

# CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GOD - NUMBER ELEVEN

## ***GOD'S EMERGENCY MEASURES***

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Number Eleven: "**God's Emergency Measures**,"--another look at the "many and various ways" in which God has worked to hold His family together as He demonstrates the truth--all in the larger setting of the great controversy over His character and government.

At infinite cost God has sought to convince the universe that His government will be forever one of peace and freedom based on mutual and well-founded trust. But when Satan plunged the family into the crisis of rebellion and distrust, emergency measures were required to maintain a semblance of order and respect until the basis for real peace and freedom could be clarified and confirmed. God even had to command His children to stop lying, stealing, cheating, and murdering one another. To gain our attention He had to raise His voice on Sinai, rain fire on Mt. Carmel, and send she-bears in Elisha's days. The One who sees the little sparrow fall had to establish a sacrificial system that called for the death of thousands of His creatures. And the One who is love personified had to set up a system of priestly mediation because His people were either too irreverent or too afraid to be His friends. He even sent His Son to be the One between, when there really is no need for anyone to stand between us and our gracious God. Besides, the One who came is God, and no one stood between Him and Judas as the Creator knelt to wash His betrayer's dirty feet.

How Satan has sought to pervert the meaning of God's emergency measures as evidence of the correctness of his charges that God is arbitrary, vengeful, unforgiving, and severe! Perhaps Satan's greatest success has been in leading God's children to believe that were it not for the constant intercession of His Son, the Father could not find it in His own heart to forgive and heal.

Thank God for the emergency measures! But we must understand them for what they are.

Welcome to the eleventh of our conversations about God--another look at our Heavenly Father in the larger setting of the great controversy over His character and government. The subject of our conversation this evening is: "**God's Emergency Measures**". We have an opportunity to consider again the lengths, indeed the extraordinary lengths, to which God has been willing to go to hold His family together as He demonstrates the truth and seeks to bring the whole conflict to a successful end. As we have been discussing, God will settle for nothing less than peace and freedom, established upon mutual trust--well-founded trust and love--because of all the evidence that He has provided for us through the years.

Of course, the emergency is the breakdown of this trust and trustworthiness that we have discussed before. Our stubborn and suspicious unwillingness to listen has made it so hard for God to heal the damage done. The damaging consequences of this breakdown of trust in the family are very clearly portrayed all through Scripture and through history. We see it in society all around us.

God proposes to set right and to keep right all that has gone wrong. This requires first that He win us back to trust and a willingness to listen. Then He can heal the damage done. Mere forgiveness only would not repair all the damage that has been caused by this breakdown of trust and trustworthiness and would not secure the universe and keep it safe for all eternity. We could say that heaven will not be peopled with pardoned criminals, but with trusting and

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trustworthy saints who have new hearts and right spirits, as David prayed. (see Ps. 51:10)

Granting all that, what if we are not willing to listen? What if we are not listening to God's generous offer? What about those who have been so influenced by Satan's lies that they have turned away to other gods or to no gods at all? What about those who have been so influenced by Satan's lies that they seek to worship the true God, but they worship Him as arbitrary, vengeful, and severe? They offer Him the obedience that springs from fear; with all the dire consequences that come from that. What about all the people who live between those two extremes? How can God reach all of them?

It is no wonder that in the Biblical record we see God in many and various ways trying to reach us where we are in this emergency. He is speaking a language that we can understand; leading us no faster than we are able to follow. He is running grave risks of being misunderstood as He seeks to gain our attention and hold it long enough to tell us the truth about Himself. When we have been hard of hearing, God has surely raised His voice, as on Mt. Sinai (Ex 19,20). When we were irreverent, He shook the ground beneath our feet (Num 16). He even sent she-bears in the days of Elisha (2 Kings 2:23,24). He brought fire down on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18). So many of the stories in the Bible illustrate God's willingness to run the risk of being misunderstood to lead us to that reverence that is the beginning of wisdom. (Prov. 9:10)

Then, when we were tempted to take sin lightly and underestimate the serious consequences of sin, the One who sees the little sparrow fall, instituted that whole system of sacrifices and ceremonies that required the death of thousands of His creatures. When we were tempted to accept Satan's lie that sin does not lead to death, God sent His Son to die that death and so demonstrate the truth.

The whole Bible is full of these emergency measures. I find it difficult each time to decide which ones to select. This is particularly so because the whole Bible is full of illustrations of the lengths to which God is willing to go. Fortunately, we have included some already, such as, Jesus' explanation of why He gave permission to divorce in the Old Testament (Matt. 19). He said this was an emergency measure because of "the stiffness of your necks and the hardness of your hearts." In fact, could we not say that the whole Bible is an emergency measure?

Since there are so many mentioned, I thought it might be best to consider two of these emergency measures. These two are the most important measures and perhaps these are the most seriously misunderstood. The first one is God's emergency use of law. If it is true that God values nothing higher than our freedom, why has He made so much use of law? If all He asks is trust and love, and these cannot be produced by force or command, then why did He give us the Decalogue which seems to demand our love and obedience under threat of execution? If He doesn't wish to be seen as arbitrary, exacting, and severe, why has He surrounded us with innumerable rules?

Paul understood all about trust and freedom. He emphasized it so much that he was accused of doing away with these rules, doing away with God's law. He said, "I intend no such thing. Faith does not abolish law. Faith establishes law, by putting it in its proper perspective." (see Rom. 3:31)

But what is the right perspective from which to view God's use of law? Well, it is mentioned in Galatians 3:19 (RSV). "Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions." Then Paul went on to explain *why* the law was added. Using the King James

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language you remember from memory, he said, "the law was our school master to bring us to Christ." The Greek word behind it is "**paidagogos**". Can you hear pedagogue in that, the pedagogical method? That word actually was the name given to a trusted slave whose duty it was to take the children to school, to make sure they got there, stayed there, and then it was his duty to bring them home. He was not the teacher. He was the guardian, the protector.

Now can you see the reason for the translation in the next passage? Read Galatians 3:24,25 (Goodspeed). "So the Law has been our attendant on our way to Christ, so that we might be made upright through faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer in the charge of the attendant." Compare with that the New International Version translation--"So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law."

Now which law in your judgement is he talking about? Which law was "added because of transgression, to lead us to Christ?" Was it the ceremonial law? Was it the moral law? Was it all law? Would you **dare** include the Ten Commandments?

Consider how God gave the Ten Commandments. One day, you recall, He gathered His misbehaving children together at the foot of Mt. Sinai. He announced, "I want all the murdering to stop. I want all the hating to stop. I want all the stealing, cheating, the lying, and the immorality to stop. I want you to stop going after other gods." What an emergency in His family, when He had to ask His children to stop doing all those things! You recognize, of course, the Decalogue. It was added because of transgression.

Have you ever had to do this in your home? Some of you fathers might say in the morning at worship--perhaps next Monday morning before the children leave for school:

"Now Billy, let us see if we all can make this a very good day in our family. Billy, when you are at school today, do you promise not to murder any of your friends?"

"Yes, Daddy, if you insist," Billy would answer.

"And Mary, do you promise not to steal any more while you are in school?"

"Yes, Daddy, if you insist," Mary would answer.

Then you turn to your wife and say, "And when I am at work, please do not commit adultery again. Do you promise, wife?"

"Well yes, if you insist," answers the wife.

If you do this in the morning, be sure not to leave your window open. The neighbors will assume that terrible things are happening in your home. Don't you think the devil mocked God for having to say to His children, "Please, I want all this to stop?" There was no need before sin entered the universe, to say to the loyal angels, "I want all this misbehavior to stop." They didn't need a law to do what was right. They did what was right, because it was right. But here on this earth, the law was added because of sin.

Of course, when sin entered the universe, there came the first day when God had to speak of law. Then came the first awesome day, when God had to say that sin, rebelliousness,

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lawlessness, and disorderliness result in death.

But there are many dangers inherent in the use of law. One danger is that now that the law has been expressed, one will assume that doing right means merely *obeying* the rules, that sin is merely *disobeying* the rules and that the penalty for breaking the rules is that the Rule-giver will execute you. But God does offer forgiveness and then He won't have to execute you. How has He made this possible? Someone else paid the legal penalty, so it is all right for God to forgive you. What if you turn down the offer? Then you will be painfully destroyed, perhaps more painfully because of your ingratitude. You know how that can lead to the obedience that springs from fear.

But if one takes the larger view in all 66 books, you see that what God really wants is not mere obedience to the rules. He wants us to do what is right because it is right. He wants the obedience that springs from love and trust and that is offered in the highest sense of freedom. What if I choose to go my own rebellious way? What will He do to me? He will sadly let me go as He let His Son go. I will die and He will cry. But there is no need to be afraid. Those who watch me die will not serve Him from fear having watched my sad end. God wishes that to be understood for all eternity.

But why then the law? Well, it was added to protect us until we had a better understanding and better motivation. We thank God for the rules He gave us. Some are very stern. We needed them. But we must understand that they were emergency measures. Now look at Romans 3:31 (GNB). "Does this (what we have been saying) mean that by this faith we do away with the Law? No, not at all; instead we uphold the Law." (parentheses supplied) Thank God for it because we needed it.

Now Paul makes it plain that the rules are for the misbehaving members of the family. Look at that remarkable verse, 1 Timothy 1:8,9 (NIV). "We know that the law is good if a man uses it properly. We also know that law is made not for good men but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful..." The Phillips translation of the same passage reads, "We also know that the law is not really meant for the good man, but for the man who has neither principles or self-control." If you have principles and self control, you are led by the Holy Spirit and you don't need to be told to love God and to love each other. That is God's ideal.

The same understanding is true of the whole sacrificial system, which was certainly not against us to be taken out of the way. It was for us to teach things we needed to know. Most especially were the sacrifices given to remind us of how serious sin and its consequences are. Look at Hebrews 10:3,4 (RSV), "But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year. For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin." The remedy was yet to come, but we needed this to be reminded of the seriousness of sin.

But misunderstood, these very same sacrifices and ceremonies, turned many people away from God. Think of what happened on crucifixion Friday, Passover weekend. Yet the people who celebrated that Passover and kept that special Sabbath did not know the One who was represented. They did not understand the meaning of the ceremonies or understand God's plan. Most of all they did not know God Himself, and nailed Him to the cross. Many Old Testament prophets had tried to make it clear what the meaning was and why God had given these rules and ceremonies.

Look at the wonderful verses in Jeremiah 7:22,23 (*An American Translation*). "For on the day that I brought your fathers out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to them, nor give them

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command regarding burnt-offering or sacrifice; but this command I gave them, 'Listen to My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people.'" You know, Jeremiah looked forward to the day when the ceremonies which God did have to add later on, because they wouldn't be His people, and they wouldn't listen, (as Jeremiah later goes on to describe), would have served their purpose. Look at Jeremiah 3:16 (RSV). "In those days...(when everything will be restored, is the context) men shall speak no more of the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord; they shall not think of it, nor remember it, nor resort to it; it will be needed no more." (parentheses supplied) I do hope the Lord keeps it in the heavenly museum. I would like to go look at it. It might remind us of the emergency measures God was willing to use in the past.

What is the purpose of all those ceremonies, those rituals and sacrifices? Look at Jeremiah 31:33,34 (RSV). "I will put My law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; (where a man does his thinking) and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (That is all He has ever wanted, to bring the family together again.) And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall know Me." (parentheses supplied) That is what He wants.

How eloquently Hosea had not only taught this, but demonstrated it. Look at Hosea 6:6 (Phillips). "It is true love that I have wanted, not sacrifice; the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings." Look how well that has been put in the Good News Bible translation, "I would rather have My people know Me than have them burn offerings to Me." We have been noting all through these conversations that to know God means to love Him, to trust Him, and to be willing to listen. That is all God has ever wanted or ever will want for all eternity. All these emergency measures are designed to lead us back to that.

But now consider the second emergency measure that has been so seriously misunderstood. If God really is so gracious and if He is love personified, why does the Bible picture the need for mediation and intercession? Why does Someone need to stand between us and the anger of our offended God? I believe that Satan would love to have us misunderstand this. Nothing can really distort the picture of God more than a misunderstanding of this most gracious of His provisions. Satan wants us to believe that were it not for Christ's constant intercession in our behalf, the Father could never find it in His own heart to forgive and to heal.

Then is God, after all, unforgiving and severe? We know *that* isn't true, yet priestly intercession runs all through the Scriptures, especially the intercession and mediation of our Lord. Is this also an emergency measure especially tailored to meet our needs until we come to know God better and realize the incredible news - there is no need for anyone to stand between us and our God? Now we **have** had an enemy between. There is no question about that. The damage has been devastating. Do we need a "Friend" between? If so, why?

God came down on Mt. Sinai to speak to His people, remember? There was such irreverence that God had to show His might and power, and the people were terrified. They turned to Moses and said, "Don't let God speak to us lest we die. *You* speak to Him and then *you* speak to us." They begged for an intercessor, for someone in between, though God wanted to speak to them directly. Look at Exodus 20:19,20 (GNB). "They said to Moses, 'If you speak to us, we will listen; but we are afraid that if God speaks to us, we will die.' Moses replied, 'Don't be afraid.'"

God actually had been speaking to them and they had not died. They were impressed with this, but they just didn't want to run the risk any further. Look at Deuteronomy 5:24,25,27 (GNB). "Today we have seen that it is possible for a man to continue to live, even though God has spoken to him. But why should we risk death again? That terrible fire will destroy us. We are

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sure to die if we hear the Lord our God speak again...Go back, Moses, and listen to everything that the Lord our God says. Then return and tell us what He said to you. We will listen and obey." You see, the people pleaded for a mediator. They pleaded for a friend between them and God. **They** needed him. **God** didn't need someone in between.

But Moses was such a friend. Was there anyone between Moses and God? Look at Numbers 12:6-8 (Jerusalem). "If any man among you is a prophet I make myself known to him in a vision, I speak to him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses; he is at home in my house; I speak with him face to face, plainly and not in riddles (or parables, or dark speech some versions say)." (parentheses supplied) Compare with that Exodus 33:11 (RSV). "Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend." There was no one in between.

Now, years later, Jesus tried to encourage the disciples to believe that He wanted to speak to them as friends as He used to talk to Moses. Look at John 15:15 (RSV). "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." (RSV) When friends speak together, they speak plainly, face to face. Notice that among friends there is explanation. Understanding is desired. It is quite apparent that Jesus didn't want blind obedience - just doing what they were told. He wanted the understanding cooperation of friends. He wanted His disciples to obey because they agreed and they admired God for His wise and gracious ways. That is the obedience of a free person. That is intelligent obedience, as the Bible describes it. (see Rom 12:1,2)

When we are friends, no one needs to come in between. When friends are talking together, does someone need to intervene and intercede and protect one friend from another? The disciples could see no need at all for any one to come between them and Christ. They were clear on that. They weren't afraid of Him. But they were not so sure about the Father. That is what led them to say, "Tell us more about the Father." (see Jn. 14:8) That is, tell us more about the One who requires all the sacrifices and the priestly intercession. "Jesus, could God the Father be like You?" You remember Christ's stunning reply, "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father. And as for the whole matter of intercession, I am the one who gave you that whole system. I gave it to you Myself because you needed it. Go back and read the cry of the people when they were so scared at the foot of Sinai. But the time has come, My friends here in the upper room, for Me to tell you plainly there is really no need for this." Then comes the verse that maybe is the most ignored one in the Bible and often read in quite another way. Look at John 16:25,26 (Phillips). Jesus was here speaking to His friends (and you can talk plainly to your friends). "I have been speaking to you in parables--but the time is coming to give up parables and figures and tell you plainly about the Father. When that day comes, you will make your requests to Him in My name, for I need make no promise to plead to the Father for you, for the Father Himself loves you." Goodspeed translates it saying, "There is no need for Me to intercede with the Father for you, for the Father loves you Himself." You remember the words of Christ in John 14:9. "He who has seen Me has seen the Father."

Think of the implications of this! There was no one standing between God and His friend Abraham. There was no one between God and His friend Moses. For three and a half years there was no one between God and the disciples. Who stood between God and Judas as the Creator knelt and washed His betrayer's dirty feet? *Even though Judas had passed the point of no return, there still was no need for anyone to stand between him and his God.*

If we are still afraid of God, then it is good to know we have a Friend between. But Who is that Friend? You remember the words of Thomas in the upper room? John 20:28 (RSV),

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"Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

This is so little to say about something that is behind all 66 books, and of such enormous consequence. This says so much about the quality of life in the hereafter. It says so much about whether or not we really will be free. If you are still afraid of God, I have good news for you. God has made provision for your forgiveness, and He has provided a Friend to stand between you and our just and holy God. But may I say with all deference, that means you still need emergency measures.

But in the larger view of all 66 books, the great controversy view, there is far better news, infinitely better news. There is no need to be afraid of God. God is forgiveness personified. There is no need for anyone to stand between our Heavenly Father and His most wayward child. The Friend who came to win us back to God is none other than God Himself.

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## ***Conversations About God - Tape 11B***

Venden: "Most of the Adventist lifestyle has traditionally stemmed from guidelines from Ellen White's writings--enlarging the understanding of the Decalogue. Many of her writings sound arbitrary and legalistic, and other passages are beautiful. Do you just avoid the unpleasant, legalistic areas? How can you always understand the setting?"

Maxwell: Ah, that's very fair. If one has been accustomed to doing that in the Bible, one is ready to do it with Ellen White. But if you're accustomed to going here a little and there a little in the Bible, you might do the same with Ellen White. But you have any uneasy feeling if you've done that. If you've got many skeletons in your Biblical closet, you're going to be very ill at ease. But if you're accustomed to looking at places in the Bible where it says, you know, that women shouldn't speak in church, and it's better not to marry--well, you can if you can't control yourself, you know; and you're used to putting those things in context, then you're used to doing it with Ellen White.

And then I find that if I were to compare Ellen White with the scriptures, she poses far less problems than the Bible does. I mean, if Ellen White had ever said that gluttonous children were to be stoned; or that illegitimate children were to be banished from the camp for ten generations; or that we should give up this idea of joining the Medical Cadet Corp in the next war--we should go to battle, and kill the women and the children and the babies, and leave alive nothing that breathes--we'd have a little difficulty with Ellen White. She said nothing like that. She's easy, compared with scripture.

But I don't think we can skirt around the difficult passages. Often the difficult ones are the most eloquent ones, like the Levite and his concubine. In the full setting of the book of Judges, in the full setting of scripture, that has a very eloquent significance, I believe.

Now, I think she suffers no end from being taken out of context. Like her advice on bicycles, for example. She says that the saints shouldn't waste money on bicycles. And you wonder, how could that possibly be so? So you try to get the documents so you can recreate the setting that was [unintelligible]. Can you recreate the setting?

Well, get a Sears Roebuck Catalog of about the same date. And you'll find in there, that the bicycle with two wheels was just being developed then. You know, some were still using the old penny farthing as they called it over in England. And it was very expensive. The best Yukon Gents' bike was \$56.50. The ladies' best bike was \$56.00. It didn't have a cross-bar, I guess, in the middle for the fifty cents.

You say, "Well, that's pretty cheap, isn't it?" Well, read on a little further over, and you'll find the furniture section. And you go from the cheap furniture to the most expensive furniture. And you come to a page of the most super, tufted, quilted furniture— a whole sitting room, \$14.65. A dining room chair, 37 cents! A sewing machine - Sears Roebuck's very best, cabinet and all, you know - about \$11.00.

A bicycle, \$56.50! You could furnish your whole house for it. And Ellen White says, "My poor husband worked so hard for 25 cents to mail the Signs; how can we go out and buy these bicycles?" Besides, they were such a rage for awhile. They were forming, you know, these leather jacket clubs, you know! [Laughter] And they were roaring around the country on these bicycles, you know! They didn't have motorbikes. They were pedaling around, you know, for all they were worth.

And like Dr. Wolfgill said once, that they used to be worried about all the people riding their bikes so recklessly through the PUC campus, breaking the speed limit on their bicycles, you

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see. It's all relative. Now a few years later, if you get the 1902 Sears Roebuck Catalog, the price of bicycles is gone way down.

What she said about cameras— you ought to look up the camera section. What she says about drugs— look at the drug section. Here's Dr. Rose's French Arsenic Wafers, "guaranteed to make you beautiful. Do you have pimples? Are you too fat? Are you too thin? Dr. Rose's French Arsenic Wafers guaranteed to make you beautiful and give you a perfectly pellucid" - what's the word I want?

Venden: What was that word you just used?

Maxwell: Pellucid. [Laughter] Don't you want to be pellucid? What was it? Complexion, that's the word I want.

Venden: "Complexion" I understand, "pellucid" I don't!

Maxwell: It's almost transparent, it's so beautiful and clear. And then it says underneath, "If you're worried about using arsenic, in our product it is perfectly safe, guaranteed to be absolutely safe. Our best German scientists have tried it out." Then underneath it says, "Do beware of quack medicine and quack doctors," and so on.

A little further over, for men who are losing their vitality, there's the Heidelberg Electric Belt. And you have to determine how much voltage you men need. And all this sort of thing!

And underneath there again it says, "Beware of quacks and those who will suggest remedies that are not dependable; what we offer you is the best in the world. And it's absolutely guaranteed. Money back. It will do it for you."

And there's a headache cure, there's a Mexican headache cure. It'll probably kill you! It says, "Guaranteed to cure any headache in twenty minutes." I think so! And then there's the liquor cure; there's the drug cure. Everything we have difficulty with, they could do with a pill in Sears Roebuck.

And Ellen White says it might be better to stay home. Don't even go to the doctor. Don't use this medication. In her day -- I mean, it was hazardous to use those things!

So if you put Ellen White in her setting, she's way ahead of her time. The dress that she advised, was way ahead of its time. It was a little odd at first, but finally there was a little better taste there. She said to the women, "Don't get your dresses down, down and closer to the ground." Remember, they were on the ground. Her message was, "Get them up, up, nine inches from the ground at least." Not down, but up!

So she needs to be read in the setting. You read the etiquette books of the day, and then read Ellen White's advice. She was a liberated lady. Just remarkable.

You read the rules for chaperonage in those days. My, was it strict! And there's even a section in the etiquette books of the day, on how a young man should propose to the woman of his choice. And you realize how quaint and old-fashioned things were in the day that Ellen White wrote. Then all of a sudden, relatively, she's a very free spirit. And it's just a shame that people don't know that.

You ought to see how proposals were done those days. It says that the young man should write a little note, and he would leave it where his intended would find it. And he would say, supposing a certain young man should spy a certain young woman, and he should be greatly attracted to her, etc., etc. What do you suppose perhaps that young woman would do? I mean, it's all totally indirect! And then you leave it where she might find it. And she would write another little note

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just as indirect, in hopes that you might find it. And so you would make progress along the way.

And when you read that, my! She was a modern lady in her day. And it's a pity that that's not known.

Venden: What you're saying, How can you always understand the setting? You're saying it may take some work.

Maxwell: It may take some work, but it's there. [. . ? . ] Sears Roebuck catalog. . .

Venden: It's an important thing to do.

Maxwell: In the Inland Shopping Center, you can get 18— by 1897 and 1902, and you'll see even the progress that was made as the price of bicycles began to drop. But the drug section in both is just devastating. The poison that was peddled by Sears Roebuck. It's incredible!

Venden: Judging from the handwriting, this is the same individual who asks, In getting a clearer picture of the Old Testament, what's the best study method? Just reading it through time and time again?

Maxwell: Well, you could. But some things do require a re-creation of the historical setting. For example, you keep reading every time you go through, that "Thou shalt not boil a kid in its mother's milk." And you say, What could possibly be wrong with that? And you could do what some of our very devout Jewish friends have done, and used that text as a basis for the practice of Kosher; that you do not mix dairy products with meat.

What is intended there? You can buy books now that try to fill in the historical background for many things like this in the Old Testament. It was suspected by scholars — I forget whether we ever discussed that prohibition. Did we at an earlier time? -- It was suspected by scholars that probably the Canaanites boiled kids in their own mothers' milk as part of a fertility cult rite. And in the Old Testament it's suggested that the Canaanites worshiped fertility. But there was no other extra-Biblical documentation for this.

But then in more recent years this was discovered. And they have found written records of Canaanite fertility cult worship which was so attractive to the Jews. Which is why I think that could have been one of the meanings and usages of circumcision in the day, as I mentioned earlier.

And if you get an English translation of those documents that were found, you will find that boiling a kid in its mother's milk was part of fertility cult worship. And I think it was God saying, "Look, you know the trouble you have when you remember when what's going on up in those mountains. Just don't do those things. You're having trouble with drinking? Then don't walk boldly by the saloon. You're having trouble with smoking? Don't have a pack of cigarettes on every ledge in the house. I mean, get rid of these things. So don't boil a kid in its mother's milk. Try in every way to forget what's going on up in those hills."

The prophets talk about the orgies in the hills. Over and over again they speak of them. It's not very tasteful to mention. Though the Bible mentions briefly, it mentions frequently. And if you have the courage, you can get the records and read what they did.

And then when you read the prophets saying, "Don't look toward those mountains; don't desire to go up there" — but here Hosea says, "The leaders of my people in the promised land are up in those mountains sacrificing with the cult prostitutes" — you understand what it means. It was real. Not just spiritual; it was real. It was actual.

And then that's help with just "boiling a kid its mother's milk." But there are so many other things

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all through the Bible. There have never been more books available — illustrated books, even illustrated encyclopedias — on Biblical backgrounds as in recent years. Really very fine.

So there are sets one could get to help.

Venden: I suppose the Adventist Bible Commentary may have one very serious attempt along that same [line].

Maxwell: Very much so. Unfortunately, it's only seven volumes. You say, Well, that's rather large." There are much bigger ones than that. Much, much bigger ones than that.

Venden: In connection with the subject this evening, this observation— and with it I suppose a question. With the interpretation that you suggested regarding the law, could not theologians of all churches agree that the law was added as an emergency measure? Then what objections would there be for theologians — say, not Seventh-day Adventists — what objections would they have to this?

Maxwell: You mean to the idea that the law was an emergency measure to bring us back to Christ?

Venden: Yes.

Maxwell: Well, you know where the rub really comes. It isn't with the idea the law was given to help us behave and bring us to Christ so we'd learn to behave better and accept the message of salvation; and even learn to love, to love God and to love our fellow men. Everybody's for that. You know where the rub comes. With respect to the Sabbath. Interesting enough.

Now, how can you fit the Sabbath in? That's why last week we worked on that. Is the Sabbath an exception to the rule? Here we do have an arbitrary test of our obedience. And outside of the whole great controversy, it's hard to explain it in any other way. And that's why we settle for it.

We say, "Well, it's a beautiful, arbitrary test. There's no reason for it whatever, except that God wants to see if we'll do what we're told, whether it makes sense to or not." Which I think defeats everything He's trying to reveal to us.

But if the Sabbath is put in the whole setting, I believe it isn't possible to keep the other nine without the evidence for the truth about our God, that is the basis for keeping the other nine. So the Sabbath reminds us of the means by which we can become people who love God and love their fellow men like that. So the Sabbath has a very important function.

The interesting thing, is that so many who want to get rid of the Sabbath commandment, feel that we're legalistic in keeping it, and they're non-legalistic in giving it up. The interesting thing is, usually their conception of the plan of salvation is totally legalistic. And that's why the law's demands having been satisfied, they don't have to worry about it anymore. And we who keep the Sabbath in the true way, are the ones who are not legalistic.

Now, many will find that hard to believe at first, and we'll have to say it over and over in many and various ways. But most people who say the law has come to its end and you don't have to obey it anymore, say that because they had a very legalistic view of God's use of law in the first place. And sin is breaking the rules. And you know what the sentence is. You go to Hell. But Jesus has paid the legal penalty; so you can be forgiven and you don't have to go to Hell. And since you're all paid up, you don't need to worry about the law anymore. Total legalism.

They say, "No, that's not legalism! I'm free from the law." No, their very expression of "free from the law" is legalism. You see, what matters is legal standing with our God. As sinners they've been in bad legal standing; now because of what Jesus has done, they're in good legal standing. And that makes them feel good. They feel good, why? Because they're in good legal

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standing. Because as legalists, they're glad they're in good legal standing.

You tell them they're legalists, and they get very upset. But that's legalism. The essence of legalism is preoccupation with your legal standing. And no matter what you offer God to improve your legal standing, if that's what you're concerned with, you're a legalist. If you take Him blood of bulls and goats to improve your legal standing, we all say, "That's legalism." If you take Him your own works of obedience to improve your legal standing, you say you're a legalist.

If you take Him the blood of His own Son to improve your legal standing, you say you're not a legalist? You are still a legalist, and abusing the blood of the Son of God. Using it as if it had some power apart from its meaning.

So it is interesting that actually the term "legalism," which is so often used by our good friends - some of our best ones - you know, to describe us Adventists, primarily because we keep the Seventh day. That term "legalist" should be very, very carefully and courteously redirected.

However, how many of us too, are preoccupied with our legal standing? And therefore we deserve also to be called legalists. That's the thing. Somewhere in our twenty, I wish we could go into that little more, so that we would all be invited to discover whether we think we're legalists or not.

Do you regard yourself as a legalist? Nobody's going to say "yes" to that. Would anybody like to say what a legalist is? I believe a legalist is a person who is preoccupied with his legal standing with his God because He's God. He's too [also] preoccupied with the legal standing of His children. He is a legalistic God.

And you say, "But He's been so good. He's provided a way out of this. He has arranged for a legal satisfaction, and the payment of a legal penalty, so that legal standing may be legally adjusted." And the whole thing is legal all the way through.

And Jesus never talked that way. Never at all in the Gospels. He said, "Come to Me. Believe Me. Trust Me. Stay." And He told the prodigal son, to explain the plan of salvation. Some would say, "No, He really didn't deal with the real essence of the problem there. And of course He couldn't, because He was not a trained theologian."

And I say, Jesus portrayed the clearest representation of the plan of salvation that every could be portrayed before the universe. And the prodigal son was His masterpiece there. All you have to do is come home. Even if you don't know God very well, head for home. Even if you're heading home because you're hungry and you're sick, and you don't like pigpens any longer, and you think it would be nicer to be home with your Heavenly Father, head for home.

And you'll be murmuring to yourself your speech, because you think your Father is a legalist. So on the way, you are planning it, you know, the way people sometimes do testimonies. And you're going to say, "Father, I don't expect You to do this. I mean, it really couldn't be in Your heart to do this. Just make me as Your hired servant." And then you bump into your Dad. And you realize you're not nearly home yet. He's been waiting, coming down the road all that time. You know, a marvelous story!

And the son repented after he discovered that his father had fully forgiven him and already wanted him to come home, before he started his speech. In fact, he never finished his speech. He never finished it. The father said, "Look, that's enough. Let's get home and get cleaned up; and we'll throw the biggest party we've ever had."

And you know who the legalist was — the one who was in good and regular standing. And he said, "That's not fair; justice has not been well served. There will be chaos in the community. Somebody is going to have to die around here."

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No, nothing mentioned like that. The father said to the older brother, "I'm thrilled to have your younger brother home. Aren't you thrilled too?" "No," the older brother said, "that's unjust; that's not fair."

I hope the loyal angels don't feel that way about things when we turn up. They don't; because they've seen the truth, and they will be thrilled to have us come. And they know what it takes. And they know the kind of people Christ can defend as safe to save, and those He cannot. They understand that now, and there's not a shred of legalism in the whole thing. It's for real! Do we have new hearts? Do we have right spirits? Are we willing to walk humbly before our God? Are we willing to listen? Do we like the way He runs the universe? Would we like Him to go on running the universe that way for eternity? It's for us. We genuinely prefer it, and are willing to do anything to fit in.

He says, "Good. You're a good candidate for the Kingdom. You have a great deal to learn, but that's not the problem. Are you willing to learn?"

So the thief on the cross could be saved. All the thief did was come home. He didn't do anything more, did he? He didn't even pay his back tithe. He may have died with all kinds of forbidden foods in his stomach. Who knows? That wasn't allowed to stand in the way. He'll learn some of those things in the hereafter.

Lots of saints will have many a surprise in the hereafter. I know if Luther makes it, the menu's going to really, really — it may be distressing for awhile. You know, he was used to near beer. Lemonade? Orange juice? Maybe carrot juice? He'd say, "Don't you have any beer?" You know.

And Abraham will be looking around the table; and here is the fruit salad and all those other lovely things that some of us enjoy. And he will say, "I know what I like is veal; I know the Lord does. I served it to Him once. He said it was delicious." So.

And then Peter will be looking around the table, you know. I don't know that he cared for veal so much, but he loved fish. And he knows the Lord loves fish; because the Lord created fish for breakfast when He said farewell to the General Conference Committee, you remember, that time - served fish. And He created fish. He could have created anything: Ruskets, prune juice, you know. [Laughter] But He created fish for breakfast.

Can you see all those saints around that long table, looking for something on the menu that they like?

The Lord says, "Up here, We don't eat these things," you know.

"Well, I don't want to stay!"

The Lord would say, "Well, how did you get in?" You know. It's not going to happen like that, is it? It really isn't.

So if Luther doesn't arrive, a man of strong conviction, if he doesn't arrive willing to listen, then he won't be there. None of us will be there if we're not willing to accept correction. Including theologians.

If we're not willing to have the Lord take two of us aside who may have argued over something for many years, and we say, "Good, now we'll find out who's right - you or I." And be ready for the Lord to say, "Actually, you both were wrong." And be willing to accept this, you know, and go on from there -- then we're not safe to have around. That's "Blessed are the meek," you see, and the humble. They are the ones who are safe to save.

Venden: All right, beautiful. Once again, define what a legalist is. I think that's such an important thing.

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Maxwell: To me, a legalist is a person who is preoccupied with his legal standing with his God. And what has led him to that, is the kind of Person he believes God to be. So the remedy for legalism is the truth about God.

Venden: All right. Now, let's go to your questions, live from the floor. Here's a hand right over here.

Comment: I wanted to bring up the point just a little while ago when you were saying all these good things that happen to us; isn't that what the Sabbath does for us? We were wondering what the Sabbath does for us. It brings us to Him every week so that we can be renewed, so that our minds can be renewed?

Maxwell: Like you said.

Comment: . . . Can we become in this close relationship. The people who don't keep the Sabbath, have a problem with their health. Many times because they're not taking the time out to have this renewal.

Maxwell: Yes, among the many benefits of the Sabbath, are the fact that for those twenty-four hours you have a perfect alibi for not doing certain other mundane things. Isn't it a lovely feeling?

Comment: . . . Friday night comes, and as the sunset your mind is freer; you don't think of your worldly problems. You don't think of having to worry about cleaning the rest of the house because [2 or 3 unintelligible words] already. And you're just totally free.

Maxwell: If you promised your wife to vacuum the house, and you didn't get it done, when the sun goes down, you say, "Hey, get off my back! Sun's gone down. You can't . . ." [Laughter] So . . .

Comment: . . . it makes me feel this way.

Maxwell: Yes. No, I like the way you're putting it; very much so! No, it's not that we are so designed that we need to rest every seventh day, as I mentioned before. Because if we're so designed to rest every seventh day from our Creation, we should be keeping Thursday, because we were created on Friday. So it obviously isn't that kind of a cycle.

But the Lord in His wisdom, decided that from then on, every seventh day from that one that He celebrated, with the universe looking on — and we observed as visitors; that's all we were; visitors, that first one — that it would be meaningful; so it would not seem arbitrary, you see. And then He added all those other meanings we discussed last week: the Exodus, the Crucifixion -- all those things connected with the seventh-day Sabbath.

So it might be a very busy day, and yet a very inspiring and uplifting day, to be sure. It's a pity if it's a day like every other day in the week. And around a medical center, that's a hazard. It really is. I think that those whose turn it is to be on duty on Sabbath really have to perform a special act of discipline, to make sure it isn't just an ordinary day.

And I worry about students who say, "Well I have to study all week; the only day I'm free to work is Sabbath." You know, God's not going to be angry with them. You know, the day is ours. And they need the money terribly; and yet they're paying a price for it. And I wouldn't want to criticize; but they would really have to go out of their way to keep that day special, or they lose. They lose the benefits.

See, I believe God will not condemn us if we don't pray. He won't condemn us if we don't read the Bible. He won't condemn us if we don't keep Sabbath. We just lose. That's all. So it's not a legal obligation at all. So what you say introduces a whole lot of nice things you could say about

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the Sabbath.

So we should really rejoice in it. Every gloomy Sabbath-keeper lends support to Satan's charges. We're going to do it if it kills us, you know. Like I remember L. L. Caviness) used to say at PUC — some of you knew him. A man came up to him and said, "You've convinced me about health reform, Brother Caviness. From now on I will practice health reform if it kills me." And the tension might do it. The stress might do it. That doesn't make sense, you know. But some people almost approach the Sabbath that way.

And as I may have mentioned last time, I am so pleased my parents went out of their way to make Sabbath special in ways that were appropriate to children, and then as we grew up. I have always enjoyed the Sabbath. I bet you have in your house.

Venden: Yes.

Maxwell: Always.

Maxwell: Sabbath was always very, very pleasant. Mother was so good at that. Dad was gone seven months of the year traveling around the world with his responsibilities. But Mother always made Sabbath interesting. We always went to Sabbath School and Church, always studied our lesson seven times.

Of course, when I was small they had a nice ribbon as a reward for studying the lesson seven times, which motivated us. One year was red, I remember; I think two was green. But I noticed saints in their seventies, you know, picking up their ribbons because they were gold, you know, by the time you got up there. And some people had Bibles just full of ribbons. It's like wearing your phylactery. "Look at me; I haven't missed my lesson for seventy years." But now, that's not fair. They were pretty. And some of us need motivation like that. I wanted my ribbon at the end of the quarter.

I haven't had a ribbon for years, and years, and years. Now I do it for other reasons. I like getting ready for the lesson. I'll go home tonight, and spend two or three hours getting ready for tomorrow morning. I enjoy doing it.

So, as we grow older, we substitute other motivations. But the motivation should be appropriate; children on up.

Comment: As you were mentioning tonight — we were talking about the sacrificial system. And it seems like that God would see that people would get used to killing animals, and eventually it would turn into the mess that it did. It just seems to me like that was an awful lot of carnage. And I guess I just don't see the reason behind the sacrificial system.

Maxwell: Often the people multiplied sacrifices more than He asked them to, you know. Almost matching the Aztecs when they might kill ten thousand people. And you remember, how they'd offer their hearts to the gods down there. The sacrifices were not that frequent, as sometimes people turn them into. But even, say, just one is bad enough! It seems to me, that in view of Satan's lie and God's warning, and the tendency of Adam and Eve to go along with Satan, it was essential that God impress them that sin will lead to the serious consequence that He had warned.

The time was not right for Jesus to come and demonstrate. So the first thing He said was, "Go and take a lamb" -- such an innocent little creature -- "and kill it." And so Adam got this little animal. And I don't know whether he picked up something to hit it with. How hard did he know to hit it? And it didn't die. And he hit it a little harder. You know. He hadn't seen blood before, maybe.

The first time I ever killed anything - a small boy in England - I threw a stone at a bird carelessly,

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and I hit it; and it died. It made me sick. It's what you're saying, you know. It would take me quite awhile to become a surgeon; get accustomed to what a lot of you folk are used to seeing. I'm doing better than when I came here twenty-three years ago. Even watched Dr. Wareham do open heart surgery years ago. It was so very wonderful.

But I can imagine Adam turning to God and saying, "I can't go through with this thing. It's making me too sick." And God would say, "That's just what I always hope will happen. I hope you're always sick when you do it."

If it had been the case, I don't think He would have added all the others. He added one thing after another after another. There would have been no need for circumcision if they'd maintained a right relationship with Him. So God added that. There would have been no need to give the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai or write them on the tables of stone, if only they had heeded God's advice earlier on. This was an emergency measure.

Those of you who know Ellen White well, you know I just quoted her in what I just said. She says, there would have been no need for Sinai, no need to write the Ten Commandments on the tables of stone, no need for circumcision. But God added these things. And then after He'd given the Ten Commandments, there would have been no need for all the multiplied rules and regulations that followed, if only they'd heeded the basic principles in the Decalogue. So you're right, it became common to them; so He added more, and He added more.

It's like some modern music. Someday there's going to be a limit to the volume. It gets louder, and louder, and louder, you know. Like so many things in life, we become jaded; and so we have to seek more excitement and more excitement. That's a real problem for God.

It's sad, though, that when He finally came and gave the ultimately dramatic demonstration, who cared? Who went to see? The disciples even slept in Gethsemane. And only one went to Calvary. It's incredible! That was the ultimate sacrifice; and they weren't interested enough to watch. Of course, they had reasons that disturbed and disappointed and depressed them.

No, I believe if we don't like it, He disliked it a hundred times more. But could you think of a better way to do it? Could you think of another way? It's significant, I think, to run through the Old Testament and see the growing understanding of the warning that sin results in death. The first animal was the lamb. The first death was Abel. And the angels were watching, you know. They had never seen this death.

Had anybody seen the death that is a result of sin? They hadn't seen it. And they probably assumed that the lamb was not it, although they could have said, "Is that what You mean? You're going to kill them the way Adam is killing the lamb?"

And He'd say, "No, that's not the meaning; wait awhile."

"Well, when Cain killed Abel, is that what You mean?" Well, but how about Sodom and Gomorrah? Is that what You mean; if Your children don't obey, You'll burn them?" Or, of course, "How about the Flood sooner on? If they don't obey You, You'll drown them?"

And year after year, more and more to these deaths. And some of them were very LARGE deaths, you know, many, many people. The angels would turn to God and say, "Is that what You mean? Is that what You mean?" And so on down through the years, "No, no, no, no."

Until Gethsemane and Calvary. "Is that what You mean?" "Yes. That's the first time anybody has ever died the death that is the result of sin and My giving him up to reap the consequences."

And it never needs to happen again; but it will at the end of the millennium. The death of the wicked at the end of the millennium is a total waste. It's a total waste. Oh, it will confirm the truth, but we don't need that. It's all settled. The universe is settled. That's what make that so

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sad. An absolutely meaningless death at the end of the millennium. If we have already accepted the meaning of why Jesus had to die, we don't need to see it again and again at the end.

So if you could think of a better way. Like people say, "I wish the Bible were made a little clearer." That's an interesting point too. God in His wisdom let it develop this way. And it came out the way He knew it would, by His design, with all its problems, it's many and varied descriptions. This is what He decided was the best way. Could you think of a better way?

Comment: It just seems like there are so few places in the Bible that really speak clearly. You know, it just seems like there are so many confusing turnoffs along the way.

Maxwell: Well, it was only when He had His friends around Him that He could talk so clearly; most of the time He didn't have people who would listen so He could do this.

Venden: All right, this gentleman here.

Comment: This is not a question - just a comment. And that was that no matter what gift the Lord — as I've studied and seen — no matter what gifts He had given to them, whether it be as the Sabbath, or an emergency measure, you find that the devil always finds a way to make it go wrong, to misuse it. And so what you say is true. It seems like no matter how good it was, you can always find fault, because Satan always found a way to use it.

Maxwell: I don't think you could name anything that he hasn't. The Sabbath. Our ability to have little people in our own image, you name it. Everything's been abused! The sacrifices were particularly abused, it's true.

It would be much better if it had been the simple things; still sad, but simple. God would much, I believe, have preferred to go that way. But to impress them adequately, He had to go to these larger measures. Like the still, small Voice had to be magnified into thunder and lightning. He didn't like doing that, but he was willing to do it.

There is a consistency to this that encourages one. It's as if that got out of hand as far as God was concerned. He knew. I think He wished that some would look on and be revolted by it, and raise your question, and say, "When could this thing be terminated?"

Venden: Sharon had a question right here.

Comment: Mine goes just a little bit further on the first question that Pastor Venden asked. I wish you'd explore a little bit more, the difference between emergency measures and something that you carry on as a law, and how we determine the difference? I remember the my own rearing in an Adventist family as the daughter of a minister, in fact. And often being told that the things that I didn't understand, that it just took more faith, and it was just sort of a blind faith. When it was law, or a principle, or something that Ellen White had said or was in the Bible that I didn't understand. I didn't have enough faith to believe it. And now we're finding that possibly circumcision did have a medical reason. Why the Jews for years had less cancer as a result of what we thought was circumcision. Now, maybe that's no longer being true; there were things that Ellen White said that now no longer possibly are true, be it bicycles or whatever.

Do we have something that we can look at today; is it weight of evidence; or what do we use today to determine what's a good law to keep now and what was . . . ?

Maxwell: Yes, the weight of evidence is the only way to go. You know, we hear a lot about ministers' sons; it's nice to have ministers' daughters get involved. Ah hum. Good for you.

On the matter of circumcision; if it had continuing value for the reasons given in the Bible, why was it stopped? Paul says, "Don't do it anymore." Now, you can do it for other reasons if you like, but don't do it for ceremonial reasons. It had become more a curse than a blessing. It had

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become almost a monument to the rejection of the Good News about God. So it had become useless to them.

Well, some would say, "The Sabbath has become useless, so we shouldn't keep it either." That's why the Sabbath is so surrounded with meanings of all the things He's asked us to do; it has so much usefulness; so much value. You couldn't say, "Well, it has no function anymore."

But if you suggest that He gave it for hygienic reasons, then why would it be stopped in the first century? So I doubt that was the original reason.

Comment: Dr. Maxwell, the evidence today is against the theory that it has anything to do with cancer.

Maxwell: OK.

Comment: That's been done away with.

Maxwell: Ah, thanks for speaking from the back there.

Comment: [several unintelligible words] I knew that. My question is basically, do we use weight of evidence [. . . ? . .] law.

Maxwell: Hopefully always. Yeah, and that's why we started out the beginning of our series as we did: All God asks of us is trust, but He does not ask us to trust Him as a stranger. He offers evidence, and it has to be adequate weight of evidence. It has to add up and make sense. He does not ask us to take these leaps in the dark that have been mis-called faith. I mean, the whole world is strewn with the wreckage of people who have been leaping in the dark. I mean, you leap in all directions. And unfortunately, the appeal of much religion today is toward this faith that is a leap in a dark. "Don't ask for evidence; you'll just destroy faith!"

Comment: I felt very much that way. I go home to my own church, right now, and I become very discouraged because, you know, the idea of the blood of Christ saving me is opposed to what's going on right now, you know, when I'm a little bit more enlightened area [?]; and it's very much that way, and it's very discouraging.

Maxwell: Of course, if you take the Biblical, God-like approach, you'll meet them where they are, lead them no faster than they are able to follow, and not turn things upside down right away. Isn't that true? It is hard to do. You know, if we get impatient, do you suppose God gets impatient trying to wait for us to come along? So you wouldn't want to disturb that needlessly; or take something away and leave a vacuum into which seven worse devils would crowd, you know. So one has to move very gently there.

Venden: Did I see your hand signal here?

Comment: I was wondering - get back to this legalist bit. Under certain circumstances when we repent, could it be a legalistic matter? This isn't too clear, but in my head it is.

Maxwell: Go on; you want to give an example, maybe?

Comment: Well, I throw a stone and break a window; and I'm sorry because I'm caught. So I repent. But I throw a stone and break a window and I repent whether I'm caught or not. I'm worried that I'm not going to get to Heaven, so I better repent, because I want to go to Heaven.

Maxwell: Yes. You have a legalistic problem. You're afraid of God; He's going to get you unless you tell Him you're sorry, and make it genuine. And if He judges it to be genuine, then He will forgive you, and you won't have to go to Hell for this. So that motivates lots of repentance. Not worth a whole lot, although it might get us on the way home, maybe.

Comment: That's what I was thinking, would this nullify repentance, would I still need to repent

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because, okay, I'm all right with God, although I have sinned?

Maxwell: It always seems there are almost levels of repentance. Like the prodigal son. I think repentance started. But when he met his father, and found his father had already forgiven him, then the kindness of his father really led him to full repentance. I almost think repentance will deepen through eternity, you know; as we come to realize how gracious God has been, and how patient with us. And we'll look back and say, "My, if I had known that!"

Comment: [It will be] for a different reason, then.

Maxwell: Yes. There's nothing legalistic about this, and nothing requisite about this. It's just the way it will happen among friends. Children who realize what their Heavenly Father has done for them. I think so. So it's not an arbitrary thing. It's something that - well, in human experience we see it naturally occurring between people.

Last night I had the privilege of presenting the Winnegar Award to someone I admire enormously, Dr. G. T. Anderson. And I have such good feelings toward him, you can't imagine. And if I were to hurt him in some way; I mean, I would be so sorry. You know. And he has difficulty walking these days with his arthritis. And if I were to hurt him in some way, I mean, I wouldn't have to say, "Let me see, do I have to or not? Will I go to Hell if I don't?" Even if I broke his window, I'd want to run up and put it in, you know; I wouldn't want him to get cold. I wouldn't think for a moment whether I have to or not. I'd feel very sorry I caused him inconvenience, caused him pain. And that's a human being.

How about God? The moment the legalistic requirement gets in, it shows we have a ways to go, it seems to me. And freedom comes from getting rid of that.

Comment: [unintelligible comment]

Maxwell: Yes.

Venden: I wonder if you would comment - then we'll go back to Lisa's question. You have touched on some of the perplexing stories in the Bible. Would you say a word more about Achan and that situation as an emergency, and how you might solve the problem created there. How does God look good in that kind of situation?

Maxwell: One thing for sure, the One who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me," must have hated every moment when those rocks reached their target; and even killed the children. Or do you believe God was not so kind in the Old Testament; He also was learning to be a little more gentle? Or was it the Father who ordered the stoning of Achan?

Who led Israel through the wilderness? — I Corinthians 10:4 — but Christ. So Christ is the one, Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, is the One who ordered the stoning of Achan. And you wonder how He could possibly do it.

Now, various alternatives are offered sometimes. One is that, well the man who wrote the story didn't know God very well, and that's why he wrote it up that way. But the moment you say that about the Bible, then anything in the Bible you have difficulty with, is well, the writer probably didn't understand. And I don't know anywhere to stop with that, so I don't like to assume that once.

Is there any other way to approach it? If you read through the Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy record of God's best friend, Moses, we then as you know, come to Joshua.

And the people come to Joshua and they say, "You know, this is the generation after the forty years." The previous generation was so impossible, there was no way God could take them in,

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so He let that generation die off. These are the new ones, who are not one wit better than their forefathers.

And God says, "I'm not taking you into the land of Canaan because you're any better, but it's time for Me to say something about Myself." But they came to Joshua and said, "Joshua, just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you." And his heart sank to his boots: "That's all I'm going to get, is the obedience they gave Moses."

But after that they said, "If anybody will not obey you, let him be put to death!" That's the way they wanted things to be run. Those were harsh days. Life was cheap. You know what they did those days. Now, a little rap on the knuckles doesn't do any good to people who say themselves, "If any of us will not obey, let him be put to death."

Now God, I believe, would much rather have been able to take Achan aside and talk to him and reason this out with him. But that was a day for thunder and lightning and earthquake. And God not only had the family stoned to death; He had His own Sabbath-keeping, tithe-paying, health-reformers stone them to death.

Could you do that? Could you take a man, a member — Let's say the Church Board has just discovered that somebody has absconded with some of the funds donated last week. And this sort of thing cannot be permitted in the University Church. With five thousand members, this could really spread.

And so to make an example, tomorrow morning after the sermon, the pastor will announce: We will assemble out here on the lawn. And the deacons have prepared piles of bricks for us. And Brother Jones, and Mrs. Jones, and all the little Jones, and all their pets -- remember the animals are brought out — they're all lined up at one end. I don't know whether the pastor would offer prayer first. Then at a signal, we'd all start throwing these missiles at the family. Who would you aim at? I think most would be inclined to throw them at Achan first. But then there's Mrs. Achan. And what about the children? I have a line drawing at home of the stoning of Achan; and it shows two elders about to drop a huge rock on his head. And they look so pious doing in this man who had disobeyed, you know. No tears going down their cheeks as they did it. I mean, righteousness must prevail! Justice must be done!

And so the children raise the question: How could God order the stoning not only of Achan, but his wife and his children? Especially the children. As I mentioned to you another time, the children don't have too much difficulty with the grown-ups being stoned. It's the children that bothers them. They think that grown-ups probably have deserved it by now. But the children; they can't understand, you see.

And so I ask the teachers, What answer do you give? And the answer they give me back is, "Well, probably Achan's sons helped him dig the hole." And I would have to say to that, When my Dad said "Dig," I dug! Because he was visibly present. And I didn't know where God was, but I knew where my father was. And they say, "Well, they shouldn't have done it; so they were all taken out and stoned."

The whole thing is an emergency, a horrible emergency. And yet it required something that severe, that dramatic, to make any impression on the people. Now, were they overimpressed? What were they doing a few days later?

And so I would want a lot of parallels to this running through the Bible. You know, Sinai was overwhelming. Or was it? You know, you think of the earthquake, and the fire, and the lightning, and the thunder, and God's voice even. And they were absolutely terrified. How soon did they get over it? Amazing capacity to get over such a thing. And they were dancing drunk and naked in a fertility cult right, around the golden calf.

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So God had to be that dramatic on Sinai to get their attention. The stoning of Achan, she-bears, many, many other things like this. And who would hate it the most? But God, who prefers to speak in a still, small voice and says, "Suffer little children to come unto Me."

Now, what happened to Achan's family? Ellen White makes the comment that there was a spirit of rebelliousness in the whole family. She makes that comment. Nevertheless, I like to leave room open; who knows what may happen to all of them? We don't know. Let's wait until the resurrection.

Like the firstborn in Egypt as we mentioned before, who says they died because they were bad? They died because they were the firstborn. Who knows in that family? Who knows in the Flood? We don't have to say that.

This was a very painful and terrible example, so that the people would now trust God to take them into Canaan. Because the Canaanites were a highly armed people, the Jews - it isn't like in the Six Day War when they could have taken on most of the rest of the world the way they showed such skill and had marvelous armament, and so on — when they entered Canaan, they were absolutely vulnerable, sitting ducks, for those well-armed Canaanites.

And God said, "If you don't trust Me enough to go My way - let Me do it My way," — and you remember what they did around Jericho? It was God's way — "you're never going to get in at all." And immediately they started going their own rebellious way. And God said, "I'm going to have to take a position right now. And I'm sorry to have to motivate you with fear. But you go in My way, or we'll not get in there at all."

And I think that's why Ananias and Sapphira died when they cheated with their offering. The early church, how could it survive? Look at the opposition. Paul's opposition - Saul's, you know - just developing. He set out to destroy the Christian Church. And God said, "You're just a little people. If you don't trust Me enough, really trust Me, I'll never get this church underway."

And here these two folk cheated, and in a very bad way. "Lied to the Holy Spirit," is the way it says you know. And they died on the church floor. And it made the members afraid. And it made the offerings pick up. And that was great. But God was sad. That's a miserable motivation. God loves a cheerful giver; not people who have just watched Ananias and Sapphira die, and put an extra dollar in the offering. God ran the risk with them.

You know, the Third Angel's Message - our last message to the world - is a terrifying message. God must hate to have to do that, but who's even listening to the thunder and lightening of the Third Angel's Message? Now, let alone, "Blessed are the meek." They won't even listen to, "And you will be consumed in sulphurous flames, and the smoke of your torment will ascend," you know. That's the Third Angel's Message. And who's taking that seriously?

So I believe it was part of the emergency measures necessary. And if we hate it, God hated it far, far more than we. Does that correspond[?] with your explanation?

Venden: Thank you, thank you Graham.

Comment: You talked forgiveness. I'd be interested in hearing, if forgiveness is not, you know, wiping off my black marks against me, what exactly is the process of forgiveness?

Maxwell: Well, what may actually happen depends on your attitudes and your conception of God; and whether you have a legalistic relationship or another relationship. This could vary a good deal. But something's gone wrong between you, and you don't feel good about it. You may even be scared. And the reason why you feel so guilty is, you know what happens to people who do bad things like that!

So lots of things could motivate you to say, "Please forgive me; please forgive me."

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Now, what you may want to hear is, "OK, I forgive you; you won't have to go to Hell." Or something like that. There could be many, many levels of this. I can remember as a small boy, you know, maybe doing something wrong and saying, "Please forgive me; please forgive me." Because if I were not forgiven, I was spanked. So all I wanted to do was escape being spanked. I didn't really care whether I was forgiven or not! I didn't want this other, you know.

But then as I grew up I realized there were much more important things at stake. It's like saying, "I've smoked, say, five packs a day for twenty-seven years; and I've got terminal lung cancer that's been greatly worsened by that indulgence." (I have to phrase that carefully, because it's just incredible how some supersaints get that dreadful disease! This is a dangerous planet to live on. Even those who have been so disciplined, get these things.) But I'm thinking of the one now, who really has contributed to his serious case. And he says, "God, please forgive me; please forgive me. I mean, You've obviously laid Your hand on me. You're punishing me for my sins."

And God says, "I forgive you." And you say, "Well how come I still have lung cancer?" No, the lung cancer is a consequence there. It's not a punishment at all.

I was going to use an illustration tonight, but I watched the clock going by too fast. Supposing some of you had to keep rat poison in your place. We have a few rats around our house this year! There have been more rodents this year for some reason. And you have to keep this rat poison, which is very dangerous to your children.

So you've told your son, "You stay away from that little green bottle. I've put it on the highest shelf, and I've locked the cabinet. I want you to leave it alone. It's very dangerous. Don't touch it." And sometime later you hear a crash in the garage. And you run out. And there's your boy lying on the garage floor. And there's the bottle; he's obviously drunk some of it.

Now, what does he need? Forgiveness? You say, "Son, I forgive you." And he dies forgiven. Forgiveness does not heal the damage done. He still dies.

Now, if the word was, "That stuff's perfectly OK. In fact, it's delicious. But don't you touch it, or I'll kill you. Do you understand?" So here's your son in the garage, and he's just drunk the stuff. And here comes Dad about to kill him.

And he says, "Please, Dad, I repent; forgive me."

And you say, "OK, I forgive you son."

And he says, "Oh good; you won't have to kill me now." No, that's right!

Sin's not like that. Sin is not breaking the rules. Sin is indulging in something which is very hazardous and very self-destructive. It's like poison.

In the legal model, you see, forgiveness would keep the boy who's drunk the rat poison from dying. In the trust/healing model of the great controversy, there's nothing arbitrary about this thing. Sin is something disorderly and rebellious and wrong that does great damage to us. And even though we be forgiven, we would still die if that were all.

Now, supposing the father would say, "Son, I forgive you but I see you're still dying. I'll try something else. Let me drink it." So the father drinks it. What's that going to do? They'll both die. It isn't going to do a fig of good, is it?

In the healing model, it would only be valuable if the father could not persuade his son how dangerous it is to drink the rat poison. And finally the father would say, "It's that important to me son. Come with me to the garage." And the father would drink the rat poison. And the son would watch his father die. And the son would say, "Say, that really is poisonous stuff!"

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Now we only want God to do it because He can take His life back afterwards, you see. After Jesus had offered the demonstration, He took His life back on Sunday. He said, "Any complaints?" "Oh yes," the legalists said, "You should still be dead to pay the penalty."

But no, the universe who loved the trust/healing model said, "You could have come up on Friday. We got the message. Sin is not something legal and arbitrary. Sin is something very wrong, very disorderly. And it results in death. You really died. It was a terrible death. But we didn't see anybody killing You."

I mean, the two models are very much at stake in this thing. So when you raise the question of repentance, it all depends on what model you're thinking within. And there are these two major ways of looking at it.

I think the legal one is appropriate for a beginner, for a child. And the child might be sixty-five. Paul talks about "babes in the truth." But to stay in that model, is to lose so much. And when it becomes a habit to think that way, I think real damage is done. One is certainly retarded. And one certainly misses great good news that could set one free.

I think if one has been legalistic at first; great, let's go on from there. And look back and say, "God, I thank you for all those rules. I might have hurt myself many times, but for those rules. But now I have better reasons."

Like I mentioned my Mother making me brush my teeth. I thought the consequence of not brushing my teeth was, I upset Mother and there were consequences. Now Mother's gone. And I realize that if you don't look after your teeth, you reap consequences even when Mother isn't around, that send you to the dentist. So I'm highly motivated to look after my teeth now.

So it's part of growing up. And the Bible speaks of growing up. We're going to spend a whole evening on that. God Can Completely Heal the Damage Done, is another look at perfection in the larger view of the great controversy. There's nothing arbitrary about perfection. Perfection is not a requirement; it's an offer; in this model, see, it's an offer. And who would say to the doctor, "Say, I know you could make me completely well, but may I settle for fifty percent? I mean, I wouldn't want to be that well," would be absurd.

So when we say, God says "I can make you perfect," you say, "Well, number one, I'm not sure You can; and number two, I'm not sure I want to be that good." That's ridiculous! You say to the Creator, "You offer me perfection. Thank You very much. What do I have to do?" He says, "Cooperate." "You mean I do have to do some things?" "Oh yes, you'll be very busy in this program. But let Me lead you in it." And you'll follow the most helpful program in order to arrive at that destination.

So it's an offer; it's not a requirement. Again, that's in the two models. In the legal model, perfection is a killing doctrine, a heavy burden. Probably produces lots of ulcers and hypertension and other things.

Venden: All right, I see we're at our closing time. And that's a good place to end, with what you've just said. Won't you pray for us as we close?

Maxwell: Our Loving Father in Heaven,

On another Friday evening, another Sabbath, and the Sabbath always reminds us of the long history of the conflict in Thy family, and all the measures Thou hast taken - even extraordinary emergency measures - to take care of the revolt in the family and win us back to trust. Some of the most winsome evidence is to be found in these emergency measures. For surely Thou hast run grave risk of being misunderstood. Especially with an enemy watching, seeking to misinterpret, seeking to becloud our understand. And how successful he has been, seeing the

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Sabbath as a burden, as an arbitrary test; seeing our relationship with Thee as primarily a legal problem, rather than the relationship of a Father to his children; a Father of whom we have no need to be afraid, but a Father, we know, will have to watch us die if we will not come home and let Him heal us.

Surely we have indeed unwittingly or sometimes carelessly allowed ourselves to be influenced by the adversary. And many of us at times may have turned against Thee or away from Thee.

But surely if we have looked elsewhere, there is nothing nearly this good. And so we come back to take another look. And those of us who have looked all through the Sixty-six - what a magnificent picture there. How consistent it is. How consistent the whole picture of the Old Testament, with what Christ revealed in person, if we will only read it all.

So surely one of the best things we could do as a people, facing a time of great confusion and deception, but also faced with the great opportunity of sharing this Good News, is to take this record - the same old record. It needs no changing or editing; but to read it. Not here and there a little and there a little, but all the way through from Genesis, to Matthew, to Revelation; and see this total picture that invites us to look a little higher and see the involvement of the whole universe. And see Thee presiding over the whole family, and the enemy trying to turn us against Thee. And the long and patient way in which Thou hast worked, to win us back without violating our freedom, without making us afraid. Though Lord, we thank Thee for scaring us once in awhile to lead us to be reverent and take Thee seriously, and be quiet, and hear Thee say, "I never want to scare you again."

So lead us in our study. And we thank Thee for the Good News.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

# **CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GOD, Questions #11**

A. Graham Maxwell and Louis Venden

## ***"God's Use of Emergency Measures"***

Venden: This matter of emergency is a very interesting idea, and it started the question, just the title of it, last week with one of the members of our congregation, and I think it is a good question with which to begin this evening. This friend wrote, "Why does an omniscient, omnipresent, omnibenevolent. . .

Maxwell: That's a new one.

Venden: That sounds good. ". . . omnibenevolent God allow Himself to get into a situation where emergency measures are needed?" Emergency does imply that something happened that you really weren't counting on, that you hadn't foreseen? Maybe this is. . .

Maxwell: As if God isn't caught by surprise.

Venden: And this person concludes, "Why didn't God plan better?" How would you answer that?

Maxwell: I think that's why several times in the Bible we have to have things like the wheels within the wheels in Ezekiel which suggests that God is calmly in control amidst all the complexities of human affairs. I think that's the meaning of that vision repeated twice. And books like Daniel and Revelation which suggest that God foresaw all these things. He was not surprised, but in human terms, an emergency has developed for which God has made adequate provision. But that He would allow the emergency to occur, when He has the power to run the universe any way He wants, speaks very well of Him, and speaks volumes about the value of freedom to our God. That He would allow the emergency says that there are higher values even.

Venden: But with the word "emergency," are we saying, are you indicating that God is here doing something to meet a situation which runs the risk, if I am understanding you correctly, that we might misunderstand Him?

Maxwell: He could be misunderstood.

Venden: It could be misread, or it has been misread.

Maxwell: That's right.

Venden: Or the devil might use it.

Maxwell: He has very much.

Venden: To do that very thing.

Maxwell: Yes. So that's why, see, when Jesus came, He said, "I haven't come to destroy the law and the prophets," the Old Testament, "I have come to explain it." That's the meaning of the word fulfill there. And he set out to explain even "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

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There's an emergency measure. They didn't like His explanation. And He gave the explanation on divorce, and they didn't like that one. Remember even His own disciples said, "You're taking away our only escape clause in the marriage in ceremony. If that's the case, it would be better not to marry." And He said, "If you can't promise your wives to stay with them forever, maybe you shouldn't marry." Remember, He said, "Not everybody can take this."

Venden: And they found this a hard saying.

Maxwell: Yes. So Jesus did come to explain because these things could be misunderstood. But look at the prophets that didn't misunderstand. That's what's so impressive.

Venden: You've been speaking about emergency and a time period of emergency. The question is this: "Has the emergency ended yet, or when will it end? Are we still living in emergency?"

Maxwell: Some would think if it's a legal problem, maybe it all ended at the cross, but look around us. We're still in the emergency. I would say the emergency is not over until God's last emergency measure is no longer needed. And I would think of that as the veiling of His life-giving glory, lest we be consumed. You know, Christ took that emergency measure when He came. "He veiled the dazzling splendor of His divinity that human beings might come to know God without being consumed." So not till the end of the millennium, when everything is done and no one will misunderstand, God will unveil His life-giving glory. The last emergency measure is over, and everything will come to a natural conclusion. So we're still looking forward to the end of this.

Venden: I want to go back to . . .

Maxwell: Not that provision hasn't been made to successfully bring it to its end. You can't add to the cross. The provision is totally adequate.

Venden: But we're still in an emergency period.

Maxwell: That's right.

Venden: I want to go back to this matter of the law that you spoke of as one of the main areas of emergency that you wanted to deal with. If I heard you correctly, you were saying that both the ceremonial law and the Ten Commandments, the Decalogue, were emergency measures. Now, I can hear some Seventh-day Adventists saying, "Is that the Adventist position? Haven't we made a distinction and said 'Well, the ceremonial law was added, but the Ten Commandment Law is a transcript of God's character; therefore, it's eternal.'" How would you respond to that?

Maxwell: Yes.

Venden: Now did I understand you correctly that you're saying even the Ten Commandments were also added?

Maxwell: I'm including them all in this particular context. But when one raises the question, "Is this the Seventh-day Adventist view," then one has a right to say, "Who is authorized to say what the Adventist view is?" I will nominate, I think, by all means the most influential person who ever helped shape this movement, and that would be Ellen White. And she was asked, "What

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law was added?" She says, "Both the ceremonial law and the moral code of Ten Commandments." So I feel secure and in very good company when I take this position.

Venden: It seems to me that you illustrated that very well when you spoke about our home situation and with our children and so on, and it was observed that to think that God would have to say, "Now, angels, please don't murder," and that became an emergency measure in a sadly broken world.

Maxwell: Next time when we talk about what the law requires, will be an opportunity to show how the principles in the law are eternal. I hope they are, or this won't be a safe universe to live in.

Venden: The idea that the law is a transcript of God's character will come into next week's study. Let me ask you this: Are there any emergency measures that are still in use?

Maxwell: Yes, I think the third angel's message, for example. That's fire and brimstone. I mean, that's an emergency measure. That's hardly still, small voice language. And then the Sabbath. We need this still. It speaks eloquently to us and reminds us of the truth.

Venden: Well that ties in with another question I wanted to ask. If the Ten Commandments were added, as you have suggested, then will there come a day when the fourth commandment, that is, the Sabbath, we won't have to keep it anymore.

Maxwell: Ah, you see, that all depends whether we think of it as just a legal requirement and a test of obedience. I can see how beautifully Isaiah could have had it in his mind that for eternity we'll keep Sabbath to celebrate the end of the emergency, and we'll keep it as a perpetual reminder of the price that was paid and the evidence that was demonstrated to establish peace and freedom in the family. But it's just because the Sabbath is so eloquent with meaning, just the opposite of arbitrary, that that's the one that would be so worldly observed for all eternity, appeals to me.

Venden: One of our congregation last week raised this question: "Was there no Sabbath before Creation Week? If the commandments are a transcript of God's character, there must have been a Sabbath before Creation of our world, and is not the Sabbath going to be carried into the New Earth and eternity? Will not all Creation keep the same day, the seventh day, the Sabbath day?" Well, we've already touched on that, but say a word more on that.

Maxwell: Well, I'm not an astronomer, but I do know it's a great difficulty even with our own solar system, our own planetary system for this to happen as our planets being all of different size and speeds of rotation here. Don't we have one that turns about once every year? How about keeping Sabbath every seventh year?

Venden: So as far as getting them all coordinated, that wouldn't be practical at all.

Maxwell: I am impressed that the Sabbath was made for humankind. It was made for us where we are in the emergency. Now what God has for His children elsewhere in the universe, we are not told. But Jesus Himself said, "It was made for you." Particularly tailored to this planet of ours.

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Venden: Well that in a way answers this next question that came in: "Do you think the Sabbath is observed on the other planets, or did God create it for this earth because He knew that man would not be able to speak to Him face to face after his sin?" You did mention, though, that the Sabbath had come in in the light of the emergency that already existed. As a help to us.

Maxwell: Oh, very much so. I really see the Sabbath as an emergency measure that will turn into great celebration. The beauty would be to become the celebration now. You know, we've got the point. We understand what it's all about, and we'd like to enter into this Sabbath-like rest that comes from knowing God. So it really is a foretaste of the hereafter.

Venden: You emphasized that the Sabbath was a matter of celebration, not just an arbitrary test that God imposed.

Maxwell: \*

Venden: One of our friends asked this question: "If it's not a test," you said it really isn't, "then why in Revelation does it mean so much to be a commandment-keeper?" And the question goes on, "If you can't command enjoyment of the Sabbath, but it's made plain, isn't it, that if you don't enjoy it, you will die?"

Maxwell: Remember last time we talked about how God could police that. And if you didn't really enjoy Sabbath, you broke it today. So wouldn't you be worried every sundown Saturday evening, "Did I enjoy Sabbath? I mean that sermon," not yours, but visiting someone, "was really heavy." No, you've got to sit there and say, "I'm enjoying myself. I'm enjoying myself, or I'm breaking this day." It doesn't make sense. It just destroys human reason. No, next time I'd like to converse about what it means to keep the commandments. I believe the Ten Commandments describe the way trustworthy people will live together. And if I don't want to be that kind of a person, it is serious, and God will let me go. So it's not arbitrary. It's no more arbitrary, really, than breathing and eating. In a way, you know, eating is a test of obedience. But He won't punish you if you don't eat. You'll just get in very bad shape, and if you abstain forever, you will die. So I don't have to follow these rules, but if I don't, I'll be a different kind of a person, and eventually I will just ruin myself, and I would not be safe to save.

Venden: That's a good way to put it. Then the commandments are a statement of the way God made things to work.

Maxwell: And it's the best way to run the universe and keep it free. I hope He'll never run it any other way. This is the only way mutual love and trust as described in the Ten Commandments, is the only way to have a really secure, safe, free universe. I hope He doesn't change it, or we're going to lose.

Venden: One of our congregation last Friday evening asked this question. It's a very practical one. "I have a question about the Sabbath, about how to keep it. Several people go out to eat after church is over with. I understand that they may be going out to eat because they don't want their wives to cook."

Maxwell: That's thoughtful.

Venden: "Is that wrong because they are making people work for them on the Sabbath, or does that just mean that we are judging them? I'm confused."

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Maxwell: Oh, I like fact that last was added on there, because then it reminds me of what Paul said, "Let everyone be fully persuaded in his own mind, and who are you to judge another? Each one of us shall give account of himself to God." This day is ours, you know. It was given to us. Sure, it's the Lord's Day, it's a day to remember the Lord, but it's His gift to us for our best good. If I don't observe it in the best way possible, I just lose, that's all. So that I must decide for myself. We've no business deciding for other people. We've no business criticizing. Before the Damascus road, Paul would have said, "Shame on you for \* something like that. I'll haul you into prison and maybe have you stoned." But after the Damascus road he said, "Let everyone be fully convinced in his own mind." I also think, though, that Sabbath keeping not only says something to ourselves and to God. It also says something to the community, the people looking on. And those who try to be good confuse the public a little anyway. And I think the way we keep Sabbath can speak well or otherwise of our God, and I think we need to weigh that. What do people think about when they watch us Sabbathkeepers try to keep holy the seventh day? The stories I hear about the pressure in Alpha Beta on Friday afternoon, that's a very dangerous time to shop locally. The last two hours before sundown as the saints are all trying to get home on time, even in the store everybody's pressing to the front with their baskets full, and whereas on any other day in the week you might courteously let somebody with less in the basket go ahead, you can't afford to be courteous on a Friday afternoon. I mean, you're going to keep Sabbath, even if you've got to break the other Nine. Well, my wife one time asked one of the clerks in Alpha Beta here in town if she had noticed this. "Yes," she said, "we are very puzzled. Just as it begins to get dark on Friday afternoon, there is a tremendous increase in business. Even the parking people are rushing to and fro. We even have to lay on extra clerks for awhile. And then we're just settling into it, and all of a sudden most of them disappear." And she doesn't know why, and they can't plan on it each Friday, because it seems to come at a different time. Well, she knows we're religious and wonders why. I think we owe her the favor, maybe, of an explanation. Would we give a good one? Or would we say, "You know why we hurry like that? Because if we don't get home before that sun goes down, oh, you couldn't imagine what our God would do to us." We've not spoken very well of Him.

Venden: So you're saying that perhaps we ought to hurry but for the right reasons.

Maxwell: And by the way, if we see somebody hurrying, we have no business. . .

Venden: Judging their reasons.

Maxwell: That's right. That's right. The beauty of this whole thing is, in the larger view, you do not feel moved to condemn other people. God doesn't condemn. He just says, "I'm so sorry; you lose."

Venden: You spoke last week, too, in a way that I thought was extremely important about the principle of what the motive is. There are those who, for instance, in health care programs must take care. One person might be excusing this on the basis that, "Well, I can do this; I can go ahead with it." Another person might see it from a completely different perspective of following in the steps of Christ and \* . You can't read other people's motives on this. You allude to, in that beautiful introductory paragraph, to some other emergencies in addition to the law and mediation, the she-bears. And one of our questioners says, "God sent she-bears against the children who ridiculed Elisha. Just how does God come out looking good in that strange incident?"

Maxwell: Well, superficially it doesn't, and He ran the risk of not looking too good. And the devil would live to have us misunderstand. But if one reads the whole setting, in those days even the

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king of Israel was consulting Beelzebub, the god of flies. Very little reverence to God. And these youths were mocking Elisha. Elisha had just been translated to Heaven, and these irreverent youths, following the example of their king, said to Elisha, "Hey Baldy, why don't you go up too?" And when people are that irreverent, God has almost lost any communication with them. It's that serious. Then if we need she-bears, we'll get she-bears.

Venden: God does what He has to do.

Maxwell: He does what He has to do.

Venden: Along a little different line, but a central question. "In reading about the sacrificial system, I get the impression that it was very messy, throwing blood on the Mercy Seat, throwing blood on Aaron and the other priests. Who cleaned the Mercy Seat off? Who cleaned those garments of Aaron and the other priests?" And this person signs himself, "Just really curious."

Maxwell: Most important thing, you know, is the observation that it is messy. On the cleaning, there are many references to cleansing, water, scouring of pots, washing of garments, even in Nehemiah a complete housecleaning of the whole temple. But that it was messy, if it looks messy to us, how do you suppose it looked to God? As I mentioned, the One who sees the little sparrow fall asked them to kill lambs. I think God wished that they always felt as sick as Adam must have when he killed that first lamb and turned to God and said, "I can't do it. It's making me sick." "I hope it always makes you sick." He came to the place eventually where he could kill his animals with hardly a thought. It was almost like a circus as they cut them up and burned them.

Venden: They thought the more, the better.

Maxwell: The more the better. God would smell a sweet savor and bless them. So yes, it was messy. It was painful. But God \* needed it. It had to be that dramatic, that impressive, and He paid the price Himself. And how He's been misunderstood.

Venden: Here's a question that was sparked by last week, I think, but it goes on the other line regarding family and marriage, rather than the Sabbath. "Could you comment on the role of the family and marriage in God's overall plan for us, especially as we are called God's children? Also, is there special significance to our planet in having male and female, the two sexes?"

Maxwell: Yes, I remember in our conversation on the Sabbath we touched on this. Yes, I think God deliberately designed things this way. The sexes, the family, sharing with us the power to create little people in our own image. Then we know how difficult it is to bring our children up and yet set them free. How can we keep them from hurting themselves when they're little? Anyone who has had children, anyone who has been a teacher of little children, ought to be able to read the Bible very sympathetically. I think God gave this as a very eloquent demonstration. Right there in Eden the family, the sexes, the Sabbath, many things in that Garden were immediately emergency measures. Some emergency measures can be very pleasant, you know.

Venden: The Sabbath, you know.

Maxwell: And the family. What about that? He did this to say something.

Venden: Let me ask another one that has been asked before. "Why would God choose

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circumcision, for example, as an emergency measure?"

Maxwell: I think it's somehow related to the previous question. If you don't acknowledge that God is the Creator, then the mystery of life and reproduction may become the object of your worship. And it did in the fertility cults. And you read through the Old Testament, and one of the prevailing weaknesses of the Israelites was the temptation to go up into the mountains and as Hosea says, "Sacrifice with the cult prostitutes." And so God gave them something. I don't know all the meanings, but this one appeals to me. God is very practical about things. And what if a young Israelite has followed his eyes up into the mountains and he's there with a cult prostitute. At the last moment, maybe, she'd look down and say, "I see you are a Jew." And the young man would say, "I can't do it." And maybe he'd hurry home. I mean, I could see God doing something like that. Because that was something very much involved in their greatest indulgences, their greatest sins. Balaam couldn't curse them, but when the Midianite ruler came in, you know what happened. And so I think God chose something that would be particularly eloquent and useful.

Venden: A reminder of to Whom we belong.

Maxwell: \* And all of that. Yes.

Venden: Now, there are questions that arise in regard to the second part of your presentation on intercession. You've talked about intercession, a Mediator, as part of the emergency measure. Does that mean that we don't need an advocate? I John, second chapter, talks about "If anyone sin, If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Are you saying that we don't need an advocate?"

Maxwell: As I mentioned, if one is still afraid of God, in the Bible, see, we have an Advocate with the Father. However, knowing that we really don't need someone to intercede with the Father, do we still need an Advocate? Well, if we only determined who it is that's really against us, then we would see why we need an Advocate standing beside the Father, the Paraclete called to His side to help. Satan is against us, the accuser of the brethren who accuses us day and night before God. Look in Zechariah 3. Who is accusing Joshua the High Priest? Who is defending? In Job, who is accusing? Who is defending? So since we have an enemy, God's enemy is our enemy too. We need an Advocate. We need someone to represent us.

Venden: To God?

Maxwell: No. He's our Friend as much as the Son and the Holy Spirit. But our future neighbors and friends, the inhabitants of the universe, might not be too sure about us. And God doesn't ask them to accept His list of candidates. He doesn't run His universe that way. So He allows Satan to accuse, as Jesus explain. If He can defend, He does. If He can't, He won't. And so it's very real to me that Jesus is in this role of Advocate and Intercessor defending His loyal children who may even be just babes in the truth. If they trust Him like the thief on the cross, Jesus can say, "Yes, he has a terrible record as the Devil has pointed out, but he has a new heart and a right spirit. I commend him as safe to save, even to live next door to." And his guardian angel heaves a big sigh of relief.

Venden: Not from God's wrath or anything like that that He's protecting us.

Maxwell: No. We've got the wrong enemy so often, you know.

Venden: He made God the enemy.

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Maxwell: Yes.

Venden: Exactly what the devil would like to have us think.

Maxwell: The Father's not our foe. No. "If God can be for us, who can be against us?" Romans 8.

Venden: In Romans 8:26, speaking of Romans 8, it says that the Spirit makes intercession.

Maxwell: That's right.

Venden: "With intercession? Jesus is Intercessor? The Spirit is Intercessor?"

Maxwell: Well, we know the Spirit isn't interceding with the Father. Jesus said, "There is no need." And He certainly isn't interceding with the Son. So in the context it says, "We do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit helps us to pray," and I believe His intercession is in teaching us the truth about ourselves, about our God, that He is our Friend. He helps us approach Him. So it's through prayer. By the way, Bible students for many, many years have taken Matthew, and Ellen White has taken it. I like it very much. His intercession with the Spirit is helping us see the truth and tell the truth. And we have a whole session coming up on Talking to God as a Friend where we will get very much into the work of the Spirit in talking to God.

Venden: This very important text, John 16:26, that you referred to as perhaps the most misunderstood or . . .

Maxwell: Ignored.

Venden: Ignored text. "I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you." There are so many texts, though, about intercession, and then here's this one that seems clear the other way. We don't need an Intercessor. You talked about the principle of understanding in the light of all of the texts. What would you say to that, if I would say, "Look, let's take all of these texts that talk about intercession and understand this one in the light of all these texts".

Maxwell: Yes, I mean, we so often say if it's a difficult verse it should be understood in the light of all the clear ones.

Venden: Right.

Maxwell: Well, what's so interesting about that is that Jesus labeled this verse "plain and clear." He didn't say it was difficult.

Venden: So we really didn't need any other.

Maxwell: I will accept the Son of God's evaluation as a statement. It is one of the only ones in the whole Bible designated as "plain and clear." And I will understand all the other verses in the Bible in the light of this one. However, one should never leave the others out. We must build a model of understanding based on everything in the Bible. We must be able to put that precious verse in and all the others too.

Venden: Now Graham, we just very quickly here, we talked about praying in Jesus' name,

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wondering what that might mean. Is it that Jesus, that God too holy and we need Jesus to kind of run interference, not against His anger but in relationship to His holiness?

Maxwell: Ah, you said two things there of consequence. We do say the Father is too holy to look on sin, so the Son came. Are we implying the Son is not as holy as the Father? Forbid the thought! The Son is just as holy as the Father. I believe that to pray in Jesus' name is a grateful recognition that if the Son had not come to reveal the truth, we wouldn't know the Father. We wouldn't know the Father. We wouldn't know He is just as approachable as the Son. We wouldn't be bold to approach Him with confidence to the throne of grace, and Hebrews 2 and 4 say. We'd be afraid to do it. So we pray in Jesus' name, saying, "Thank You for the whole costly revelation and demonstration." And it certainly doesn't mean, "Lord, I'm near the end of my prayer. In one minute when I say, 'Amen,' You'll know I'm through." Amen means I mean everything I've said, Dear God. I mean it.

Venden: So in Jesus name really means celebrating God's gift. That's beautiful.

Maxwell: I can approach You, God.

Venden: Alright. That's great.

Maxwell: It certainly isn't an indication to the choir to get the response ready at the end of the meeting.

Venden: In Hebrews 2 and Hebrews 4, the last of those two chapters, there are these statements about how Jesus was made like unto His brethren and He Himself has suffered being tempted, and that we can come boldly because He has been tempted. Are you saying that these statements really aren't important statements?

Maxwell: I think they are very important, but they certainly don't mean that God had to come to this earth to learn how to be sympathetic. He came to show how sympathetic He already is. Although I do believe that Jesus growing up as a Man as well as God, He learned. He learned, but He learned from Scripture as we do, and He became convinced of the truth about His Father. And so He did grow up this way and became the marvelous Person that He was, but He was no more friendly and understanding than His Father. He came to say, "This is what My Father is like." But He came to reveal also that you can get this from the Old Testament. That's what He grew up with. I mean, how could He go out and say, "This is what My Father is like"? He got it from reading Jeremiah, and Isaiah, and Hosea and Amos and all those other places. The Old Testament is that clear.

Venden: Just a quick word about next Friday night.

Maxwell: The topic is, "God's Law Is No Threat To Our Freedom."

Venden: And again, that sounds like the most important one left.

Maxwell: It will be an extension of tonight.

Venden: Because the law so often has been seen, I think by Christians of all denominations, as buying freedom someway.

Maxwell: Yes.

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Venden: Well, we'll look for all of you next Friday night.

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