

The Broken Cisterns of Babylon

God's people have gone to the broken cisterns of Babylon ever since sin came onto the scene. Why? I don't know. It makes absolutely no sense. Why do people drink what doesn't satisfy? The only thing I can figure out is that they think they will be satisfied. But they are always disappointed. You would think they would learn. We have lots of examples in the Bible of what happens when we drink from these broken cisterns and we even say, "We would never do what they did." But then we do. So, why on earth do we drink from these broken cisterns? Ellen G. White says this:

"Men who turn away from the knowledge of God, have placed their minds under the control of their master, Satan, and he trains them to be his servants. The less the productions expressing infidel views are brought before the youth, the better. Evil angels are ever on the alert that they may exalt before the minds of the youth that which will do them injury; and as books expressing infidel and pagan sentiments are read, these unseen agents of evil seek to impress those who study them with the spirit of questioning and unbelief. **Those who drink from these polluted channels do not thirst for the waters of life; for they are satisfied with the broken cisterns of the world. They think they have the treasures of knowledge, when they are hoarding that which is but wood and hay and stubble, not worth gaining, not worth keeping. Their self-esteem, their idea that a superficial knowledge of things constitutes education, make them boastful and self-satisfied, when they are, as were the Pharisees, ignorant of the Scriptures and the power of God."**

-- Christian Education, page 100

"In the Teacher sent from God all true educational work finds its center. Of this work today, as verily as of the work He established eighteen hundred years ago, the Saviour speaks in the words, "I am the first and the last, and the Living One." "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end." Revelation 1:17, 18; 21:6, R. V.

In the presence of such a Teacher, with such opportunity for divine education, what worse than folly is it to seek an education apart from Him--to seek to be wise apart from Wisdom; to be true while rejecting Truth; to seek illumination apart from Light, and existence without the Life; to turn from the Fountain of living waters, and hew out broken cisterns, that can hold no water!"

-- Education, page 83

"It is by beholding that we become changed. And as those sacred precepts in which God has opened to men the perfection and holiness of his character are neglected, and the minds of the people are attracted to human teachings and theories, what marvel that there has followed a decline of living piety in the church. Saith the Lord, "They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Jeremiah 2:3

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly. . . . But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Psalms 1:1-3. It is only as the law of God is restored to its rightful position that there can be a revival of primitive faith and godliness among his professed people. "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." Jeremiah 6:16" -- The Great Controversy, page 478

Why do we insist on going to the Daughters of Babylon (apostate Protestantism) to get our water? It is polluted water at best. They have fallen for Satan's lies. Their theology is filled with them. I do not understand why we think they have anything to offer us, unless we are simply looking for their success with numbers. Human nature, being what it is, will always cause the larger portion to follow error. The main reason they have so much success is that they do not require one to crucify self. Self is flattered and allowed to be very much alive and in control. In fact, many are teaching the New Age philosophy which teaches that "we are gods", making God unnecessary.

This is exactly what our sinful human nature wants to hear. This is why the evangelical Protestant churches attract large numbers. It isn't the Truth that attracts them, it's this false gospel. Whenever we see large numbers of people accepting something, we need to look very, very carefully at what is being taught. It can all but be guaranteed that there will be error in it. And guess what? Were it possible to extract the error, keep the good, and then implement it in our churches, hoping to get the same results, we wouldn't. Why? Because it is the error that is giving them their results.

It is very much like removing the alcohol (error) from alcoholic beverages because it is bad for us, and then expecting to get the same results when drinking it. It does not happen and people do not flock to buy it either. Why? It's the alcohol that gives the results, not the pure juice!

Isaiah gives us a test that we are told to administer to teachers and ministers, books, etc. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20. But surely isn't the truth, truth? No, if it is not all truth then it is all error – void of light. But so many say, "But there is light and truth in it. Shouldn't we take the truth and ignore the error?" NO! I wondered about this for years myself but now I see why Isaiah said what he said. Yes, there may be

truth found in the error. In fact, there will always be truth mixed with the error. That is how we are deceived into believing error. The truth is put there as a means to deceive you and for that very reason it **all** becomes error.

Let me illustrate. Let's say you make a delicious smoothie. You use only the best ingredients. Organic fruits and juices. The last ingredient is a drop or two of cyanide. To drink it would be pleasurable, but deadly. No matter how good the fruits and juices were, the poison would effectively neutralize all the goodness.

Will there be some that insist they are wise enough to discern error and leave it alone? Are they saying they are smarter than Eve? Remember she was perfect and far more intelligent than any of us are today. Yet, she drank it all when Satan charmed her. Is Satan less crafty today than he was then? He has had six thousand years to hone his skills. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." 1 Corinthians 10:12.

Why is it so often that we see those in leadership positions draw God's people into error? I believe that it is because they think that since they have been trusted with leadership that they are too wise to be drawn into the devil's trap, when just the opposite is true. Their proneness to self-importance and self-trust leaves them wide open to the devil's snares, while the common individual who is aware of their own weaknesses and inabilities is not.

For illustration purposes, let's say that we are able to weed out the error from the good and then only use the good. Well, how would we determine what is good? You say, "That is obvious, you go to the scriptures and if you find it there, then it is good and if you don't find it there or if the scriptures condemn it, then it is error." OK, I can go along with that.

But that begs another question. If you can find the good in the scriptures, and anything that isn't there or is condemned there is error, then why go to the Daughters of Babylon in the first place? Wouldn't it save a whole lot of time and make much more sense to go straight to the scriptures where you don't have to be concerned with possibly having to deal with someone trying to deceive you? Sounds logical to me. Or do we, like Eve and the Israelites, think that we can play in the devil's backyard without getting dirty?

So, why don't we go to God's Word to drink of the everlasting water of life? I believe the biggest reason is that God's Word teaches that complete surrender is required - a death to self. Self-denial and obedience, through the power of God, the acknowledgment that we have nothing to offer God, that our best is but filthy rags - human nature has a very difficult time acknowledging this. Our human nature desperately wants to believe that there's something we can do ourselves. It fights the idea that it is otherwise - that there really is nothing we can do except to surrender. We want to feel important and so we drink of the broken cisterns of Babylon, the wine of Babylon.

I acknowledge that there are relatively few teachers who are sharing this pure water but they are out there. Isn't that how it has always been? I know of a few. One of them is Bill Liversidge (<http://www.creativegrowthministries.org>). He has a very clear presentation of the Gospel. It is based on a "thus saith the Lord". You can listen to a number of his talks at: <http://www.ThoughtsOnChristianLiving.org> under the heading 'Audio & Video'. There are also books like, "Escape to God" by Jim Hohnberger (<http://www.empoweredlivingministries.org>), "What Shall I Do To Inherit Eternal Life?", "How to Be a Victorious Christian", "Of Course You Can Walk On Water", (see <http://www.whatshallido.org>), as well as many others out there. But the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy continue to be our best source of pure water. We won't go wrong with them.

It is people like these who I believe will bring about the true revival. We know that the false revival will come before the true. So, with this in mind, I say, bring on the false so we can get on with the true revival.

"Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth, there will be, among the people of the Lord, such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon his children. **At that time many will separate themselves from those churches in which the love of this world has supplanted love for God and his Word.** Many, both of ministers and people, will gladly accept those great truths which God has caused to be proclaimed at this time, to prepare a people for the Lord's second coming. **The enemy of souls desires to hinder this work; and before the time for such a movement shall come, he will endeavor to prevent it, by introducing a counterfeit. In those churches which he can bring under his deceptive power, he will make it appear that God's special blessing is poured out; there will be manifest what is thought to be great religious interest. Multitudes will exult that God is working marvelously for them, when the work is that of another spirit.** Under a religious guise, Satan will seek to extend his influence over the Christian world." --The Great Controversy, page 464

This is a warning. It would appear that we as a church are embracing the teachings of apostate Protestantism what is called Spiritual Formation rather than leaving them. It has been acknowledged by SDA theologians that it has dangerous errors in it. But they assure us that we can trust them to remove the errors before they give us the cleaned up version. But can they? No, they can't. Isaiah is very plain on that point. He says that there is no light in them, it is all darkness. You can't find light in darkness.

But if they could clean it up it would no longer accomplish what it is accomplishing in the apostate Protestant churches. Why? Because as we have said, it is the error that is accomplishing the results. In other words, it is the power of the devil that is giving the results, not the power of God as claimed by them.

But, some insist that Ellen White and the founding fathers of the Seventh-day Adventist church went to and got their beliefs from the Protestant churches, as justification for our going to them as well. The fact is, the founding fathers were all Protestants. Other than Catholicism, Protestantism was all that existed. Prior to 1844 the Protestant churches were living up to all the light they had at the time. It wasn't until after 1844 and their rejection of the 1844 message, the Sanctuary message, and the Sabbath message that they became Apostate Protestantism. It is since 1844 that there is no light in them and we are to have nothing to do with their teachings. Satan is using truth to lead us into error, making it all error!

I believe what is called Spiritual Formation creates a false revival which Ellen White is referring to. It also comes with other names to disguise it, but the teachings are still the same. It comes with enough truth so as to fool, if it were possible, even the elect.

Some may say, but we have been going to worldly authors for a long, long time now. It has become an accepted practice, a tradition. Does time make something right? Does it becoming a tradition make it right? "And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition." Mark 7:8. "Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition." Mark 7:13. Because something has become a tradition does not make it right. We need to get away from everything that is not the pure gospel and regain our primitive godliness.

Stay as far away from the cliff's edge as possible, not as close as you can...the cliff's edge will crumble under you.

Genuine Conversion (from Review & Herald, July 7, 1904)

"In order to be saved, we must know by experience the meaning of true conversion. It is a fearful mistake for men and women to go on day by day, professing to be Christians, yet having no right to the name. In God's sight, profession is nothing, position is nothing. He asks, Is the life in harmony with my precepts?"

There are many who suppose that they are converted, but who are not able to bear the test of character presented in the Word of God. Sad will it be, in the day when every man is rewarded according to his works, for those who can not bear this test.

Conversion is a change of heart, a turning from unrighteousness to righteousness. Relying upon the merits of Christ, exercising true faith in him, the repentant sinner receives pardon for sin. As he ceases to do evil, and learns to do well, he grows in grace and in the knowledge of God. He sees that in order to follow Jesus he must separate from the world, and, after counting the cost, he looks upon all as loss if he may but win Christ. He enlists in his army, and bravely and cheerfully engages in the warfare, fighting against natural inclinations and selfish desires, and bringing the will into subjection to the will of Christ. Daily he seeks the Lord for grace, and he is strengthened and helped. Self once reigned in his heart, and worldly pleasure was his delight. Now self is dethroned, and God reigns supreme. His life reveals the fruit of righteousness. The sins he once loved he now hates. Firmly and resolutely he follows in the path of holiness. This is genuine conversion.

In the lives of many of those whose names are on the church books there has been no genuine change. The truth has been kept in the outer court. There has been no genuine conversion, no positive work of grace done in the heart. Their desire to do God's will is based upon their own inclination, not upon the deep conviction of the Holy Spirit. Their conduct is not brought into harmony with the law of God. They profess to accept Christ as their Saviour, but they do not believe that he will give them power to overcome their sins. They have not a personal acquaintance with a living Saviour, and their characters reveal many blemishes.

Many a one who looks at himself in the divine mirror, and is convinced that his life is not what it ought to be, fails to make the needed change. He goes his way, and forgets his defects. He may profess to be a follower of Christ, but what does this avail if his character has undergone no change, if the Holy Spirit has not wrought upon his heart? The work done has been superficial. Self is retained in his life. He is not a partaker of the divine nature. He may talk of God and pray to God, but his life reveals that he is working against God.

Let us not forget that in his conversion and sanctification, man must cooperate with God. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," the Word declares; "for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Man can not transform himself by the exercise of his will. He possesses no power by which this change may be effected. The renewing energy must come from God. The change can be made only by the Holy Spirit. He who would be saved, high or low, rich or poor, must submit to the working of this power.

As the leaven, when mingled with the meal, works from within outward, so it is by the renewing of the heart that the grace of God works to transform the life. No mere external change is sufficient to bring us into harmony with God. There are many who try to reform by correcting this bad habit or that bad habit, and they hope in this way to become Christians, but they are beginning in the wrong place. Our first work is with the heart.

The great truth of the conversion of the heart by the Holy Spirit is presented in Christ's words to Nicodemus: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born from above, he can not see the kingdom of God. . . . That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it

listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

The leaven of truth works secretly, silently, steadily, to transform the soul. The natural inclinations are softened and subdued. New thoughts, new feelings, new motives, are implanted. A new standard of character is set up,--the life of Christ. The mind is changed; the faculties are aroused to action in new lines. Man is not endowed with new faculties, but the faculties he has are sanctified. The conscience is awakened.

The Scriptures are the great agency in this transformation of character. Christ prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." If studied and obeyed, the word of God works in the heart, subduing every unholy attribute. The Holy Spirit comes to convict of sin, and the faith that springs up in the heart works by love to Christ, conforming us, body, soul, and spirit, to his will.

A man sees his danger. He sees that he needs a change of character, a change of heart. He is stirred; his fears are aroused. The Spirit of God is working in him, and with fear and trembling he works for himself, seeking to find out his defects of character, and to see what he can do to bring about the needed change in his life. His heart is humbled. By confession and repentance he shows the sincerity of his desire to reform. He confesses his sins to God, and if he has injured any one, he confesses the wrong to the one he has injured. While God is working, the sinner, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, works out that which God is working in mind and heart. He acts in harmony with the Spirit's working, and his conversion is genuine.

The nobility and dignity of the man increase as he takes his position against the wily foe, who for so many years has kept him in slavery. He feels a holy indignation arising within him as he thinks that for so long he has been Satan's bond-slave, allowing the enemy to lead him to refuse to acknowledge his best friend.

Let the sinner co-operate with his Redeemer to secure his liberty. Let him be assured that unseen heavenly agencies are working in his behalf. Dear souls in doubt and discouragement, pray for the courage and strength that Christ waits to give you. He has been seeking for you. He longs to have you feel your need of his help. He will reach out his hand to grasp the hand stretched out for aid. He declares, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Let mind and heart be enlisted in the warfare against sin. Let your heart soften as you think of how long you have chosen to serve your bitterest foe, while you turned from Him who gave his life for you, who loves you, and who will accept you as his, though you are sinners. Step out from under the rebel flag, and take your stand under the blood-stained banner of Prince Emmanuel.

He who would build up a strong, symmetrical character, must give all and do all for Christ. The Redeemer will not accept divided service. Daily he must learn the meaning of self-surrender. He must study the Word of God, getting its meaning and obeying its precepts. Thus he may reach the highest standard of Christian excellence. There is no limit to the spiritual advancement that he may make if he is a partaker of the divine nature. Day by day God works in him, perfecting the character that is to stand in the day of final test. Each day of his life he ministers to others. The light that is in him shines forth, and stills the strife of tongues. Day by day he is working out before men and angels a vast, sublime experiment, showing what the gospel can do for fallen human beings.

Let us not spare ourselves, but carry forward in earnest the work of reform that must be done in our lives. Let us crucify self. Unholy habits will clamor for the mastery, but in the name and through the power of Jesus we may conquer. To him who daily seeks to keep his heart with all diligence, the promise is given, "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

"Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, . . . Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee." God himself is "the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." And "whom he justified, them he also glorified." Great as is the shame and degradation through sin, even greater will be the honor and exaltation through redeeming love. To human beings, striving for conformity to the divine image, there is imparted an outlay of heaven's treasure, an excellency of power that will place them higher than even the angels who have never fallen."

-- Ellen G. White - Review and Herald, July 7, 1904

God Bless,
Arlen Davis

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