seek Jesus. If His own people would reject Him, perhaps Christ would be willing to minister to them, for they certainly were ready to receive Him!

Going to Greece or Macedonia instead of Calvary was not as easy an opportunity for Christ to turn down as it may appear. He was already under the shadow of the cross. This is why “a mysterious cloud seemed to enshroud the Son of God” and He “sat rapt in thought.” Though He recognized it would take death on the Cross to redeem Greeks as well as Jews, “His humanity shrank from the hour of abandonment.” He sighed, “‘Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour?’” (John 12:27, NASB).

Jesus was troubled because His feelings did battle with His faith. He honestly would forgo the humiliation of the Cross. He would rather minister to the Greeks who appeared open to God now than put them on hold while He took up His cross. What made sense was to go where people really wanted Him, not to die misunderstood.

Nevertheless, what the Father had made clear was the cross for Him to bear, not the Greeks for Him to witness to. So, He followed the light He had, and not the one He didn’t. He woke Himself, as it were, to such reality, by continuing His thinking aloud: “‘But for this purpose [the cross] I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name”’ (vss. 27, 28, NKJV). And His mind was made up. That is living by faith and not by sight.

I have said to my friends that I am too busy to be an officer in the Adventist Theological Society (ATS). But I see how it builds faith in God and that is what God longs to see happen with His own. Faith is our victory. Faith is the one way we make God’s day (Heb. 11:6). When an ATS team of scholars presents papers in Bible symposia or ministerial councils, people leave with renewed confidence in God and His Word. They are more willing to trust in Him than to doubt Him. When I read articles in The Journal of the Adventist Theological Society or in Perspective Digest, my own faith in God is renewed. I believe in these publications because they are God-centered and Bible-driven, and when these two things are in place, everything is in place.

My hope is that ATS will be a tool used by our Lord to engender faith in Him—real, abiding, even long-suffering faith in the “Lover of our souls.” I say this not because I am a great man of faith, but because I am in great need of faith. And so are we as God’s last-day people, remembering what is written, that “faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17, NASB).

REFERENCES
1 The Desire of Ages, p. 823.
2 Ibid., p. 625.
3 Ibid.

WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY?

In January 25, 1990, Avianca Airlines Flight 52 ran out of fuel and crashed to the earth, causing the loss of many lives. In its report of the incident, the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) disclosed that the whole tragic accident might have been prevented if the flight crew had used the correct specific terms to describe its critical problem to those in the control tower.

Reportedly the pilots had radioed the following message to air traffic controllers at the nearest airport: “We’re running out of fuel.” In fact they used the wrong terms. If they had described their situation as having “minimum fuel” or “emergency fuel,” as they were supposed to under the circumstances, the air traffic controllers would have known to respond decisively and immediately. Those were the terms controllers were trained to be listening for, but because they didn’t hear them, they did not realize the gravity of the situation.

In order to anticipate every possible eventuality, the Federal Aviation Administration has designated a standard form of...
terminology for communication between aircraft and control tower. In this case, it was the personnel in the aircraft whose failure to use the official vocabulary led to miscommunication—and a great loss of human life.

In a sense, God has also established a standard for communication whose importance has life-or-death consequences. In point of fact, it has cosmic implications. He chose to reveal His will through Scripture so that those who love Him may navigate a flight plan through life in safety and security.

Given that, one might conclude that humankind would be universally intent on learning what God has to say to us, parsing everything as if our lives depended on it. As it happens, our everlasting lives, indeed, do depend on it.

Some have been moved to recognize this. Through the ages God’s people—spiritual Israel—have maintained a vital reliance on Scripture as the guiding light of their lives. In responding to God’s grace, they have considered it a privilege to follow His guiding light. “In every age there were witnesses for God—men who cherished faith in Christ as the only mediator between God and man, who held the Bible as the only rule of life, and who hallowed the true Sabbath.”1

But there has also been a broad mix of reactions to God’s Word that do not acknowledge its full authority. Some reject it outright. They say it is nothing more than ancient superstition from which humankind has been liberated by the Enlightenment. Others, recognizing that Scripture undeniably contains at least some germ of truth, seek to glean from it a measure of general spiritual guidance. Both of these depend primarily on human reason. Both subject Scripture to a scientific process that usually precludes anything that would be classified as supernatural.

As it happens, the very earliest pages of Scripture recount a cautionary tale about this very issue. The experience of Cain, Adam and Eve’s oldest son, their firstborn, is a good example of what happens when you measure the Word of God by human standards or measurements—by human reason alone. From a human perspective, Cain’s offering as a sacrifice the very best of his produce—his fruit basket—made perfect sense. Hadn’t God originally put humankind in “the garden of Eden to cultivate it”? (Gen. 2:15, NASB). It doesn’t say anything about tending sheep there. Younger brother Abel was the shepherd; Cain was not. But Cain was surely following God’s command to cultivate the garden. Couldn’t the elder brother’s gesture have been construed as a sincere effort to do the right thing?

Intentionally or not, Cain had missed the point of God’s mandate regarding the submission of sacrificial offerings. He had misinterpreted it. At the centrality of this command was the emphasis on blood. As the old saying goes, you don’t get blood from a turnip—or any other fruit or vegetable, for that matter. Cain may have thought that God was expecting him to use the brain that God had given him to apply his human reason to this requirement, to turn his best skills of hermeneutics in his preparation to bring an offering to God.

Cain was dead wrong. His attempt to substitute something else for blood in the sacrifice was a rejection of the principle that blood—God’s blood—was the only way that humankind can be saved from sin.

It should be acknowledged that Cain did not get his instructions regarding appropriate offerings from his close reading of the Holy Word. There was, of course, no Scripture in his time. How could he be reading Scripture when the account of his own life is contained in its initial chapters? He didn’t have a leather-bound, onion-skin, cross-referenced study Bible—in any version—to go to for the necessary information about God’s expectations for a sacrifice. In his time, he didn’t even have the crudest form of parchment.

But Cain did have the benefit of the direct and specific Word of God, delivered in person to Adam, his father. How, we wonder, could Cain have missed the point? How could he have had the temerity to question the authority of God’s Word? The answer is this: he “permitted his mind to run in the same channel that led to Satan’s fall—indulging the desire for self-exaltation and questioning the divine justice and authority.”

The decision to base interpretation of God’s Word on anything other than a recognition of His authority is willful. It isn’t a matter of inadvertence. It isn’t “Oops!”

Any rejection of the authority of God’s Word today is just as much an act of will as was that of Cain. It is an audacious decision to rely primarily on personal, human reason in evaluating the authenticity of God’s attempt to reveal His will to humankind.

As has been said, “Christianity is different from all other religions. They are the story of man’s search for God. The Gospel is the story of God’s search for man.”2

REFERENCES
1 The Great Controversy, p. 61. Italics supplied.
2 Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 71.