

Faith That Never Fails



SABBATH—APRIL 27

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Psalm 119:103, 104; 2 Corinthians 4:1–6; John 14:25, 26; Ephesians 2:8, 9; *The Great Controversy*, chapters 7–11.

MEMORY VERSE: “I study your teachings very carefully so that I will not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11, ERV).

Our understanding of these Bible truths will help us get ready for the final test in the end times.

THE PROTESTANT LEADERS in the 1500s had something we all need. They had a reason for living. A famous scientist, Philip Cushman, talks about our need for a reason to live. In his book, *The Empty Self*, Cushman says that some people have nothing worth dying for. Nothing in life really matters to them. So, they have no reason to live.

But the men, women, and children of the Protestant Reformation were different. As we saw last week, the Protestant Reformation happened in the 1500s in Europe when religious leaders made big changes to the Catholic religion. These leaders rejected the false teachings of the Catholic church. The changes they made led to the start of the Protestant churches. The Protestants had an important reason for living. Their beliefs were important to them. They couldn't reject their beliefs. If they did, that would be the same as rejecting who they were.

This week, we will look at how Bible truth changed the lives of the Protestants in the 1500s and gave them a reason for living. Our understanding of these Bible truths will help us get ready for the final test in the end times.

THE BIBLE ONLY (Psalm 119:103, 104)

Read Psalm 119:103, 104; Psalm 119:147; and Psalm 119:162. What did David think about God’s Word, the Bible? How did David’s ideas about the Bible change the lives of the Protestant leaders? What did David’s ideas cause these leaders to do? Are David’s ideas about the Bible important to our lives today? If yes, how are they important?

The Protestant leaders in the Middle Ages built their faith on the Bible. They taught from the Bible. The Protestants in the Middle Ages understood that the Bible was “God’s living [life-giving] message that continues forever” (1 Peter 1:23, ICB). The Protestants believed that the Bible was the same as a precious treasure. As they believed its promises, their faith and courage grew strong. “All the promises in the Bible make our faith and courage grow strong. God talks to us in His promises. He speaks to us in the Bible the same as if He spoke face-to-face with us. In these promises, Jesus communicates to us His mercy and power over sin. These promises are the same as leaves from the tree of life. ‘The leaves of the tree are for the healing of all people.’ Revelation 22:2 [ICB]. When we believe in Jesus’ promises, they change us for the better and make us strong. Jesus’ promises give us life. Nothing else can heal us the way Jesus’ promises can. Only Jesus’ promises can give us the courage and faith we need. His promises give life-giving energy to our minds, hearts, spirits, and bodies.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, page 122, adapted.

The Protestants in the Middle Ages filled their minds with verses from the Bible. These men, women, and children followed Bible truth in their lives. Many of these Christians died because of their faith in the Bible. These Protestants weren’t empty, careless Christians. They knew they needed Bible truth to help them stand against Satan.

John Wycliffe wanted to translate the Bible into the English language for everyone to understand. At that time, reading and translating the Bible was a crime. So, Wycliffe was arrested for translating the Bible. He was sentenced to die. At his court trial, Wycliffe said, “Do you think you are fighting with an old man ready to die? No! You fight against Bible truth. Bible truth is more powerful than you are. Bible truth will win in the end.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 90, adapted.



“Bible truth will win in the end.”

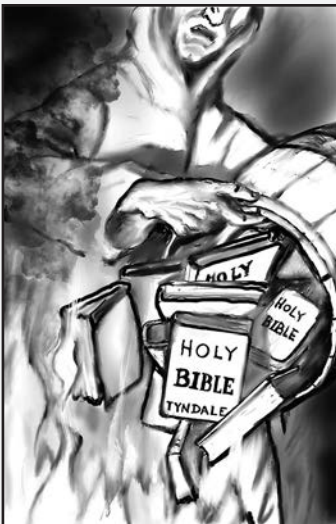
SHARING BIBLE TRUTH (2 Corinthians 4:1–6)

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1–6 and 2 Corinthians 2:14. What do these verses tell us about Paul? How much faith and courage did he have as he shared Bible truth in hard times?

Paul often met with troubles and false teachings while he worked. But Paul believed that Bible truth was more powerful than any of these problems. He said, “I can’t do anything to stop the truth. I can only work for the truth” (2 Corinthians 13:8, NIV).

During the Middle Ages, the Protestants had many of the same problems sharing Bible truth that Paul had in his day. One of these Protestants was William Tyndale. William Tyndale’s life is an example of courage. More than anything, Tyndale wanted to give England a good translation of the Bible. Also, Tyndale wished to fix some of the mistakes in Wycliffe’s translation of the Bible, 200 years before. Soon Tyndale was arrested and put on trial in court. Many of Tyndale’s Bible translations were burned. Tyndale went to court in Belgium, in A.D. 1536, and was sentenced to die. The men who killed him strangled him while they tied him up. Then they burned Tyndale’s body. Tyndale’s dying words were said in a loud voice: “Lord, help the king of England to understand.” God soon answered Tyndale’s prayer.

Within four years after Tyndale died, four English translations of the Bible were printed. In 1611, the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible was printed. The KJV was made mostly from Tyndale’s work. The 54 Bible experts who made the KJV used Tyndale’s English translation. One of those Bible experts guessed that the Old Testament part of the 1611 King James Bible is 76% Tyndale’s translation, and the New Testament is 83% Tyndale’s translation. In 2011, the King James Bible celebrated its 400th-year anniversary, with one billion Bibles in print. The King James Bible has been translated into many different languages. This Bible version has changed the lives of millions of people around the globe. Tyndale gave up his life for Bible truth. His offering continues to change lives long after his death.



Many of Tyndale’s Bible translations were burned.

Read Daniel 12:3 and Revelation 14:13. How do these verses help us remember Tyndale’s life in a powerful way? How do these verses encourage you to share Bible truth with other people?

THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKES US WISE (John 14:25, 26)

When Martin Luther was a student at the university, he went to the library to study. Something happened in the library that changed his life forever. Luther found a copy of the Bible. The Bible was written in the Latin language. Luther never saw a Bible before. He was so happy he found it! With joy in his heart, he read chapter after chapter and verse after verse. Luther was amazed. The Bible was so plain and easy to understand. At the same time, its teachings were so powerful. As Luther continued to read, the Holy Spirit guided him. The Holy Spirit helped Luther to understand Bible truth that the Roman Catholic Church had hidden from people for so long. Later, Luther wrote about his first experience with the Bible. He said, “Oh, if only God would give me a copy of this Book for myself!”

Read the verses below. How should we explain the Bible’s meaning? What rules do the verses below give us?

John 14:25, 26 _____

John 16:13–15 _____

2 Peter 1:20, 21 _____

The same Holy Spirit that helped men to write the Bible also helps us to understand the Bible when we read it. Isn’t the Holy Spirit amazing?! The Holy Spirit is God. As God, He teaches us what the Bible says. Sad to say, many Christians today don’t believe that the Bible came from God. Satan has tricked them. They believe that the Bible is only a well-written book. But they don’t believe that God really led men to write it.

The Protestant leaders in the Middle Ages saw that the Holy Spirit, and not the pope, is the real Teacher of Bible truth. John Knox told Queen Mary of Scotland the same thing. Mary said to Knox, “You and the Roman Catholic Church don’t agree about what the Bible teaches. Shall I trust you or the pope?” Knox answered, “You must believe God. Don’t believe any teaching that doesn’t come from the Bible. The Bible’s teachings are easy to understand. If a verse in one part is hard to understand, then the Holy Spirit explains its meaning in another part. Trust Him to teach you.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 251, adapted.



The Holy Spirit helped Martin to understand Bible truth that the Roman Catholic Church had hidden from people for so long.

ONLY JESUS . . . ONLY MERCY (Ephesians 2:8, 9)

Read Ephesians 2:8, 9; Romans 3:23, 24; Romans 6:23; and Romans 5:8–10. What do these verses teach us about God’s plan to save us from sin?

God saves us with His mercy. God’s mercy is a gift. The Holy Spirit helps us accept this gift. We accept this gift when we believe in Jesus and His death for our sins. Jesus paid for our sins on the cross with His perfect life.

When people sin, they break God’s law. The penalty for breaking the law is death. The penalty must be paid with blood. Only Jesus’ blood can pay the price, because He did not sin. God exchanges our life record with Jesus’ life record. When God looks at us, He sees only Jesus and the price He paid for our sins. Yes, when we broke God’s law, we earned everlasting death. This death is final. We cannot wake up from this death. But Paul gives us good news. “When you sin, the pay you get is death. But God gives you the gift of eternal [everlasting] life. That’s because of what Christ Jesus our Lord has done” (Romans 6:23, NIV). Are we worthy of everlasting life? Have we done anything to earn it? No, everlasting life is a gift. Let’s say we can earn everlasting life with our good behavior. Then everlasting life would no longer be God’s gift to us. If the Good News about Jesus teaches us anything, it teaches us that we can’t earn God’s mercy.



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During the Middle Ages, Martin Luther and other Protestant leaders discovered that only Jesus saves us. When Luther understood this Bible truth, he started to preach this message. Crowds came to hear Luther’s sermons. His words were the same as a drink of cold water in a desert. The church did not teach Bible truth. The church taught people to follow only the teachings of the church. So, Roman Catholic people were the same as spiritual slaves. The teachings of the church gave no spiritual life to anyone. But Luther’s sermons about Bible truth touched people’s hearts and gave them hope. Lives changed.

“Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, so that He can give us the riches that belong to Him. Jesus died for our sins. He did nothing wrong. He accepted our punishment so that He could help God to accept us again. We did nothing to earn this gift. Because Jesus died our death on the cross, He can offer us His life.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 25, adapted.

OBEDIENCE (Romans 3:27–31)

Read Romans 3:27–31; Romans 6:15–18; and Romans 8:1, 2. What do these verses teach us about how we are saved?

Martin Luther taught Christians to trust in Jesus to save them. In Luther's day, many Christians believed that their good behavior would save them. But they failed all the time. When they looked at their lives, they felt hopeless. We have the same experience today, don't we, when we look at our own lives? We don't see much good. That's why we also need to look to Jesus to save us.

God's forgiveness and mercy change us. A story from John Wesley's life helps us understand this Bible truth. Wesley went to a meeting at a Moravian church in London. Someone there read Martin Luther's introduction to the Book of Romans. Luther's ideas amazed John Wesley. For the first time in his life, Wesley started to understand the Good News about Jesus. Luther's words deeply touched Wesley's heart. Wesley wanted to give his life to the One who gave His life for him. Wesley said, "I knew then that I trusted only in Jesus to save me. I felt that Jesus removed **my** sins. He saved **me** from the punishment of sin and death."—John Whitehead, *The Life of the Reverend John Wesley*, M.A. (London: Stephen Couchman, 1793), page 331, adapted.

Read 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18; Colossians 1:10; and Ephesians 4:18–24. What important Bible truths do these verses teach us about the Christian life?

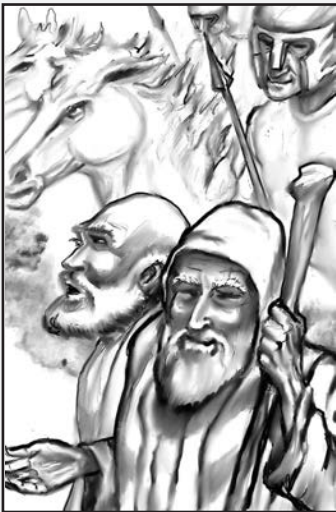
During the Middle Ages, Protestant leaders carefully studied the Bible to learn more Bible truth. The leaders wanted to know Jesus better. Many Bible-believing Christians in the Middle Ages paid a high price for this wish. Their enemies hurt them or put them in prison. Some of these Christians died for their faith. Their lands were taken away from them. Their homes were burned, and their families were attacked. Many of these loyal Christians were forced to leave their homes. They didn't complain. They were "looking for a city which will last [continue] for ever. It was the city God planned and made" (Hebrews 11:10, WE). These Christians blessed the ones who hurt them. When they were put in jail, they trusted in God's promises for a better future. Yes, their bodies were in jail. But their hearts were free. Jesus and the Bible gave them hope.



When the Protestant Christians were put in jail, they trusted in God's promises for a better future.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “Satan and his army of evil angels fought against God’s servants. But the Lord didn’t leave His people. God was with them the same as He was with Elisha in Bible times. Elisha’s servant told his master to look at the angry army all around them. The army cut off any chance for Elisha and his servant to escape. Then Elisha prayed and said, ‘Lord, I ask you, open my servant’s eyes so that he can see.’ 2 Kings 6:17 [ERV]. All of a sudden, the mountain was filled with war wagons and horses made from fire. God sent His army from heaven to protect Elisha. In the same way, angels protected Protestant Christians during the Middle Ages.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 208, adapted.

“Powerful enemies joined together to destroy the Protestant faith. Thousands of Catholics were ready to go to war against the Protestants. At this time, Luther wrote, ‘Satan is very angry. Evil popes are making secret plans. The Catholics are ready to start a war against us. Tell the people to be brave. Tell them to go to God’s throne in faith and prayer. We must trust the Spirit of God to fight our enemies for us and to give us peace. We need prayer more than anything. Prayer is our most important work. Let the people know that they are in danger from the sword and Satan’s anger. Let them pray. D’Aubigné, book 10, chapter 14.’—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 209, adapted.



“God sent His army from heaven to protect Elisha.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① How are we saved? What part do mercy and the law have in God’s work to save us? Also, what part do faith and good behavior have in this work?
- ② Some people think that their own good behavior will save them or earn them God’s favor. Why is it so easy to fall into this trap? Why is the teaching that we can save ourselves so wrong? How does this teaching hurt our Christian faith?
- ③ God saves us with His mercy when we accept Jesus. What danger will we be in if we don’t understand the correct teaching about how we are saved? Where will the wrong teaching lead us?
- ④ What do some people mean when they talk about “cheap mercy”? Is mercy cheap? Explain.

LETTERS TO THE RICH AND FAMOUS

My mother, a Spanish housewife, read a surprising quote in *Christ's Object Lessons* that changed her life forever. The quote said, "There are many people who don't know the special Bible truths for our time. These people include businessmen, powerful leaders, inventors and scientists, intelligent men, and pastors. We should try to share the Bible truth with them first. We must invite them to follow Jesus."—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 230, adapted. After Mother read this quote, she wrote letters to the rich and famous for the next 35 years. Some of the people she wrote to included Spanish royalty, actors and singers, and Cuban leader Fidel Castro.

After my mother first read the quote from *Christ's Object Lessons*, she wondered, "How can I, a housewife, share the Good News about Jesus with rich and famous people?" Then God gave Mother a plan. She watched talk shows on TV with famous guests. She read articles about them in newspapers and magazines. She looked for any hint that famous people were interested in spiritual things. As soon as she heard famous people on TV or the radio say, "I wish I had faith," "I don't believe in God," or "I feel my heart is empty," she wrote them a letter to introduce them to God.

My mother lost count of the number of letters she mailed. Many people answered Mother's letters. Madrid's mayor wrote, "I'm reading the Conflict of the Ages books. I'm in the chapter 'The Awakening in Spain' in *The Great Controversy*. It's very interesting. I will keep reading."

A bishop told my mother he was grateful for *Steps to Christ* and the Conflict of the Ages. The bishop wrote, "May God in His mercy do what needs to be done to bring us Bible truth."

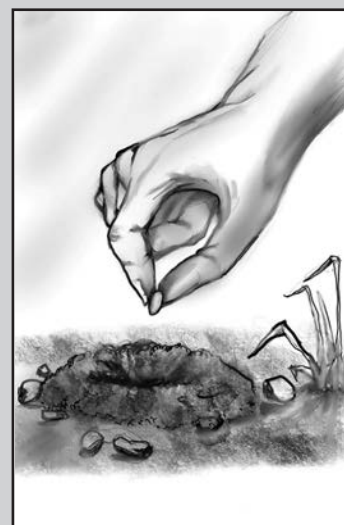
Another person who wrote my mother was Isabel, who was a doctor. Isabel gave up her job to become a nun. A nun is a Catholic woman who promises to serve God all her life and lives with other nuns in a special religious community. Isabel wrote and called my mother for many months. In Isabel's first letter, she told my mother, "You can send me all the Bible books you want." My mother did, and a "seed" of Bible truth was planted.

My mother says, "The most important thing to do is plant 'seeds' of Bible truth. The Lord says, 'Do good wherever you go. After a while, the good you do will come back to you' (Ecclesiastes 11:1, ERV)."

Join the Seventh-day Adventist Church in sharing *The Great Controversy* worldwide in 2023 and 2024. Visit the great.controversyproject.org for more information or ask your pastor for more information.

INSIDE Story

by REBECA RUIZ LAGUARDIA



"The most important thing to do is plant 'seeds' of Bible truth."