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**BETTERING TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS:
LESSONS FROM THE GREAT CONTROVERSY THEMES**

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Bettering Teacher-Student Relationships: Lessons from the Great Controversy Themes

There are a number of biblical themes that are readily available to provide lessons from which Christian teachers can learn to better relationship with students. They can be found from both Testaments. They are heart-gripping and yet relevant. The relevance has timeless and universal values that help us appreciate God's providence down through the ages. The themes of the on-going great controversy between Christ and Satan stand out foremost and all-pervading. These themes become the springboard from which principles can be drawn to provide relevant implications for Christian teachers.

What is Great Controversy?

A controversy is a "dispute" or a "clash of opposing views"¹ that emanates from two parties or two opinions. From this definition comes the idea of absence of harmony, unity, and understanding. It rather suggests the prevailing presence of discord or conflict between two realities. What is the source of authority to inform us further of the reality of this conflict?

From the beginning pages of the Bible to the last is a rich portrayal of an on-going conflict between two realities: the reality of good and the reality of evil. God's throne is a spring from which good reality flows, while evil reality spreads out from Satan's seat. One may wonder how this two begun into conflicting realities up to the present age. "Then there was war in heaven. Michael and the angels under his command fought the dragon and his angels. And the dragon lost the battle and was forced out of heaven. This

¹ The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1997).

great dragon – the ancient serpent called the Devil, or Satan, the one deceiving the whole world – was thrown down to the earth with all his angels.”¹

War in heaven was no more. In fact it could never happen there anymore. And yet Satan’s fury against Heaven was not over and the spell of his hatred he has to continue everywhere in this planet earth into which he was thrown.

Today the conflict is on-going. “The same spirit that prompted rebellion in heaven still inspires rebellion on earth. Satan has continued with the same policy which he pursued with the angels. His spirit now reigns in the children of disobedience. Like him they seek to break down the restraints of the law of God and promise men liberty through transgression of its precepts.”²

Our eyes and ears are witnesses to the reality of conflict around us – in everyone’s home, in market places, in churches, in palaces, and every nation. But the greatest conflict is being fought in the minds of men and women. The only hope of victory is when our trust is cast on Christ, our sole Defense in this great conflict.

What are the Problems in Teacher-Student Relationship?

Natty was a successful office worker in a college for several years, and she never had a thought of entering into classroom duty. She was smart, respectable, with pleasing personality, and intelligent. But she did not want to stay forever in the confine of her office. She tried to teach a class and then two, and next more classes. Then she finally landed into fulltime instructorship in response to the pressing need of teachers.

Not long thereafter, she got bored of the challenge of diversity in the classroom. While some of her students were quick to perceive concepts, ideas, principles, and

¹ Rev. 12:7-9. Unless otherwise indicated all Bible texts are from New Living Translation.

² Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1950), 500.

develop skills, others were slow, timid and undetermined. For Natty, to linger awhile with slow learners would mean a waste of time, and to simplify matters for their sake was tiresome and agonizing. To repeat an explanation, to illustrate and simplify a point was for her not only an extravagant use of lung power and time, but unnecessary as well.

For Natty, the process of learning is a race. Whoever gets that learning first is the winner unmindful whether students' queries are cleared or not. Unresolved queries place learners on status quo and, more often than not, learning is stunted.

This method of transferring knowledge and effecting change in one's life is risky. It sprinkles fear in every atmosphere of learning. Fear is always considered hindrance to learning activity as opposed to the dynamicity of love's motivating force.

Natty is a typical example of some contemporary Christian teachers. They are confronted with problems that are real and varied in their day to day school activities. They fail to see these problems in the context of Christian virtues, and as a result, leave students in a despairing and, at times, helpless situation. This situation makes Christian teachers think that all their daily endeavors and brighter hopes in their students turn to naught, failure, and meaninglessness.

What solutions are there to help Christian teachers better their relationship with students that will ultimately make their teaching profession meaningful? Where are these solutions found? Are they accessible? Are they relevant?

Principles that Develop Better Relationship and the Great Controversy Themes

The Bible is pregnant with principles that will help and encourage Christian teachers to develop not only godly attitude in their dealings with students but positive outlook of their teaching profession. Selected great controversy themes in Scriptures, are

picked up to serve as wells from which wealth of timely and relevant principles for growing, dedicated Christian teachers are drawn. How does God deal with His people in the great controversy? What are the secrets of winning? For the sake of brevity six biblical principles will be discussed: *friendship, faith, love, patience, mercy, and service.*

Friendship. Friendship is a Christian virtue that runs abundantly in many pages of Scriptures. Jesus' friendship surpasses other friendships for He is the Truest of friends. He is a Friend of Abraham,¹ of sinners,² and of a betrayer.³ But in this generation friendship is a rare and, therefore, expensive commodity. Some may claim to be our friends but are really not. And yet others claim to be real friends. The Bible paints similar picture: "There are 'friends' who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother."⁴

When tragedy hits our way, we raise our hands to reach out and touch real friends who will respond with real concern. Friends we can turn to when none seems to care. Friends "whose own life's scars have empowered them to be the healing friends when we need them to."⁵

The experience of Job did not only demonstrate a controversy between God and Satan, truth and error, faithfulness and unfaithfulness. It did also demonstrate who real friend was to him. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were all his friends. But they were only true to their friendship with him in times of peace and prosperity. When tragedy and adversity became his lot, even Job's wife, the closest friends to him on earth, kept her

¹ Isa. 41:8 (NASB)

² Luke 7:34

³ Matt. 26:50

⁴ Prov. 18:24.

⁵ Dwight K. Nelson, Outrageous Grace (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press., 1998) p. 119.

distance and asked him to curse God instead.¹ But God stayed close with Job, and he held on to his real Friend. “The difference between the friendship of God – One who never fails – and these intermittent friends who had run dry, is a matter for all to ponder. The faithful sage still held on to God even though he felt himself under the shadow of divine displeasure.”²

When earthly friends forsake us there is always a Friend who stays closer than anyone else and that friendship never runs dry. “. . . He will heal the wounded heart, He will strength and grace impart, oh, the best friend to have is Jesus.”³

Faith. “What is faith?” the question rings. “It is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see,”⁴ the answer echoes back. A few verses yonder the Holy Writ continues to declare, “So, you see, it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that there is God and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.”⁵ Relationship is straightened by faith. Belief is strengthened by faith. Our belief in the existence of God and our belief in Him as Creator do not fall apart because it is glued together by faith.

The Bible is replete of persons who have demonstrated a child-like faith to God even amidst conflicting situations. Such situations in their lives are replica of the ongoing controversy between the faithful and the unfaithful, the righteous and the

¹ Job 2:9.

² George T. Dickinson, *The Grandeur of Job* (Washington, DC: Pacific Press, 1973), 22. “Much theological controversy stem from people trying to apply theological teachings to inappropriate situations. Both Job and his friends believe in the doctrine of retribution, but only Job can sense that his case might be an exception.” Gerald Wheeler, *God of Whirlwind* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1992), 60.

³ P.P. Bilhorn, “Oh, the Best Friend to Have Is Jesus” in the *Church Hymnal* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1941), 528.

⁴ Heb. 11:1.

⁵ Heb 11:6.

unrighteous. Abraham is one whose obedience is a fruitage of his faith to the One who gives him the command to leave his country and kinsmen.¹ “Thus, in absolute faith, Abraham cast his lot on God’s side. Faith in Him cannot be compromised, however great the whisper of evil one may be.”² The result of the test of faith in the life of Abraham remains a shining light to guide the path of the righteous and obedient in the ways of God. “Abraham’s great act of faith stands like a pillar of light, illuminating the pathway of God’s servants in all succeeding ages.”³

At the ebb of Mount Carmel’s showdown, Elijah defines that the essence of true faith is not to remain sandwiched between who’s winning or losing. It’s not waiting which side the majority or minority finally settles. In fact his position on true faith still rings today: true faith cannot stand “between two opinions.”⁴ Mount Carmel calls everyone to take side – the winning side. In this call majority does not determine whose side is winning. Instead, faith dictates that on God’s side, though outnumbered, few, or even alone, His people are sure to win. Minority plus God always wins.

Ruth is another personality in the story of the faithful. The quality of faith she possessed propelled her to persevere during difficult and trying circumstances. Choices between mingling with people worshipping the true God or with those who don’t were pressing and demanding during her days. But her deliberate decision to serve the God of Israel⁵ places her on the pedestal of the faithful and noble in character. That good decision was the result of faith, because faith results to anything that is good.

¹ Gen. 12:1

² John M. Fowler, *The Cosmic Conflict Between Christ and Satan* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2001), 61.

³ White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1958), 153.

⁴ 1 Kings 18:21.

⁵ Ruth 1:16

The Roman centurion has a marvelous quality of faith.¹ His faith defines the unity of human race. His faith knows no caste, no economic status, no gender – faith that shuns discord. Discord is an instrument being used by Satan to give him success in the great controversy. But the miraculous event that takes place between the respectable centurion and the merciful Healer destroys discordant ambition and eventually leads to the healing of the centurion’s servant. That ultimate healing is all because of trusting faith.

Faith is not the monopoly of any one individual or one group. It is God’s gift to anyone who can claim it and exercise it. The faith we may not find in us – even in Israel – maybe found elsewhere. That’s the beauty of faith. It knows no language. It knows no color. It knows no nation. And because of that faith, the kingdom of God will be filled with many from the east and the west, while those who claim to be chosen ones will be cast out.²

Love. The concept of love is biblical. In fact it is an attribute of God for “God is love.”³ God reaches out to His earthly children and declares “I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving kindness.”⁴ Everlasting love cannot be lasting only in words of blessed assurance. That love has to come in Person. That Person has to live a life. That life has to be perfect life. And that perfect life has to be given up to evidence everlasting love. Centuries later that divine expression of love became a living reality in the person of God’s Son: “For God so loved the he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”⁵ This is the concept of genuine, divine love. Everlasting!

¹ Matt 8:5-13

² Fowler, “unpublished manuscript,” chapter 9, p. 8.

³ 1 John 4:8

⁴ Jer. 31:3 (NIV).

⁵ John 3:16. Paul supports John’s statement: “But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law.” Gal. 4:4.

Everlasting love never quits. In the conflict between truth and error, God never quits with Job, with Moses, with Joseph. God was the last Friend who stayed with Job when all, along with his wife, quitted. God's love to Moses was unending in spite of all his frailties for He had a mission to accomplish through him.

“We must keep in mind that in every part of Moses' life, God was preparing him for leadership of an extraordinary quality. To wrench a mob of slaves out of a nation unwilling to let them go, to bring the undisciplined, ignorant multitude together in one place, to lead them in an orderly fashion out of Egypt, to teach them the rudiment of worship, civil behavior, and public health, required a man carefully trained in leadership, eloquence, and human behavior. But above all he needed total submission to God and full reliance on Him. for here was a divine plan dependent upon human agent for its fulfillment.”¹

From infancy 'til Moses was brought to what we call now eternal abode of the redeemed, God never gave him up. Amazing love.

The physical separation between Joseph and Jacob meant so much to a loving God and, thereby, led the young lad in every step. Young as he was Joseph knew he was not left undone. God's leading was his for a noble mission.

Patience. This is an attribute of a person who considers suffering and hardship stepping stones to greater heights. Patience winks at life's problems, laughs at life's rough journey, whistles out the burden of earthly cares. Patience governs one's action in the face of prevailing difficulty, for it is astutely said that “we glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope.”²

A patient person endures. He has the capacity to bear burdens for others knowing that he will reap joy by so doing. Bearing is not only sharing with others our problems.

¹ Paul F. Bork, The World of Moses (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1978), 26.

² Rom. 5:3, 4 (KJV).

It is also sharing with others' problems. "Share each other's troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of God."¹ This is the kind of patience that is enduring.

God's patient and enduring dealings with His people in the Great Controversy is obvious. As a matter of fact, the way He dealt with them became the secret of winning in the conflict. Moses was not left alone in the struggle of life. Heaven knew all the troubles he was in and yet God had to patiently sustain him. Moses' daily display of commitment and allegiance to God and His words eventually became part of his life, so that even in trying times the comfort of a palace cannot replace his deliberate choice to share the troubles and problems of his own people.² God's patience with him bore patience for others.

David, a shepherd, a fighter, a builder, a musician, a king, and a Spirit-led writer had victories and defeats in his life-long struggle. His struggles attested to the important role he performed in the history of God's people. Perfect he was not. Failures he had many. Discouragements he was not exempt. But God's patience was upon this imperfect, frail man, "a man about whom God said, 'David son of Jesse is a man after my own heart, for he will do everything I want him to.'"³ In the parable of the wheat and the weeds,⁴ Jesus admonishes His listeners (readers as well) to be patient with those whose behavior is no different from that of the gentiles. His admonition to all workers runs this way: "Let both grow together until the harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds and burn them and to put the wheat in the barn."⁵ Jesus knows that careless

¹ Gal. 6:2. "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves." Rom. 15:1 (KJV).

² Heb. 11:24, 25.

³ Acts 13:22; 1 Sam. 13:14.

⁴ Matt. 13:24-30.

⁵ Matt. 13:30.

and impatient dealings with the misbehaving might result to the removal of the behaving souls, too.

Through long ages God has born the anguish of beholding the work of evil; He has given the infinite Gift of Calvary, rather than leave any to be deceived by the misrepresentation of the wicked one; for the tares could not be pluck up without danger of uprooting the precious grain. And shall we not be as forbearing toward our fellow men as the Lord of heaven and earth is toward Satan?"¹

Mercy. Mercy is a virtue that expresses compassion to someone as a result of moral excellence. The poor may receive mercy from someone who gives him clothing, food, and shelter. An executioner offers from his heart mercy to a criminal whose offense demands capital punishment. Mercy is pity to the disfavored. It is a compassionate look that internalizes the brokenness of someone in want, at fault, unfortunate, and disgraced. Moreover, it is a godly gesture of reaching out to others a loving hand that relieves anxiety, insecurity, and aloneness.

Mercy is inherent with God. It is His attribute. Mercy emphatically includes all these declaration about Him as "abounding in love," or "rich in unfailing love," or "abundant in lovingkindness."² Convincing the Israelites of Jehovah's presence and goodness Moses says, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that by no means clear the guilty."³ Simplifying this that Moses said, the pen of inspiration writes:

¹ White, Christ Object Lesson, (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1952), 72. "The teaching of this parable is illustrated in God's own dealing with men and angels. Satan is a deceiver. When he sinned in heaven, even the loyal angels did not discern his character. This was why God did not at once destroy Satan. Had He done so, the holy angels would not have perceived the justice and love of God. A doubt of God's goodness would have been as evil seed that would yield the bitter fruit of sin and woe. Therefore, the author of evil was spared, fully to develop his character." Ibid.

² Num. 14:18 (see also NIV and NASB). Great mercy in KJV

³ Exo. 34:6, 7 (KJV).

It was upon his knowledge of the long-suffering of Jehovah and His infinite love and mercy, that Moses based his wonderful plea for the life of Israel when, on the borders of the Promised Land, they refused to advance in obedience to the command of God. . . . God's glory, His character, His merciful kindness and tender love – that which Moses had pleaded in behalf of Israel – were to be revealed to all mankind.¹

King David, on the other hand, after receiving God's forgiveness praises Him saying, "The Lord is merciful and gracious; he is slow to get angry and full of unending love."² Illustrating the height and depth of that divine mercy David adds, "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him."³ In the light of these Bible passages king David's secret of victory is through God's mercy. "God in His mercy did not leave David to be lured to utter ruin by the deceitful rewards of sin."⁴ What a merciful God!

Service. Service is a derivative of the word servant, or the other way around for it does not make a difference. A duty rendered to someone else is service in the truest sense, and the one who performs that service is a servant. The highest form of service ever demonstrated to men is the one modeled by Jesus. Both Matthew and Mark capture the wonderful demonstration of service from His words: "For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to be served but to serve others, and to give my life a ransom for many."⁵ In this occasion Jesus voiced out the true meaning of service to calm down the spirit of self-exaltation among the disciples. Several years later the same spirit dominated the Christians in Philippi. Out of loving concern the apostle Paul verbalized the same sentiment:

¹ White, The Story of Prophets and Kings, 312-13.

² Ps. 103:8.

³ Ps. 103:11 (KJV).

⁴ White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 720. "The conditions of obtaining mercy of God are simple and just and reasonable." Ibid, Steps to Christ (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1908), 37.

⁵ Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45.

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself taking the form of bond-servant and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in the appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross.¹

This mission statement for service defined by both Jesus and Paul contains two important characteristics: self-denying and self-sacrificing. For Jesus, service is leaving the comfort zone heaven can bestow. For Him to serve is to condescend, leaving behind His lofty position He enjoyed with His Father from the beginning, for He knows that the real essence of service is destroyed when one becomes so position-conscious. Not only that. Jesus further adds that His sacrificial death highlights that heaven-born service so that weaklings, even the weakest on earth, can be ransomed by that death. Genuine service, isn't it? For that He was exalted at the right hand of His Father.²

And yet the disciples did not capture the beauty of service demonstrated by their Master. For them service was thought to be demeaning. For them service carried the stigma of slavery and servitude³. But Jesus did not leave their despondency unresolved, because He knew that despondent persons weaken the true meaning of service at its very foundation. In clear tone His words reverberated in the upper room:

In this world the kings and great men order their people around, and yet they are called 'friends of the people.' But among you, those who are the greatest should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant. Normally the master sits at the table and is served by his servants. But not here! For I am your servant.⁴

The experience of Moses in the story of the great controversy presented similar characteristics. It was self-denying in that he "refused to be treated as the son of

¹ Phil. 2:5-8 (NASB).

² Matt 26:64; Acts 7 7:55, 56; Heb. 8:1

³ Gen. 37:27, 28; 39:1, 2; Exo. 1:11-14.

⁴ Luke 22:25-27.

Pharaoh's daughter;"¹ it was self-sacrificing because "he chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin."² Rightly understood in this context Fowler candidly explains: "Moses' choice was clear. He will serve his God no matter what the cost, and he would preserve a nation that God will use to bring the Messiah and usher in the message of salvation to all the world."³

The parable of Jesus about the prodigal son⁴ presents the meaning of true service in verity right at the back drop of great controversy. It is a story that underscores service as a result of forgiveness, for only a forgiven person understands and renders honest service.

When the younger son was overwhelmed by selfish ambition he started to go down the path of defeat. In the midst of gloom and hopelessness brought about by extravagant and lascivious way of life, self-centeredness started to see its folly and rottenness. In the rottenness of life the prodigal son brought back to memory the grandeur of abundance within the confine of loving concern in contrast to the pang of scarcity, hunger, and shame that selfish ambition has wrought:

When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired men have food enough to spare, and here I am, dying of hunger! I will go home to my father and say, Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer to be called your son. Please take me on as a hired man.'⁵

At this point the wayward son comes to self-awareness that between the rot of selfish ambition and the new life readily available to a contrite heart is a soul willing to do service. Even though he knows that forgiveness can restore back all that is wasted by

¹ Heb. 11:24.

² Heb. 11:25.

³ Fowler, 49.

⁴ Luke 15:11-32.

⁵ Luke 15:17-19, 21. "Make me as one of thy hired servants." (v. 19, KJV).

purposeless living, he is willing to sacrifice all the rights and privileges a loving father can bestow to a son. "I am no longer to be called your son. . . . take me on as a hired man." Service is then the uppermost concern of a forgiven son. Ellen White says that "Christ desires us to make His service appear attractive, as it really is. Let the self-denials and the secret heart trials be revealed to the compassionate Saviour. Let the burdens be left at the foot of the cross, and go on your way rejoicing in His love who first love you."¹ Beautiful is the thought that forgiven souls walk on the way of service rejoicing in God's love. "All things both in heaven and in earth declare that the great law of life is a law of service."²

Implications for Teachers

Teaching profession is intensive by nature. It requires development of skills to make teachers efficient and effective in that profession. To master those skills an enormous amount of time is needed. No wonder Jesus, the master Teacher, savored His teaching methodology with all graces of creativity. He deeply stressed the importance of teaching more than any other of His ministries. His ministry is first and foremost that of a teacher.³

Today's Christian teachers face complex challenges in their dealings with students in the classroom. These challenges should not despair anyone of them nor bring them to hopeless expectations because educating young people means doing a noble task. In fact true education prepares them to face the challenges of this present life. "It

¹ White, Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1955), 88.

² White, Education, (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1952), 103.

³ Lucien E. Coleman, Jr. Why the Church Must Teach (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1984), 15-20.

"The Greek word *didaskalos* (teacher) occurs forty-eight times in the four Gospels. In forty two instances, the term refers to Jesus, usually as a form of direct address." Ibid. 16.

prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come.”¹

We have just discussed biblical principles whereby these challenges could be fruitfully met. God’s dealings with Bible personalities in the conflict between truth and error, and the victories they won mirror that fruitfulness.

In all relationships, friendship counts because it carries with it trust, loyalty, and cooperation. In a classroom setting, trust begets trust, loyalty begets loyalty, cooperation begets cooperation. In fact, more than that, each begets the others.

That’s friendship. Teachers’ friendship is highly esteemed by students. It is one of the Christian graces students long to grasp and for them to have it is honorable. Once they possess teachers’ friendship, fear is dispelled, determination is cultivated, and learning occurs. Moreover, a friendly interaction in the classroom becomes an avenue to both intellectual and experiential growths for students.

Friendship is a tool that lightens up the burdens not only of students but also that of teachers. On the one hand, the students gain more confidence to learn in that friendly atmosphere. On the other hand, cooperation is no longer a difficult support to elicit from the class. Friendship, therefore, saves energy, emotion, and time for both learners and teachers. More importantly, it evokes lasting relationships. God’s dealing with Job revealed that lasting relationship and, without a shadow of a doubt, it was Job’s weapon to stay determined amidst the severity of that controversy.

Faith is trusting. Students find their ways to the classrooms, firstly, because they trust the authoritative figures in there – teachers. Secondly, students are trustful that their teachers can adequately deliver them valuable commodity – learning. And thirdly, that

¹ White, Education, 13.

learning should not happen in a vacuum, it must result to something tangible in students' lives – change. Durable change, in fact! All three are attainable in a trusting relationship that pervades the classrooms.

Trusting faith creates confidence in students. That confidence lubricates learning process. The problem with some students is that the absence of confidence leads to doubt their capacity to achieve and the capacity of teachers to reach them. The challenge is: how low can teacher bends to reach out those who have no, or at least lack, faith within themselves?

The sincerity of purpose of the One who called Abraham created in him faith of highest degree. Elijah's faith to the God he served made him courageous to face the battle on Mount Camel; for that he achieved victory. Ruth's decision to stay with worshippers of true God exhibited the same quality of faith. The healing of the centurion's servant was because of his faith in the great Healer.

In like manner, students strive to learn and never give up learning once they perceive an intimate faith-relationship in the classroom. There are found to be, in every classroom, clay of human minds ready to be molded in order to reach lofty and noble ideals in character development. They are the minds of your dear students

From the perspective of God, love endures. For Him love is protecting, winsome, and preserving. It is giving and yet it is also sacrificing. To sum it all love is saving the undeserving, for God loves even the unlovable.

Love is God's nature that is so contagious. It contaminates man so much that love can also be man's nature. With that in mind teachers can also possess love. In fact love to Him, who is love Himself, should be a dynamic motivation for all Christian teachers

and for those who are still teachers in the making. Is there a trait Christian teachers need to possess more important than to love their students even those who are undeserving? God's sacrificing love demonstrated on the cross includes all peoples, parts of which are those whom teachers talk to everyday.

Moses was so loved by God that in spite of his inadequacies he was made a leader of His people. Joseph who was desperately in want of a fatherly and brotherly love was not left unloved by God, too. As a result, both became assets of God in preserving the people of Israel. Only from a loving heart can all other good traits flow.

Patience is enduring in the face of difficulty. It is also trying amidst prosperity. What could have happened to people like Moses, David, Joseph and others had not God been patient with them? Victory could have not been theirs for sure.

From day to day teachers' patience is tested in many ways: the lesson preparation, classroom management, keeping records, planning for all kind of activities, field trips, laboratory procedures, are the few that can be mentioned. This means that a life-long teaching profession requires a life-long forbearance. But if God's patience toward His earthly children is shared with others, then patience multiplied in natural motion. Patience invested is patience gained. How many young people could have been alleviated from the difficulty of academic struggle had teachers been more patient with them? Shouldn't Christian teachers be more patient than ever before?

Mercy is an attribute that applies the law of harvest. Mercy sowed is mercy reaped. Jesus said, "God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy."¹ This beatitude behooves that mercy begets mercy.

¹ Matt.5:7.

God's demonstration of mercy toward individuals who needed mercy in the great controversy is important to for all Christian teachers to ponder upon. Their battles in those controversies were fought in every side despite their imperfection. Only through God's mercy and loving kindness were they able to succeed. Job succeeded. Moses did it. Elijah made it, too. Score of others climbed the ladder of success, all because God was so merciful to them. Host of them could have fallen prey to their enemies had God been so unmindful of and unmerciful to them.

Every child accepted into a school possesses inherent strength. Suffice it to say that each has imperfection, too. Where weakness and imperfection abound, mercy is needed the most. And where mercy abounds, there is not only more learning that will occur, but greater heights of Christ-like character traits will be achieved.

Jesus had a superior understanding of what true service is. For Him true service is both self-denying and self-sacrificing. Right at the heart of the cross is this very essence of service made manifest. This form of service leaves self beside, bears with sacrifice, crowns with success. And to that effect Jesus says, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must put aside you selfish ambition, shoulder your cross and follow me."¹

"If we do represent Christ, we shall make His service appear attractive, as it really is. Christians who gather up gloom and sadness to their souls, and murmur and complain, are giving others a false representation of God and the Christian life."²

Moses demonstrated the same essence of service to the people of Israel. Joseph became true to the task assigned to him because God mercifully preserved him in Egypt. Also, service stems out from a forgiven person. The prodigal son offered selfless service

¹ Matt. 16:24; Mark 8:34.

² White, Steps to Christ, 116.

as a result of forgiveness. Jesus teaches that forgiveness brings about a dedicated person in the service for mankind.

Service then, becomes a virtue of those whom God befriends. It is an offering of those whom God loves, of those upon whom His mercy multiplies. Service results from those to whom He has been faithful and patient. The master Teacher expects every Christian teacher who represents Him in every classroom to do the same to students.

Summary and Conclusion

The Bible contains great controversy themes from which principles to guide and strengthen Christian teachers of today can be derived. These controversy themes become the springboard to deliver timely and relevant principles for them.

The great controversy was started in heaven and was continued on this earth after Lucifer was defeated by Michael and His host of heavenly angels. In his desire to regain his defeat, he continued his fury against God and His people. His schemes to destroy their lives were all recorded in both Testaments of the Bible. Some were in the life experiences of men and women while others were in the teachings of Jesus.

The Devil further took for granted that humanity's imperfections and frailties were good reasons to draw them to his side. It was proven to the contrary, nevertheless, that once humanity's weakness was united to the strength of God, a big difference in the struggle of life could happen. That difference was evidenced by the victories won. "The Lord can work most effectually through those who are most sensible of their own insufficiency, and who will rely upon Him as their leader and source of strength. He will make them strong by uniting their weakness to His might, and wise by connecting their

ignorance with His wisdom.”¹ In this union, God’s friendship and faith, His love, patience, mercy and humble service for his people were underlying principles of achieving those victories.

Our students are in daily struggle. Their struggle is between right and wrong worldviews. If today’s Christian teachers do employ the same principles God used with His people in the Bible and in the life and teachings of Jesus, their students are sure to achieve more successes. In addition, their teaching experiences will ultimately be reciprocated with a lot of rejoicing and meaningful rewards.

¹ White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 553

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