

Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians Shining As Lights in the Night

Lesson #5 for January 31, 2026

Scriptures: **Philippians 2:12-30**; 2 Timothy 4:6,13,21; 1 Corinthians 4:17; Luke 7:2; Romans 3:23-26; 5:8.

1. **God had intended for Israel to be a shining light to the nations. That is why God led them to the Promised Land at the crossroads between Europe, Asia, and Africa—to a place where many people would be transiting.**

[From the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*=BSG:] Centuries later [after God gave Israel the Promised Land] Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (*John 8:12, NKJV*). He has also said, “ ‘You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden’ ” (*Matt. 5:14, NKJV*). How can we be that light? Only through a close connection with Jesus, “the true light that gives light to everyone” (*John 1:9, NIV*). As Philippians 2 says, God “has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (*Phil. 2:9–11, NKJV*).—BSG* for Sabbath Afternoon, January 24.†§ [Imagine the entire universe in harmony!][‡]

John 8:12: Jesus spoke to the Pharisees again. “I am the light of the world,” he said. “Whoever follows me will have the light of life and will never walk in darkness.”—American Bible Society. (©1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation*®* [GNT] (*Today’s English Version*) [TEV], Second Edition, John 8:12). Philadelphia: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible-TEV** or *GNB-TEV**].[‡]

[BSG:] The light and power of heaven is available to all of us who have surrendered our lives to Jesus. But too often either we expect God to do it all or our own ideas and plans get in the way. That’s why Paul’s words to the Philippians are so relevant today.—BSG* for Sabbath Afternoon.[‡]

2. **How could our own plans get in the way?**

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] **Multitudes have a wrong conception of God and His attributes, and are as truly serving a false god as were the worshipers of Baal.** Many even of those who claim to be Christians have allied themselves with influences that are unalterably opposed to God and His truth. Thus they are led to turn away from the divine and to exalt the human.—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings** 177.1.^{†‡}
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Do we have a wrong conception of God? Are we worshipers of a “Baal”?

1. [From the *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*=T-BSG:] We will consider the relationship between faith and works (*Phil. 2:12, 13*).
2. As Christians, we are called to be lights to the world, following in Jesus’ footprints and sharing our lives with others.
3. The trials and hardships that we face in our Christian walk strengthen us for greater challenges in God’s work. They are God’s tools for developing

essential qualities that are indispensable for fruitful ministry.—*T-BSG** 65.†§

[BSG:] Having just presented Jesus as the perfect example of humility and obedience to God's will, Paul now turns to the Philippians themselves. He affirms their obedience to the Lord after they received the gospel message (see *Acts 16:13–15, 32, 33*) and urges them to continue in that obedience. Having presented the example of Christ's life and the Cross as the way of salvation, Paul now focuses more directly on how this all works in practice.—*BSG** for Sunday, January 25.†§

[EGW:] **All true obedience comes from the heart.** It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 668.3.†‡ [How can we get to that experience?][†]

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3. Read Acts 16:13-15,32-33, describing events in Philippi with Lydia and with the jailer.
4. **Clearly, Paul and his co-workers took every opportunity they could to speak about God. Do we do that?**

Faith and Works

5. Faith works! As we follow God's plan for our lives when we have a correct relationship with God, we will constantly find ourselves in opposition to the world.

[T-BSG:] C. S. Lewis makes this intriguing statement about the relationship between faith and works: "Christians have often disputed as to whether what leads the Christian home is good actions, or Faith in Christ. . . . The Bible really seems to clinch the matter when it puts the two things together into one amazing sentence. The first half is, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling'—which looks as if everything depended on us and our good actions: but the second half goes on, 'For it is God who worketh in you'—which looks as if God did everything and we nothing. I am afraid that is the sort of thing we come up against in Christianity. I am puzzled, but I am not surprised."—Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), pp. 148, 149.—*T-BSG** 66.†§

[T-BSG:] In fact, Paul clarifies the relationship between faith and works in Philippians 2:12, 13. While we must work out our salvation, **works do not have a salvific role.** As James teaches, **works are the evidence of a genuine and saving faith** (*James 2:18; compare with James 2:14*). A faith without works is not faith whatsoever. In James's words, this type of faith is dead (*James 2:17, 26*) and useless (*James 2:20*).—*T-BSG** 66.†§

6. As we have suggested in the past, in order to grow their faith, Christians are encouraged to 1) **read their Bibles** regularly, doing so with friends. Often, if possible, 2) **pray** both

privately and publicly being fully honest with God, and 3) live lives and speak the truth in ways that **witness about God** every day. Doing these things are not ways to somehow earn our salvation; they are ways to show and grow our faith!

[T-BSG:] An analysis of these passages suggests that, by and large, the phrase “with fear and trembling” in Philippians 2:12 points to the highest sense of responsibility believers are supposed to develop with regard to their salvation. Their works are an indication that they are taking this matter seriously.—*T-BSG** 66.‡

7. One of the very best passages in the Bible talking about the plan of salvation in a few words, is found in Romans 3:23-26.

Romans 3:23-26: ²³Everyone has sinned and is far away from God’s saving presence. ²⁴But by the free gift of God’s grace all are put right with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free. ²⁵⁻²⁶God offered him, so that by his blood [footnote: or by his sacrificial death] he should become the means by which people’s sins are forgiven through their faith in him. God did this in order to demonstrate that **he is righteous**. In the past he was patient and overlooked people’s sins; but in the present time he deals with their sins, in order to demonstrate **his righteousness**. In this way God shows that he himself **is righteous** and that he puts right everyone who believes in Jesus.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*†‡ [God’s righteousness is demonstrated!]‡

8. Our faith grows best as we get to know God better. **Friendship with God** is another term for faith. Jesus came, first of all, to show us what God is like. By beholding Christ, we are changed into His likeness. (See 2 Corinthians 3:18; John 15:15; and Romans 14:23.)

[EGW:] See that your life is hid with Christ in God, and you will be filled with the most precious assurance that you are a child of Heaven. **If you keep Christ before you day by day, and hour by hour, and moment by moment, you will be trying to exemplify his character; and when you come where the brethren are, you will not be desponding and repining, but you will say, “I love the Lord; I am so glad that Jesus died for me.”** You will be able to talk of heaven and the eternal reward. The present truth will be the theme of your thoughts and words. Your soul will be full of love, and that love will flow out to others, refreshing them every day. Christ will be in you a “well of water springing up into everlasting life.”—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* August 14, 1888, par. 10.†‡

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[EGW:] **It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ.** We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 83.4.†‡

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9. There should be no questions about the fact that our salvation is totally dependent upon

God. If God had chosen to do nothing, we would have no choice but to die and be dead forever. However, we can experience Christ in our lives every day if we are sensible to it. Are we finding the pull of this world greater than the pull of Christ?

Light in a Dark World – Unity in the Church

[BSG:] **Unity within the church is a by-product of our union with Christ and obedience to His Word. And it's vital to our witness, as Paul proceeds to point out, calling us to "shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15).—BSG* for Monday, January 26.†§**

[BSG:] On a moonless night, away from the glare of cities and street lights, more stars are visible, and they seem to shine much more brightly. It's the contrast that makes the difference. The blacker the sky, the more clearly the stars stand out. It's the same with our witness. The greater the moral darkness around us, the starker the contrast between the lives of God's true followers and that of worldlings. How important it is, then, not to let the artificial lights of worldly ideas, pressures, and practices cause our witness to fade into the background or to disappear entirely.—BSG* for Monday.‡

10. With what do you find yourself being surrounded each day? Isn't it true that modern media channels are certainly not known for pure, uplifting, or inspiring content?
11. How can we continue to shine when we are surrounded by a vast world of darkness?
12. Consider the experience of Job as described in Job 1:1,8; and Job 2:3. **Job was described by God as a perfect and upright person.** Remember that Job had no Bible, no pastor, no Sabbath school to attend, and no prophet to guide him! **His relationship was directly with God.** And what about us? How did God and Job communicate?

[BSG:] We should never fear being different [holy/sanctified]—our faith should increasingly set us apart. The goal is to "shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15). The only way to do that is to reject conformity to this world (Rom. 12:2) by "holding fast the word of life" (Phil. 2:16, NKJV). Our choices determine whether we have lived with "the day of Christ" in view or have "run in vain" (Phil. 2:16, NKJV; compare 1 Cor. 9:24–27). If there are areas of your life that you would consider "worldly" (and there probably are), how can you be cleansed from them?—BSG* for Monday, January 26.‡§

[T-BSG:] The imagery of light is consistently applied in the Bible as a metaphor for mission. In the Old Testament, God Himself is described as the ultimate Source from whom light emanates. The psalmist says, "The LORD is my light" (Ps 27:1, NKJV; see also Ps. 4:6, Ps. 89:15, Ps. 118:27, Isa. 2:5). Similarly, speaking on behalf of his people, the prophet Micah utters, "The LORD will be a light to me . . . He will bring me forth to the light" (Mic. 7:8, 9, NKJV; see also Isa. 60:1, 2, 19, 20).—T-BSG* 67.‡§

[T-BSG:] In Isaiah 42:6 and Isaiah 49:6, the Servant of the Lord is referred to as "a light to the Gentiles" (NKJV). In Isaiah 49:6, the reader is provided with this further explanation: " "That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth." ' ' **New Testament authors understood the metaphor and applied it consistently** (Luke 2:32, John 8:12, John 9:5, Acts 13:47, Acts 26:23).—T-BSG* 67.†§ [They saw that the gospel was to spread to the

entire world.][‡]

[T-BSG:] It is interesting that the most significant metaphor for the church in the early chapters of Revelation is the **lampstands**. In that regard, various scholars agree that the abandonment of the first love by some in the church of Ephesus has to do with the waning of their missionary zeal (*Rev. 2:4*). Thus, Jesus warns that, unless they repent, He would remove their “lampstand from its place” (*Rev. 2:5, NKJV*).—*T-BSG** 67.^{†‡§}

[T-BSG:] These data shed light on Paul’s exhortation to the Philippians to shine “as lights in the world” (*Phil. 2:15, NKJV*). **It’s important to note that Paul suggests that believers are truly lights in the world (*Phil. 2:15*) when they demonstrate unity among themselves (*Phil. 2:14*). After all, “the calling to be light is also a calling into the fellowship of light. Paul saw Christians as being joined together in a community by which they could encourage and strengthen one another as children of light (*Eph. 5:8, 15–20*).”**—John M. Terry, Ebbie C. Smith, and Justice Anderson, eds., *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), p. 26.—*T-BSG** 67.^{†‡§} [Are we spreading the light through unity in the church?][‡]

13. Libations or liquid offerings were supposed to be poured out in combination with sacrifices. See Numbers 15:1-10 and Numbers 28:1-15.
14. Where did Jacob, and later the children of Israel, get holy oil and wine while in the desert?

[BSG:] Paul has already expressed a surprisingly ambivalent view toward whether he lives or dies in service to Christ (*Phil. 1:20–23*). Now he suggests the very real possibility of “being poured out as a drink offering” (*Phil. 2:17, NKJV*). **This imagery is based on the ancient practice of libations, which involved pouring out a liquid (such as oil, wine, or water) as an offering to God (see, for example, *Gen. 35:14, Exod. 29:40, 2 Sam. 23:15–17*).** The apparent “waste” of a valuable liquid in an act of devotion may remind us of Mary’s act of anointing Jesus’ head and feet with the “very costly oil of spikenard” (*Mark 14:3–9, NKJV; John 12:3, NKJV*). **While not a drink offering per se, it clearly represented an enormous sacrifice that fittingly illustrated the infinite sacrifice of Christ for our salvation.**—*BSG** for Tuesday, January 27.^{†‡§}

John 12:3: Then Mary took half a liter of a very expensive perfume made of pure nard, poured it on Jesus’ feet, and wiped them with her hair. The sweet smell of the perfume filled the whole house.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

Mark 14:3-9: ³Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon [whom Jesus had healed], a man who had suffered from a dreaded skin disease. While Jesus was eating, a woman came in with an alabaster jar full of a very expensive perfume made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on Jesus’ head. ⁴Some of the people there became angry and said to one another, “What was the use of wasting the perfume? ⁵It could have been sold for more than three hundred silver coins [a full year’s wages for a laborer] and the money given to the poor!” And they criticized her harshly.

⁶ But Jesus said, “Leave her alone! Why are you bothering her? She has done a fine and beautiful thing for me. ⁷You will always have poor people with you, and any time you want to, you can help them. But you will not always have me. ⁸She did what she could; she poured perfume on my body to prepare it ahead of time for burial. ⁹Now, I assure you that wherever the gospel is preached all over the world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.”—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*†

15. **Simon was the one who had originally led Mary, his niece, (*Daughters of God* 239-240) into sin through incest. (*The Desire of Ages* 566-567) This was probably what led her into prostitution and later into demon possession! (Luke 7:36-39; 8:1-3)**
16. ***Should we be preparing ourselves to be poured out as sacrifices? How long would God have to wait to accomplish that? As we approach the end of time and the seven last plagues, will some of us be killed for our faith?*** (See Genesis 35:14; Exodus 29:40; 2 Timothy 3:12; <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpgOUrIAsCzMAjh7BGlg5Q7WdCJTOruK>.)

[BSG:] **Should Paul be executed for his work of spreading the gospel, he would rejoice because his life was being “poured out” as an offering to God. Because libations in the Hebrew Bible generally do not stand alone but accompany a sacrifice (see Num. 15:1–10, Num. 28:1–15), Paul would consider the giving of his life as the fitting complement to the “sacrifice and service” of believers in Philippi, who, through faith, have chosen to devote their lives to God as a “living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1). —BSG* for Tuesday, January 27.†§**

Romans 12:1-2: ¹So then, my friends, because of God’s great mercy to us I appeal to you: **offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God**, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer. ²Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but **let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God—what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.**—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*†

17. Having read Romans 12:1-2, what is a *living sacrifice*? Is that what Paul was throughout his ministry?

[BSG:] The early Christians, including those in Philippi (*Phil.* 1:27–29), were active in sharing their faith. **They went spreading the gospel from house to house (Acts 5:42). They opened their homes for the study of the Scriptures (Acts 12:12; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philem. 1, 2), and were able to give reasons from the Scriptures for what they believed (Acts 17:11, Acts 18:26, 1 Pet. 3:15).** Our Adventist pioneers did the same. Rather than relying on pastors to spread the message to their neighbors, they shared their faith, gave Bible studies, and prepared people so they would be ready for baptism when the minister returned. In short, at great personal sacrifice to themselves, that is, as a “living sacrifice,” they worked to spread the gospel. Should we do any less?

Reflect on what it would mean for your life to be a “living sacrifice.” How much do you sacrifice for the kingdom of God, and what does your answer tell you about yourself?—BSG* for Tuesday, January 27.†§

Philippians 1:28-29: ²⁸Don't be afraid of your enemies; always be courageous, and this will prove to them that they will lose and that you will win, because it is God who gives you the victory. ²⁹For you have been given the privilege of serving Christ, not only by believing in him, but also by suffering for him.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

1 Peter 3:15: But have reverence for Christ in your hearts, and honor him as Lord. **Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you.**—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*†

18. ***Could we have “churches” in our homes and invite neighbors and friends to attend? Are we prepared to welcome people into our homes so we can witness to them about the truth? Could we do that at our places of work?***

Qualities for a Successful Ministry: Timothy, Epaphroditus, and Others

19. Numerous passages in the writings of Paul suggest that Timothy and others were very faithful helpers, even associates in his work.

[BSG:] Timothy's role as a co-sender of this epistle has already been mentioned (*Phil. 1:1*). Now Paul begins to detail how valuable Timothy is as one of his coworkers. He is described as an evangelist (*2 Tim. 4:5*) whom **Paul had sent to Macedonia** (*1 Thess. 3:2; compare Acts 18:5, Acts 19:22*) and, on several occasions, to Corinth (*1 Cor. 4:17, 1 Cor. 16:10*). Previously he had worked with Paul and Silas in Corinth (*1 Thess. 1:1, 2 Thess. 1:1*) and later in Ephesus (*1 Tim. 1:2, 3; compare Acts 19:22*). Paul describes Timothy as being “like-minded” (*Phil. 2:20, NKJV*). The Greek word (lit. “equal in soul”) suggests he was like Paul in many ways, including his commitment to Christ, his energetic efforts to spread the gospel, and his concern for the Philippians specifically.—*BSG** for Wednesday.^{†§}

[T-BSG:] From the description of Timothy ... in Philippians 2:19–30, one can infer several qualities essential for a successful ministry. Paul portrays Timothy as one who (1) is “like-minded” (*Phil. 2:20, NKJV*), (2) sincerely cares for others (*Phil. 2:20*), (3) seeks “the things which are of Christ Jesus” (*Phil. 2:21, NKJV*), (4) has a proven character (*Phil. 2:22*), and (5) demonstrates an attitude of service (*Phil. 2:22*). The Greek word rendered as “like-minded” is *isopsichon*, which occurs only here in the New Testament. It also appears once in the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament), in Psalm 55:13, where it is translated as “my equal” (*NKJV*).—*T-BSG** 67-68.^{‡§}

Philippians 2:19-23: ¹⁹If it is the Lord's will, I hope that I will be able to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may be encouraged by news about you. ²⁰**He is the only one** [in Rome] **who shares my feelings and who really cares about you.** ²¹**Everyone else is concerned only with their own affairs, not with the cause of Jesus Christ.** ²²And you yourselves know how he has proved his worth, how he and I, like a son and his father, have worked together for the sake of the gospel. ²³So I hope to send him to you as soon as I know how things are going to turn out for me.—*GNB-TEV*.*††

20. ***Would your pastor like to have you as a “Timothy” to help him with his work?***

21. ***Epaphroditus was also described as a co-worker with Paul. What qualities of character did he demonstrate?***

[BSG:] As the “messenger” (Greek: *apostolos*) appointed by the church in Philippi, Epaphroditus is sent to minister to Paul in prison and to care for any other needs he may have (*Phil. 2:25*). He was the one the Philippians entrusted with their financial gifts for Paul (*Phil. 4:18*). These offerings were critically important because whatever food, clothing, bedding, or other necessities Roman prisoners might need would have to be purchased at their own expense or brought to them by family and friends (*compare Acts 24:23*).—BSG* for Thursday, January 29.†§

[T-BSG:] Regarding Epaphroditus, **Paul first portrays him in relation to himself: he is a brother, a fellow worker, and a fellow soldier. He is also a messenger (from Greek, *apostolos*) sent from Paul to the Philippians, and someone who ministered to Paul’s need (*Phil. 2:25*).** This indicates that Epaphroditus was a very faithful and loyal companion. Afterward, Paul portrays him in relation to the Philippians. In that regard, Paul states, “He was longing for you all” (*Phil. 2:26, NKJV*). In other words, Paul is saying, “He misses you.” **This suggests that, as a Christian leader, Epaphroditus deeply loved and cared for those whom he served. Epaphroditus was such a committed Christian leader that “for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life” (*Phil. 2:30, NKJV*).** These men gave their all for the work of Christ. **God also expects us to give our best, too!**—T-BSG* 68.†§

[BSG:] Epaphroditus is mentioned only in this letter [Philippians], but we learn quite a bit about him from the few brief mentions that appear. Judging from his name (which refers to the cult of Aphrodite [*sic*]), he was converted from a pagan background. Calling him a “fellow worker” suggests he was active in ministry, perhaps working alongside Paul in Philippi. Being a “fellow soldier” (*compare Phil. 1:27*) probably refers to conflict Epaphroditus faced in spreading the gospel, willing even to risk his life (*Phil. 2:30*).—BSG* for Thursday, January 29.†§

Philippians 1:27: Now, the important thing is that your way of life should be as the gospel of Christ requires, so that, whether or not I am able to go and see you, I will hear that you are standing firm with one common purpose and that with only one desire **you are fighting together for the faith of the gospel.**—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*†

[BSG:] It was also Epaphroditus who was entrusted with carrying this epistle [Philippians] back to Philippi (see Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 479).—BSG* for Thursday, January 29.†§

[EGW:] By Epaphroditus, Paul sent the Philippian believers a letter, in which he thanked them for their gifts to him. Of all the churches, that of Philippi had been the most liberal in supplying Paul’s wants. “Now ye Philippians know also,” the apostle said in his letter, “that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye

sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles** 479.2.‡

[<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p127.2118&index=0>][‡]

[BSG:] Perhaps because of the problems in Philippi (see Lesson 4), Paul “considered it necessary” to send Epaphroditus back sooner than anticipated, and thus urges the Philippians to “welcome him in the Lord with great joy” (*Phil. 2:29, NIV*). Paul wants to make sure they do not worry about his own situation in jail. **He also underscores that Epaphroditus is the kind of person Christians are to hold in high esteem, not because of their wealth or social status but because of their sacrificial spirit in following the example of Jesus** (*Phil. 2:6–11, 29, 30; compare Luke 22:25–27*). The Greek word for *esteem* or *honor* appears only a few times in the New Testament: for the centurion’s servant who was “valued highly” (*Luke 7:2, NRSV*), for those who are shown honor by their placement at a feast (*Luke 14:8*), and of Jesus as the “precious” cornerstone (*1 Pet. 2:4, 6*). **For Epaphroditus to be included in that group, he must have been, indeed, a faithful man.**—BSG* for Thursday, January 29.^{†‡§}

22. There were others who were mentioned by Paul as being faithful helpers. Paul obviously thought of Timothy, Silas, and Epaphroditus as the kind of people that Christians should hold in high esteem. Several of these helpers of Paul risked their lives to assist him.

[BSG:] It is the difficult experiences of life that test our mettle and demonstrate who we are on the inside. [The BSG then quotes Ellen White which is expanded below.]—BSG* for Wednesday, January 28.[‡]

[EGW:] Life is disciplinary. While in the world, the Christian will meet with adverse influences. There will be provocations to test the temper; and it is by meeting these in a right spirit that the Christian graces are developed. If injuries and insults are meekly borne, if insulting words are responded to by gentle answers, and oppressive acts by kindness, this is evidence that the Spirit of Christ dwells in the heart, that sap from the living Vine is flowing to the branches. We are in the school of Christ in this life, where we are to learn to be meek and lowly of heart; and in the day of final accounts we shall see that all the obstacles we meet, all the hardships and annoyances that we are called to bear, are practical lessons in the application of principles of Christian life. If well endured, they develop the Christlike in the character and distinguish the Christian from the worldling.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,* vol. 5, 344.2.‡

[<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p113.1734&index=0>][‡]

23. **Could our lives be described as “fighting together for the faith of the gospel”?**
24. **What can our lives say to the world about Jesus that is unique and meaningful?**
25. **If you were on trial for being a Christian, based on what people see in your life would you be found “guilty”? Or, “innocent”?**
26. Think about the provocations, hardships, annoyances you have faced recently. Have

those been “meekly borne” and “well endured”? What can you do to enable these experiences to help make you more disciplined?

[EGW:] The one who stands nearest to Christ will be he who on earth has drunk most deeply of the spirit of His self-sacrificing love,—love that “vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, ... seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil” (1 Corinthians 13:4, 5),—love that moves the disciple, as it moved our Lord, to give all, to live and labor and sacrifice, even unto death, for the saving of humanity. This spirit was made manifest in the life of Paul. He said, “For to me to live is Christ;” for his life revealed Christ to men; “and to die is gain,”—gain to Christ; death itself would make manifest the power of His grace, and gather souls to Him. “Christ shall be magnified in my body,” he said, “whether it be by life or by death.” Philippians 1:21, 20.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 549.3.‡

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[EGW:] **The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The mark of the beast will be urged upon us. Those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death.** The contest is between the commandments of God and the commandments of men. **In this time the gold will be separated from the dross in the church. True godliness will be clearly distinguished from the appearance and tinsel of it. Many a star that we have admired for its brilliancy will then go out in darkness. Chaff like a cloud will be borne away on the wind, even from places where we see only floors of rich wheat. All who assume the ornaments of the sanctuary, but are not clothed with Christ’s righteousness, will appear in the shame of their own nakedness.**

When trees without fruit are cut down as cumberers of the ground, **when multitudes of false brethren are distinguished from the true, then the hidden ones will be revealed to view, and with hosannas range under the banner of Christ. Those who have been timid and self-distrustful will declare themselves openly for Christ and His truth. The most weak and hesitating in the church will be as David—willing to do and dare. The deeper the night for God’s people, the more brilliant the stars. Satan will sorely harass the faithful; but, in the name of Jesus, they will come off more than conquerors.** Then will the church of Christ appear “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,* vol. 5, 81.1-82.0.†‡

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27. Are we among those who are standing firmly for the gospel and representing God correctly to those around us every day? Or, are we slowly, step-by-step, yielding to worldly demands and conforming to worldly customs?

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