you consider the matter as it really is, you lose no time; for when you secure the power and grace that come alone from God, you do not accomplish the work. It is Jesus who is the real worker. {OHC 116.5}

So, brethren and sisters, our protection of pure doctrine, our upholding of pure doctrine, our ability to communicate it with others, is absolutely and inseparably connected with our relationship with God. To be diligent to sustain your communion with God is priority number 1 – by time in nature, by time in prayer, by time with the word, by meditating all day, by differentiating your loyalties.

May God help us to practice this, is my prayer.

Amen.

[April 21, 2012]