

“Fear Not,
Little Flock”

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Compiled from the writings of
Ellen G. White

*“In comparison with the millions of the world,
God's people will be, as they have ever been, a little
flock; but if they stand for the truth as revealed in His
word, God will be their refuge. They stand under the
broad shield of Omnipotence.”*

—Acts of Apostles, p. 590.



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FOREWORD

Reformation Herald Publishing Association is pleased to present our first devotional book compiled for the spiritual enrichment of believers everywhere, "*Fear Not, Little Flock.*" Throughout His ministry on earth, Christ made it clear that His faithful people would not be great in number, but rather would be those whose hearts were touched to follow Him in meekness, as the timid sheep trusts in her strong, beloved shepherd.

In Psalm 23, the patriarch David depicts a beautiful pastoral scene of the soul abiding in the Saviour's love. To abide in Christ—this is our great need, especially in these last days of ever-increasing turmoil and strife. The Lord's flock will be small, and it will press together under the tender care of the Master Shepherd. The concepts found in this psalm fall naturally into place as themes for each month.

A basic overview of the New Testament provides the source material for this book. The scriptural texts are arranged in somewhat of a chronological order, with the final month of December focusing on events taking place in the last days of this earth's history.

All of the daily readings come straight from the pen of Inspiration. Great care was taken in the choice of materials, in order to maintain proper context and to provide real, practical insights for daily living. The Spirit of Prophecy sources are not those commonly found on every bookshelf. It was intended that they be mostly from among books and periodicals less frequently read, so as to provide a fresh outlook on timeless themes of eternal value.

That this little volume may offer real spiritual strength and much-needed courage to readers everywhere by uplifting the wondrous Saviour of mankind, is the earnest prayer of

The Publishers

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All Bible texts are taken from the King James Version.

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January 1

Who Is Jesus Christ?

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:1–3, 14).

The Word existed as a divine being, even as the eternal Son of God, in union and oneness with His Father. From everlasting He was the Mediator of the covenant, the one in whom all nations of the earth, both Jews and Gentiles, if they accepted Him, were to be blessed. “The Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). Before men or angels were created, the Word was with God, and was God.

The world was made by Him, “and without him was not anything made that was made” (verse 3). If Christ made all things, He existed before all things. The words spoken in regard to this are so decisive that no one need be left in doubt. Christ was God essentially and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, existed from eternity, a distinct person, yet one with the Father. He was the surpassing glory of heaven. He was the commander of the heavenly intelligences, and the adoring homage of the angels was received by Him as His right. . . . That God should thus be manifest in the flesh is indeed a mystery; and without the help of the Holy Spirit we cannot hope to comprehend this subject.¹

No amount of reasoning or explanation can tell the whys and wherefores of the creation of the world. It is to be understood by faith in the great creative power. By faith we must believe in the mighty creative power of God through Jesus Christ.²

The One appointed in the counsels of heaven came to the earth as an instructor. He was no less a being than the Creator of the world, the Son of the infinite God. The rich benevolence of God gave Him to our world; and to meet the necessities of humanity, He took on Him human nature. To the astonishment of the heavenly host, He walked this earth as the eternal Word. . . . God’s excess of goodness, benevolence, and love was a surprise to the world, of grace which could be realized, but not told.³

January 2

A Whole Saviour

“[Mary] shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

Christ stepped down from His exalted throne, left the royal courts, clothed His divinity with humanity, and became a man among the children of men; He humbled Himself even to the suffering and death of the cross, that man might be exalted, that man might become a partaker of the divine nature, be an overcomer, and have a place with Christ upon His throne in glory.⁴

No man of earth or angel of heaven could have paid the penalty for sin. Jesus was the only one who could save rebellious man.⁵

While we were under the power of the enemy, in slavery to him, Christ gave His life a sacrifice for us. We are not our own; He has purchased us with the price of agony and blood. The object of this great sacrifice was to bring us into the liberty of sons and daughters of God. But if we cherish iniquity in our hearts, we defeat the purpose of our Saviour, and rob God of the service that is His due. Jesus came not to save men in their sins, but from their sins. “Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4), and if we fail to obey the law, we do not accept our Saviour. The only hope we have of salvation is through Christ. If His Spirit abides in the heart, sin cannot dwell there.⁶

We should meditate upon the mission of Him who came to save His people from their sins. As we thus contemplate heavenly themes, our faith and love will grow stronger, and our prayers will be more and more acceptable to God, because they will be mixed with faith and love. They will be intelligent and fervent. There will be more constant confidence in Jesus, and a daily, living experience in His power to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him.⁷

Why not make up your mind that you will stand in your God-given manhood and womanhood and, through Christ, be overcomers? Why not say, “God has promised the power, and I will win back the moral image of my Creator and Redeemer”? Do not allow the mind to hold communion with the enemy. Do not talk of his power to discourage you. Talk of Christ, who is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. We have a whole Saviour, and let us have a whole faith in Him who has died for the sins of men, and for *my* sins. When we take this position, we shall find rest and peace in our Saviour.⁸

January 3

God With Us

“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matthew 1:23).

“Emmanuel, God with us.” This means everything to us. What a broad foundation does it lay for our faith! What a hope big with immortality does it place before the believing soul! God with us in Christ Jesus to accompany us every step of the journey to heaven! The Holy Spirit with us as a Comforter, a Guide in our perplexities, to soothe our sorrows, and shield us in temptation!⁹

This mighty God of Israel is our God. In Him we may trust, and if we obey His requirements He will work for us in as signal a manner as He did for His ancient people. . . .

Everyone who seeks to follow the path of duty will at times be assailed by doubt and unbelief. The way will sometimes be so barred by obstacles, apparently insurmountable, as to dishearten those who will yield to discouragement; but God is saying to such, Go forward. Do your duty at any cost to yourselves. The sea of trouble which threatens to overwhelm you will open as you advance, revealing a safe path for your feet. The trials and difficulties which seem so formidable, which fill your soul with dread, will vanish as you move boldly forward in the path of obedience, humbly trusting in God.

There are daily, important duties for every soul; not one is excused. The present duty must be done now; for the time is short, and opportunities once lost will never return. There is danger in one moment of hesitancy in face of difficulties. God will be a light to the meek, the humble, the thankful and obedient; but He is a cloud of darkness to the selfish, the proud, the impatient, and the murmuring ones. Sooner or later, light will shine forth upon the pathway of those who hold themselves ready to go when and where Christ leads the way.

Every step in life should be that of faith, of love, of consecration! . . . Christ offers to walk with us through all the journey of life, and cheer our way by His presence. If we do not avail ourselves of His companionship, it is our own fault, our own loss. If we grope in darkness, it is because we refuse the presence of the only One who can make our way bright and joyful. We need to cultivate that faith which works by love, and purifies the soul.¹⁰

The Faith of the Magi

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him” (Matthew 2:1, 2).

Students of nature, the Magi had seen God in His handiwork. From the Hebrew Scriptures they had learned of the Star to arise out of Jacob, and with eager desire they awaited His coming, who should be not only the “Consolation of Israel,” but a “Light to lighten the Gentiles,” and “for salvation unto the ends of the earth” (Luke 2:25, 32; Acts 13:47). They were seekers for light, and light from the throne of God illumined the path for their feet. While the priests and rabbis of Jerusalem, the appointed guardians and expounders of the truth, were shrouded in darkness, the Heaven-sent star guided these Gentile strangers to the birthplace of the newborn King.¹¹

The Lord is the great benefactor of the universe, a being of infinite love. His tender mercy is over all His works. He sees the great want of those in different countries who have not the truth. Thousands are not satisfied with their present state, and desire to learn a better way. They are hungering and thirsting for light, and longing for greater surety and deeper spirituality. Minds are deeply stirred, and yet how few there are to bear the message to them!

Brethren, we need a deeper work of the Spirit of God in our own hearts. Jesus was rich in heaven; but for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. The life of Christ, His self-denial and self-sacrifice, rebukes the indolence and inactivity of those who might and should engage in this great work of doing what they can to save their fellowmen.¹²

Every one of Christ’s workers is to begin where he is. In our own families may be souls hungry for sympathy, starving for the bread of life. There may be children to be trained for Christ. There are heathen at our very doors. Let us do faithfully the work that is nearest. Then let our efforts be extended as far as God’s hand may lead the way. The work of many may appear to be restricted by circumstances; but, wherever it is, if performed with faith and diligence it will be felt to the uttermost parts of the earth. . . . God often uses the simplest means to accomplish the greatest results.¹³

Jesus in Childhood and Youth

“And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him” (Luke 2:40).

Although [Jesus] was the Majesty of heaven, the King of glory, He became a babe in Bethlehem, and for a time represented the helpless infant in its mother’s care. In childhood He did the works of an obedient child. He spoke and acted with the wisdom of a child and not of a man, honoring His parents and carrying out their wishes in helpful ways, according to the ability of a child. . . .

The life of Christ, from His earliest years, was a life of earnest activity. He lived not to please Himself. He was the Son of the infinite God, yet He worked at the carpenter’s trade with His father Joseph. His trade was significant. He had come into the world as the character builder, and as such all His work was perfect. Into all His secular labor He brought the same perfection as into the characters He was transforming by His divine power.

He is our pattern. By many children and youth, time is wasted that might be spent in carrying home burdens, and thus showing a loving interest in father and mother. The youth might take upon their strong young shoulders many responsibilities which someone must bear.

Jesus did not, like many youth, devote His time to amusement. He applied Himself diligently to a study of the Scriptures; for He knew them to be full of precious instruction to all who will make them the man of their counsel. He was faithful in the discharge of His home duties; and the early morning hours, instead of being wasted in bed, often found Him in a retired place, meditating and searching the Scriptures, and in prayer. Every prophecy concerning His work and mediation was familiar to Him, especially those having reference to His humiliation, atonement, and intercession. In childhood and youth the object of His life was ever before Him. . . .

Jesus carried into His labor cheerfulness and tact. It requires much patience and spirituality to bring Bible religion into the home life and into the workshop, to bear the strain of worldly business, and yet keep the eye single to the glory of God. This is where Christ was a helper. He was never so full of worldly care as to have no time or thought for heavenly things. . . . He held communion with heaven in song; and as His companions complained of weariness from labor, they were cheered by the sweet melody from His lips.¹⁴

January 6

The Dignity of Humble Toil

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52).

The first thirty years of our Saviour’s life were passed in retirement. Ministering angels waited upon the Lord of life as He walked side by side with the peasants and laborers among the hills of Nazareth, unrecognized and unhonored.¹⁵

Honorable work has received the sanction of heaven, and men and women may hold the closest connection with God, yet occupy the humblest position in life. Jesus was as faithfully fulfilling His mission when hiding His divinity with the humble occupation of a carpenter, as when employed in healing the sick or walking upon the white-capped billows to the aid of His terrified disciples. Christ dignified the humble employments of life, by occupying a menial condition, that He might be able to reach the mass of mankind and exalt the race to become fit inmates for the Paradise of God.

For a long time Jesus dwelt at Nazareth unhonored and unknown, that He might teach men how to live near God while discharging the humble duties of life. It was a mystery to angels that Christ, the Majesty of heaven, should condescend not only to take upon Himself humanity, but to assume its heaviest burdens and most humiliating offices. This He did in order to become like one of us, that He might be acquainted with the toil, the sorrows, and fatigue of the children of men, that He might be better able to sympathize with their distresses and understand their trials.

Those who divorce religion from their business are reproved by the example of Jesus. Hidden away among the hills of Nazareth, yet having such claims upon heaven that He could command the entire angel host, He was a simple carpenter, working for wages, and living a godly life in the face of all discouragements.

It requires much more grace and stern discipline of character to work for God in the capacity of mechanic, merchant, lawyer, or farmer carrying the precepts of Christianity into the ordinary business of life, than to labor as an acknowledged missionary in the open field, where one’s position is understood, and half its difficulties obviated by that very fact. It requires strong spiritual nerve and muscle to carry religion into the workshop and business office, sanctifying the details of everyday life, and ordering every worldly transaction according to the standard of a Bible Christian.¹⁶

January 7

Paving the Way for Christ’s Work

“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight” (Matthew 3:1–3).

John the Baptist was a man filled with the Holy Ghost from his birth. If anyone could remain unaffected by the corrupting influences of the age in which he lived, it was surely he. Yet he did not venture to trust his own strength; he separated himself from his friends and relatives, that his natural affections might not prove a snare to him. He would not place himself unnecessarily in the way of temptation nor where the luxuries or even the conveniences of life would lead him to indulge in ease or gratify his appetite, and thus lessen his physical and mental strength. By such a course the important mission which he came to fill would have failed of its accomplishment.

He subjected himself to a life of privation and solitude in the wilds, where he could preserve a sacred sense of the majesty of God by studying His great book of nature, and thus become acquainted with His character as manifested in His wonderful works. It was an atmosphere calculated to perfect moral culture, and keep the fear of the Lord continually before him. John, the forerunner of Christ, did not expose himself to evil conversation and the corrupting influences of the world. He feared its effects upon his conscience, that sin might not appear to him so exceedingly sinful. He chose rather to have his home in the wilderness, where his senses would not be perverted by his surroundings. We should learn a lesson from this example of one whom Christ honored, and of whom He said, Among those born of women there are none greater than John the Baptist.¹⁷

The training of John was not to be in accordance with the ordinary customs of society. He was to be instrumental in giving new direction to the thoughts of the people of his day, and awakening them to the necessity of a nobler type of manhood. God would have the character of His servant molded after the divine Model. The wilderness was his schoolroom. . . . His habits of life were so pure and natural that his ideas were not perverted, and his character was not warped by the wrong influences which he was afterward called to meet.¹⁸

January 8

Our Job of Restoration

“Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist” (Matthew 17:11–13).

In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, such a work as that of John the Baptist is to be done. God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord. The message preceding the public ministry of Christ was, “Repent, publicans and sinners; repent, Pharisees and Sadducees; repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2). As a people who believe in Christ’s soon appearing, we have a message to bear: “Prepare to meet thy God” (Amos 4:12). Our message is to be as direct as was the message of John. He rebuked kings for their iniquity. Notwithstanding that his life was imperiled, he did not hesitate to declare God’s word. And our work in this age must be done as faithfully.

In order to give such a message as John gave, we must have a spiritual experience like his. The same work must be wrought in us. We must behold God, and in beholding Him lose sight of self.

John had by nature the faults and weaknesses common to humanity; but the touch of divine love had transformed him. When, after Christ’s ministry began, the disciples of John came to him with the complaint that all men were following the new teacher, John showed how clearly he understood his relation to the Messiah, and how gladly he welcomed [Him]. . . .

Looking in faith to the Redeemer, John had risen to the height of self-abnegation. He sought not to attract men to himself, but to lift their thoughts higher and still higher, until they should rest upon the Lamb of God. He himself had been only a voice, a cry in the wilderness. Now with joy he accepted silence and obscurity, that the eyes of all might be turned to the Light of life.

Those who are true to their calling as messengers for God, will not seek honor for themselves. Love for self will be swallowed up in love for Christ. They will recognize that it is their work to proclaim, as did John the Baptist, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).¹⁹

The work of John the Baptist is our work.²⁰

January 9

A Light Shining Even on Us

“And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mark 1:9–11).

As Jesus prayed after His baptism, the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove of burnished gold, hovered over Him, and a voice was heard, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). Through the gates ajar there streamed bright beams of glory from the throne of Jehovah, and this light shines even upon us. The assurance given to Christ is assurance to every repenting, believing, obedient child of God that he is accepted in the Beloved.

We are indebted to Jesus for all the blessings we enjoy. We should be deeply grateful that we are the subjects of His intercession. But Satan deceives men and women by presenting the service of Christ before them in a false light, and making them think that it is a condescension on their part to accept Jesus as their Redeemer. If we viewed the Christian privilege in the right light, we should consider it the highest exaltation to be accounted a child of God, an heir of Heaven; and we should rejoice that we can walk with Jesus in His humiliation. But our Saviour assures us that there are some who would like to climb up some other way than the toil-some, self-denying way of the cross. They would avoid reproach and shun sacrifices. Christ calls such thieves and robbers. If we are not willing to breast the storm of opposition, if we choose to float with the current, we shall lose eternal life. . . .

Will you leave the dark abodes of sin and woe, and seek the mansions Jesus has gone to prepare for His followers? In His name we beseech you to plant your feet firmly on the ladder, and climb upward. Forsake your sins, overcome your defects of character, and cling with all your powers to Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. We may every one of us succeed. None who shall persevere will fail of everlasting life. Those who believe on Christ shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand. Evil angels will try to weaken their hold on Christ, and to attract their eyes to earth; but God will send holy, ministering angels to help them and to strengthen their hands.²¹

Faced With Temptation

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil” (Matthew 4:1).

Bearing the infirmities of degenerate humanity, [Jesus] entered the wilderness to cope with the mighty foe, that He might lift man up from the lowest depths of his degradation. Alone He was to tread the path of temptation and exercise self-control stronger than hunger, ambition, or death.²²

Christ knows the sinner’s trials; He knows his temptations. He took upon Himself our nature; He was tempted in all points like as we are. He has wept, He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. As a man He lived upon earth. As a man He ascended to heaven. As a man He is the substitute of humanity. As a man He liveth to make intercession for us. As a man He will come again with kingly power and glory to receive those who love Him, and for whom He is now preparing a place. We should rejoice and give thanks that God “hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained” (Acts 17:31).

Those who claim that it was not possible for Christ to sin, cannot believe that He took upon Him human nature. Christ was actually tempted, not only in the wilderness, but all through His life. In all points He was tempted as we are, and because He successfully resisted temptation in every form, He gave us a perfect example. Through the ample provisions made in our behalf, we may become partakers of the divine nature, and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust.²³

Will man take hold of this divine power which has been placed within his reach, and with determination and perseverance resist Satan, as Christ has given example in His conflict with the foe in the wilderness of temptation? God cannot save man against his will from the power of Satan’s artifices. Man must work with his human power, aided by the divine power of Christ, to resist and to conquer at any cost to himself. In short, man must overcome as Christ overcame. Christ was a perfect overcomer; and we must be perfect, wanting nothing, without spot or blemish. . . .

He is the Pattern that we, as His disciples, must follow. We cannot cherish selfishness in our hearts, and follow the example of Christ, who died to make an atonement for us.²⁴

Appetite

“And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:2–4).

The great trial of Christ in the wilderness on the point of appetite was to leave man an example of self-denial. This long fast was to convict men of the sinfulness of many things in which professed Christians indulge.²⁵

Although Christ was suffering the keenest pangs of hunger, He withstood the temptations. He repulsed Satan with Scripture, the same He had given Moses in the wilderness to repeat to rebellious Israel when their diet was restricted, and they were clamoring for fleshmeats, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). In this declaration, and also by His example, Christ would show man that hunger for temporal food was not the greatest calamity that could befall him.²⁶

One of the strongest temptations to man is upon the point of appetite. Between the mind and the body there is a mysterious and wonderful relation. They react upon each other. To keep the body in a healthy condition to develop its strength, that every part of the living machinery may act harmoniously, should be the first study of our life. To neglect the body is to neglect the mind. God cannot be glorified by His children’s having sickly bodies or dwarfed minds. To indulge the taste at the expense of health is a wicked abuse of the senses. Those who engage in any species of intemperance in eating or drinking, waste the physical energies and weaken moral power. . . .

The Redeemer of the world knew that the indulgence of appetite would bring physical debility and deaden the perceptive organs so that sacred and eternal things would not be discerned. Christ knew that the world was given up to gluttony and that this indulgence would pervert the moral powers. If the indulgence of appetite was so strong upon the race as to require a fast of nearly six weeks by the divine Son of God, in behalf of man, to break its power, what a work is before the Christian in order that he may overcome, even as Christ overcame.²⁷

Presumption

“Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (Matthew 4:5–7).

In Satan’s first temptation upon the point of appetite, he had tried to insinuate doubts in regard to God’s love and care for Christ as His Son, by presenting His surroundings and His hunger as evidence that He was not in favor with God. He was unsuccessful in this. He next tried to take advantage of the faith and perfect trust Christ had shown in His heavenly Father to urge Him to presumption. . . .

The sin of presumption lies close beside the virtue of perfect faith and confidence in God. . . . Upon this point many souls are wrecked. Satan tried to deceive Christ through flattery. He admitted that Christ was right in the wilderness in His faith and confidence that God was His Father, under the most trying circumstances. He then urged Christ to give him one more proof of His entire dependence upon God. . . .

The Redeemer of the world wavered not from His integrity and showed that He had perfect faith in His Father’s promised care. He would not put the faithfulness and love of His Father to a needless trial, although He was in the hands of the enemy, and placed in a position of extreme difficulty and peril. . . .

Christ knew that God could indeed bear Him up if He had required Him to throw Himself from the Temple. But to do this unbidden, and to experiment upon His Father’s protecting care and love, because dared by Satan to do so, would not show His strength of faith. . . .

Our Redeemer, in the victory here gained, has left man a perfect pattern, showing him that his only safety is in firm trust and unwavering confidence in God in all trials and perils. He refused to presume upon the mercy of His Father by placing Himself in peril that would make it necessary for His heavenly Father to display His power to save Him from danger. This would be forcing providence on His own account: and He would not then leave for His people a perfect example of faith and firm trust in God.²⁸

Love of the World

“Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matthew 4:8–10).

In the first two great temptations Satan had not revealed his true purposes or his character. He claimed to be an exalted messenger from the courts of heaven, but he now throws off his disguise. In a panoramic view he presented before Christ all the kingdoms of the world in the most attractive light, while he claimed to be the prince of the world.

This last temptation was the most alluring of the three. Satan knew that Christ’s life must be one of sorrow, hardship, and conflict. And he thought he could take advantage of this fact to bribe Christ to yield His integrity. Satan brought all his strength to bear upon this last temptation, for this last effort was to decide his destiny as to who should be victor. He claimed the world as his dominion, and he was the prince of the power of the air. He bore Jesus to the top of an exceeding high mountain, and then in a panoramic view presented before Him all the kingdoms of the world that had been so long under his dominion, and offered them to Him in one great gift. He told Christ He could come into possession of the kingdoms of the world without suffering or peril on His part. Satan promises to yield his scepter and dominion, and Christ shall be rightful ruler for one favor from Him. All he requires, in return for making over to Him the kingdoms of the world that day presented before Him, is that Christ shall do him homage as to a superior.

The eye of Jesus for a moment rested upon the glory presented before Him; but He turned away and refused to look upon the entrancing spectacle. He would not endanger His steadfast integrity by dallying with the tempter. When Satan solicited homage Christ’s divine indignation was aroused, and He could no longer tolerate the blasphemous assumption of Satan or even permit him to remain in His presence. . . .

The words of dismissal from Christ, “Get thee hence, Satan” (Matthew 4:10), evidenced that he was known from the first, and that all his deceptive arts has been unsuccessful upon the Son of God.²⁹

January 14

How the Word Is Spread

“John [the Baptist] stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see” (John 1:35–39).

Jesus . . . saith unto them, What seek ye? The disciples confessed that they were seeking Christ, and that they desired to become acquainted with Him, and to be instructed by Him at His home. These two disciples were charmed with the deeply impressive, yet simple and practical, lessons of Christ. Their hearts had never been so moved before. Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of these disciples. He was interested for his friends and relatives, and was anxious that they also should see Christ, and hear for themselves His precious lessons. Andrew went in search of his brother Simon, and with assurance claimed to have found Christ, the Messiah, the Saviour of the world. . . . The next day Christ selected another disciple, Philip, and bade him follow Him. Philip fully believed that Christ was the Messiah, and began to search for others to bring them to listen to the teachings of Christ, which had so charmed him. Then Philip found Nathanael.³⁰

Here is an example of how we may put our talents out to the exchangers. Philip communicated his knowledge to another, and so brought a soul to Christ. The light given us of heaven is to be communicated to others in this way. If you have given light to one soul, you have enlightened one hundred, for that one will communicate the light to others, and so it will go on continually increasing. God forbid that I should spend my probationary time in selfish amusement or in glorifying self. God has given His beloved Son for my soul; and how could He who inhabiteth eternity look upon me, if I should manifest such ingratitude and neglect to win souls to Christ?³¹

No matter what we have to meet, what opposition, what effort to turn souls away from the truth of heavenly origin, we must give publicity to our faith, that honest souls may see and hear and be convinced for themselves. . . . Learned men have taught the people tradition till they are full of unbelief and prejudice. Yet we must say to these people: “Come and see” (John 1:39).³²

January 15

Men of Humble Rank

“One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone” (John 1:40–42).

Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, had to pass by the self-righteous Pharisees, and take His disciples from unlearned fishers and men of humble rank. These who had never been to the rabbis, who had never sat in the schools of the prophets, who had not been members of the Sanhedrin, whose hearts were not bound about with their own ideas—these He took and educated for His own use. He could make them as new bottles for the new wine of His kingdom. These were the babes to whom the Father could reveal spiritual things; but the priests and rulers, the scribes and Pharisees, who claimed to be the depositaries of knowledge, could give no room for the principles of Christianity, afterward taught by the apostles of Christ. The chain of truth, link after link, was given to those who realized their own ignorance, and were willing to learn of the great Teacher.

Jesus knew that He could do the scribes and Pharisees no good, unless they would empty themselves of self-importance. He chose new bottles for His new wine of doctrine, and made fishermen and unlearned believers the heralds of His truth to the world. And yet, though His doctrine seemed new to the people, it was in fact not a new doctrine, but the revelation of the significance of that which had been taught from the beginning. It was His design that His disciples should take the plain, unadulterated truth for the guide of their life. They were not to add to His words, or give a forced meaning to His utterances. They were not to put a mystical interpretation upon the plain teaching of the Scriptures, and draw from theological stores to build up some man-made theory. . . .

The Holy Spirit will enter the heart that can boast of nothing. The love of Jesus will fill the vacuum that is made by the emptying out of self.³³

Our Redeemer made the greatest possible sacrifice for the human race. Thus He has shown the estimate He places on us. Do you desire to work so as best to please Him? Gird on the armor, and fight manfully the battles of the Lord. Christ will give grace to those who are hunters and fishers of men.³⁴

The Miracle at the Marriage

“Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. . . . When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, [he saith unto the bridegroom] thou hast kept the good wine until now” (John 2:7, 9, 10).

Be assured that [Christ] did not make intoxicating wine on the occasion of His first miracle. He gave to those present a drink which it is safe to give to all humanity—the pure juice of the grape. Christ never placed a glass of fermented liquor to His lips or to the lips of His disciples. Drunkenness was rare in Palestine, but Christ looked down the ages, and saw in every generation what the use of wine would do for the users, therefore at this feast He set a right example.

Christ did not give publicity to His action, and at first only a few knew of the embarrassment of the governor. But after the new wine was brought in, great astonishment was expressed by the guests regarding its superiority over the wine first placed before them. The miracle became known, and the very work Christ desired to see done was accomplished. The faith of the disciples was confirmed. . . .

Jesus did not touch the water in the jars. He simply looked upon it, and at once it became like wine fresh from the cluster. Only a few days before, Christ had refused to work a miracle to satisfy His hunger. He was weak and emaciated; for He had been without food for forty days and forty nights; but He would not command the stones to become bread to satisfy His appetite. To the suggestion of the enemy He answered, “It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). Neither would He accept a challenge to imperil His life by casting Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple to prove that He was the Son of God. In answer to the challenge, He said, “It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (verse 7). But on the occasion of the wedding feast He performed a miracle to show that marriage is not forbidden by God.

The divine love emanating from Christ never destroys human love, but includes it. By it human love is refined and purified, elevated and ennobled. Human love can never bear its precious fruit until it is united with the divine nature, and trained to grow heavenward. Jesus wants to see happy marriages, happy firesides.³⁵

First Priority at the Temple

“Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise” (John 2:13–16).

In the defilement and cleansing of the Temple we have a lesson for this time. The same spirit that existed among the Jews, leading them to substitute gain for godliness and outward pomp for inward purity, curses the Christian world today. It spreads like a defiling leprosy among the professed worshipers of God. Sacred things are brought down to a level with the vain matters of the world. Vice is mistaken for virtue, and righteousness for crime. Temporal business is mingled with the worship of God. Extortion and wicked speculation are practiced by those who profess to be servants of the Most High.³⁶

Christ is cleansing the temple in heaven from the sins of the people, and we must work in harmony with Him upon the earth, cleansing the soul temple from its moral defilement. If we will work thus, we shall find that the sweet influence of God’s Spirit will be wrought into our life. Grace and peace and strength will take the place of strife and weakness, and instead of talking of discouragement and gloom, we shall speak of God’s light and love and joy. We shall be looking at the things that are not seen, which are not temporal, but eternal. When we engage in this work, the angels of God will draw near to communicate divine power, and combine heavenly strength with human weakness. Then we shall grow into the image of our Lord. We shall be learning how to believe in Him, learning how to commit our souls to Him, as unto a faithful Creator. The apostle says, “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). And as a result, our mental and spiritual powers increase. As we learn of Christ, we shall understand how to keep our spiritual strength, we shall feed on the word of God, and we shall have the blessed experience described by the apostle in these words: “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8).³⁷

God's Spirit Invisibly at Work

“Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (John 3:7, 8).

[Jesus] uses the wind as an illustration of His meaning. It is heard among the branches of the trees and rustling the leaves and flowers, yet it is invisible to the eye, and from whence it comes and whither it goeth, no man knoweth. So is the experience of every-one who is born of the Spirit. The mind is an invisible agent of God to produce tangible results. Its influence is powerful, and governs the actions of men. If purified from all evil, it is the motive power of good. The regenerating Spirit of God, taking possession of the mind, transforms the life; wicked thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced, love, peace, and humility take the place of anger, envy, and strife. That power which no human eye can see, has created a new being in the image of God. . . .

The heart must be cleansed from its natural defilement by the Spirit of God before it can be fit for the kingdom of heaven. . . . [Christ] had just been engaged in cleansing the Temple, by driving from its sacred courts those who had degraded it to a place of traffic and extortion. Not one who had fled that day from the presence of Jesus was fitted by the grace of God to be connected with the sacred services of the Temple. True, there were some honorable men among the Pharisees who deeply regretted the evils that were corrupting the Jewish nation and desecrating its religious rites. They also saw that traditions and useless forms had taken the place of true holiness, but they were powerless to prevent these growing evils. . . .

The great necessity of the people was a new moral birth, a removal of the sins that polluted them, a renewal of true knowledge and genuine holiness. This purifying of the Temple illustrates the work that must be accomplished in everyone who would secure eternal life. Patiently Jesus unfolded the plan of salvation to Nicodemus, showing him how the Holy Spirit brings light and transforming power to every soul that is born of the Spirit. Like the wind, which is invisible—yet the effects of which are plainly seen and felt—is the baptism of the Spirit of God upon the heart, revealing itself in every action of him who experiences its saving power.³⁸

Accountable for Light

“God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:17, 18).

If we are rational beings, and the light has come to us, we shall be held accountable for it. . . . The work of Jesus is to forgive the sins of the past, but if light comes from heaven to the church and men refuse the light because its acceptance involves a cross, then they stand guilty before God; for they have made it manifest that they love the world more than they love Christ and the truth. Those who have an opportunity to hear the truth, and yet take no pains to hear or understand it, thinking that if they do not hear they will not be accountable, will be judged guilty before God the same as if they had heard and rejected. There will be no excuse for those who choose to go in error when they might understand what is truth. In His sufferings and death Jesus has made atonement for all sins of ignorance, but there is no provision made for willful blindness. Those who have hid their eyes from the truth lest they should be convinced, must exercise repentance toward God for the transgression of His law. . . .

We shall not be held accountable for the light that has not reached our perception, but for that which we have resisted and refused. A man could not apprehend the truth which had never been presented to him, and therefore could not be condemned for light he had never had. But if he had opportunity to hear the message, and to become acquainted with the truth, and yet refused to improve his opportunity, he will be among the number of whom Christ said, “Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life” (John 5:40). Those who deliberately place themselves where they will not have an opportunity of hearing the truth will be reckoned among those who have heard the truth, and persistently resisted its evidences.³⁹

Let us consider solemnly the dealings of God with nations and individuals, that we may avoid taking a course that will ruin us through transgression of the law of God. Let us treasure up every blessing, every heaven-sent ray of light, in warnings, in reproofs, in tokens of mercy given unto us. Let us not be among those who lightly regard God's forbearance.⁴⁰

The Attitude of John the Baptist

"[John the Baptist] said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. . . . He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:27, 28, 30).

John's life, with the exception of the joy he experienced in witnessing the success of his mission, was without pleasure. It was one of sorrow and self-denial. He who heralded the first advent of Christ was not permitted personally to hear Him nor to witness the power manifested by Him. John's voice was seldom heard, except in the wilderness. His life was lonely. Multitudes had flocked to the wilderness to hear the words of the wonderful prophet. He had laid the ax at the root of the tree. He had reproved sin, fearless of the consequences, and prepared the way for the ministry of Christ.⁴¹

Those who labor for Christ should be men and women of great discretion, so that those who do not understand their doctrines may be led to respect them, and regard them as persons void of fanaticism, void of rashness and impetuosity. . . . Let the people see you exalting Jesus, and hiding self. The sentiment of your heart should be, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Exalt His matchless power and grace, but let self be crucified, let self be hidden in Christ.⁴²

Our greatest sins which separate our souls from God are unbelief and hardness of heart. Why is it that we are so unbelieving and unimpressible? The reason for it is, we are filled with self-confidence. We feel self-sufficient. If we receive some token of God's blessing, we take it as a guarantee that we are all right; and when reproof comes, we say, "I know that God has accepted me, for He has blessed me, and I will not accept this reproof." What a terrible condition we would be in if the Lord did not bless us! We must study Christ, the Pattern of character that God has given us. If we have a garment to cut, we study the pattern. And in the Christian life, we must give up our own ideas and plans, and go according to the Pattern. . . . We should not be full of self-conceit. We must say as did John, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).⁴³

Your life is to be hid with Christ in God. Self must be hidden in Christ. There is to be no great *I* in heaven except the great *I AM*, and we must learn to lift up Christ before the people, realizing and rejoicing in the fact that He must increase and we must decrease.⁴⁴

A Fountain of Living Water

"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

The grace of Christ in the soul is represented as a well of water springing up into everlasting life. . . . The world is to be warned by the solemn truths which God has committed to His people. And the condition of the church is making its impression either for or against these truths. A perishing world has need of living Christian men and women, in whom Christ is abiding, and in whose daily life He is revealed.⁴⁵

The great mass of mankind are engrossed in the things of this life, and divine truth can find no abiding place in their hearts. And yet all the blessings which the world can give fail to satisfy the wants of the soul. There is a nameless longing for something which they have not, a peace and rest that is not born of earth. It was thus with the worshipers in the Temple of old; amid the imposing ceremonies, the dazzling display, the music and rejoicing, they were still unsatisfied. Then how welcome the call that fell upon their ears, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37). It was the same message that had gladdened the heart of the Samaritan woman, at Jacob's well, [John 4:13, 14 quoted]. Christ alone can satisfy that sense of want in the human soul. His gracious invitation reaches down even to our time. From the Fountain of Life the cry still goes forth to a lost world, "Come unto me, and drink."⁴⁶

Christ, at Jacob's well, laid open the sinful life and character of the woman of Samaria. "Unnecessary, uncourteous," say many. Jesus knew that this was the only way to reach the case.⁴⁷

In His talk with the Samaritan woman, instead of disparaging Jacob's well, Christ presented something better. . . . He turned the conversation to the treasure He had to bestow, offering the woman something better than she possessed, even living water, the joy and hope of the Gospel. This is an illustration of the way in which we are to work. It is of little use for us to go to pleasure-lovers, theatergoers, drunkards, and gamblers, and scathingly rebuke them for their sins. This will do no good. We must offer them something better than that which they possess, even the peace of Christ which passeth all understanding. We must tell them of God's holy law, the transcript of His character, and an expression of that which He wishes them to become.⁴⁸

More Than He Requested

“[A certain nobleman] besought [Jesus] that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth” (John 4:47–50).

When the nobleman came to [Christ] asking Him to heal his son, He met him with a reproof for their unbelief. . . . [The nobleman] was not only greatly disappointed, but chagrined. With some impatience, and with a dread that the least delay would result in the death of his son, he said, “Sir, come down ere my child die” (John 4:49). Jesus at last graciously granted his request. But how many in these days would have allowed the feelings of their own natural heart to overbear their judgment, and become impatient and unreconciled to Jesus’ manner of working? They would have said, “Why pain and seemingly disappoint the father, when He might have healed his son at once with His word.” Christ did not feel called upon to explain His motives and purposes to man. He designed that the repulse should expand the feeble faith of the parent, and it had this effect.⁴⁹

The power of the words of the Redeemer flashes like lightning from Cana to Capernaum, and the child is healed. The nobleman shows his faith by not insisting on the presence of Jesus. . . .

As he looks upon his son, healed of all disease, spiritual life sanctifies his soul. He is converted. With the simple faith of a little child he receives the great gift of the kingdom of heaven. The same power which restores the child to health banishes unbelief from the father’s heart.

What a witness Christ has in this nobleman! He had asked for the life of his son, not expecting to receive anything himself. But he realized that a great power had taken possession of his soul. He recognized Christ as the physician of the soul as well as the body. . . .

In our work for Christ, we need more of the unquestioning faith of the nobleman. [Hebrews 11:1 quoted.] By faith we behold God in His promises, and are armed with stability. The Christian knows in whom he has believed. He does not only read the Bible; he experiences the power of its teaching. He has not only heard of Christ’s righteousness; he has opened the windows of the soul to the light of the Sun of righteousness.⁵⁰

Delivered From Paralysis

“A certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. . . . Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked” (John 5:5, 8, 9).

[This man’s] disease was in a great degree the result of his own evil habits and was looked upon as a judgment from God. Alone and friendless, feeling that he was shut out from God’s mercy, the sufferer had passed long years of misery.⁵¹

Jesus had given the palsied man no assurance of divine help. . . . He might have stopped to doubt, and thus have lost his one chance of healing. But no, he believed Christ’s word, believed that he was made whole; immediately he made the effort, and God gave him the power; he willed to walk, and he did walk. Acting on the word of Christ, he was made whole.

By sin we have been severed from the life of God. Our souls are palsied. Of ourselves we are no more capable of living a holy life than was the impotent man capable of walking. Many realize their helplessness; they are longing for that spiritual life which will bring them into harmony with God, and are striving to obtain it. But in vain. In despair they cry, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:24). Let these desponding, struggling ones look up. . . . He bids you arise in health and peace. Do not wait to feel that you are made whole. Believe the Saviour’s word. Put your will on the side of Christ. Will to serve Him, and in acting upon His word you will receive strength. Whatever may be the evil practice, the master passion which through long indulgence binds both soul and body, Christ is able and longs to deliver.⁵²

Had the man made answer, “It is impossible! How can I be expected now to use my limbs, that have not obeyed my will for thirty-eight years?” From a merely human standpoint, such reasoning would appear consistent. . . . But no; without a question, he seized his only chance. As he attempted to do what Christ had commanded, strength and vigor came; he was made whole.

Would you, doubting reader, receive the blessing of the Lord? Cease to question His word and distrust His promises. Obey the Saviour’s bidding, and you will receive strength. If you hesitate, to enter into a discussion with Satan, or to consider the difficulties and improbabilities, your opportunity will pass, perhaps never to return.⁵³

Comfort for the Persecuted

“Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me” (Luke 7:23).

Herod was affected as he listened to the powerful, pointed testimonies of John [the Baptist], and with deep interest he inquired what he must do to become his disciple. John was acquainted with the fact that he was about to marry his brother’s wife, while her husband was yet living, and faithfully told Herod that this was not lawful. Herod was unwilling to make any sacrifice. He married his brother’s wife, and through her influence, seized John and put him in prison, intending however to release him.⁵⁴

To John the Baptist, shut up in prison because of his fearless testimony against the licentiousness and the unlawful marriage of Herod, there came discouragement. He thought, Why does not Christ exercise His power and deliver me from prison? He sent his disciples to Christ with the inquiry, “Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?” (Luke 7:19).⁵⁵

Christ knew on what errand these messengers had come, and by a mighty demonstration of His power He gave them unmistakable evidence of His divinity.⁵⁶

Christ does not promise His followers a smooth and easy path, but He does not ask them to travel the Christian way alone. “When the Comforter is come,” He said, “whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning. These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended” (John 15:26–16:1). Christ told His disciples the truth regarding the future, that when their trial came, they might not fall into discouragement and doubt. When John the Baptist was beheaded, His disciples were inclined to reproach Christ because He had not worked a miracle to save His servant. So today there is danger that we shall become dissatisfied because Christ does not work a miracle in our behalf, and humiliate our enemies.

“They shall put you out of the synagogues” (John 16:2). Has not this been done? Have not those who have accepted the light in regard to the binding claims of the law of God, who have decided to observe conscientiously the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, been turned out of the churches? But they are precious in God’s sight.⁵⁷

Power in the Saviour’s Presence

“[Jesus] said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake” (Luke 5:4–6).

Everyone who in living faith follows Jesus, with an eye single to His glory, will see of the salvation of God just as surely as these discouraged fishermen saw their boats filled by the miraculous draught. It was because Christ was in the ship that they were successful in their efforts to catch fish. The indwelling presence of the Saviour is equally necessary in the work of winning souls. . . .

We may endeavor to resist temptation in our own strength, doing our best to overcome; but we shall meet with disappointment after disappointment. And thus it is in our efforts to win men and women to the Saviour. Dependence on our own wisdom will result in repeated failure, causing us much anxiety and sorrow. This was the condition of mind in which Christ found the fishermen on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, after their night of unrewarded labor. Long had the fishermen toiled that night; often had they been disappointed, as time and again the net was drawn up empty. But now, at the bidding of the divine One, they launched out into the deep, and once more cast their net into the sea. And what an abundance of fish they gathered! The sight of the miraculous draught swept away their unbelief, and they were ready to respond to the Saviour’s invitation to follow Him, and learn to be fishers of men.

The breaking net, the sinking ship, the surprise and gratitude of Peter and his companions, their willingness to follow the Saviour and to do His bidding—all these are object lessons for us in the work of soul-saving. However long and faithfully we may toil in our human strength, we can hope for no results for good; but as soon as we welcome Christ into the heart, He works with and through us for the salvation of souls. God has promised to cooperate with those who choose to labor in harmony with His purpose. . . .

Without His presence with us, our efforts would amount to nothing. We are simply channels through which His blessings flow to our fellow beings. From everyone in whose heart Christ is an abiding presence will go forth a power that will influence others to accept the Saviour as their Redeemer.⁵⁸

Mercy With Prudence

“And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them” (Luke 5:12–14).

The work of Christ in cleansing the leper from his terrible disease is an illustration of His work in cleansing the soul from sin. The man who came to Jesus was “full of leprosy.” Its deadly poison had permeated his whole body. The disciples sought to prevent their Master from touching him, for he who touched a leper became himself unclean. But in laying His hand upon the leper, Jesus received no defilement.

His touch imparted life-giving power. The leprosy was cleansed. Thus it is with the leprosy of sin—deep-rooted, deadly, and impossible to be cleansed by human power. “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores” (Isaiah 1:6). But Jesus, coming to dwell in humanity, receives no pollution. His presence has healing virtue for the sinner. Whoever will fall at His feet, saying in faith, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean,” shall hear the answer, “I will; be thou clean” (Matthew 8:2, 3). The Saviour never passed by one soul, however sunken in sin, who was willing to receive the precious truth of heaven.⁵⁹

The Lord knew that in healing the sick, in working miracles for the restoring of sight to the blind, and for the cleansing of the leper, He was endangering His own life; for if the priests and rulers would not receive the evidences He gave them of His divine mission, they would misconstrue, falsify, and make charges against Him. It is true that He did many miracles openly, yet in some instances He requested that those whom He had blessed should tell no man what He had done for them. . . . It was a betrayal of sacred trust to take that which Jesus designed should be kept secret, and publish it to others, and bring upon the cause of truth reproach and injury.⁶⁰

A Tax Collector Converted

“And after these things [Jesus] went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him” (Luke 5:27, 28).

As Jesus passed on His way to Jerusalem, He saw [Levi] Matthew engaged in his business of tax gathering. He was a Jew, but when he became a publican his brethren despised him. The Jewish people were continually irritated on account of the Roman yoke. That a despised and heathen nation should collect tribute of them was a constant reminder that their power and glory as an independent nation had departed. Their indignation knew no bounds when one of their own people so far forgot the honor of his exalted race as to accept the office of taxgatherer.

Those who thus assisted to sustain the Roman authority were considered apostate. The Jews regarded it as degrading to associate in any way with a publican. They considered the office identical with oppression and extortion. But the mind of Jesus was not molded after the prejudices of the Pharisees. He looked below the surface and read the heart. His divine eye saw in Matthew one whom He could use for the establishment of His church. This man had listened to the teachings of Christ, and had been attracted to Him. His heart was full of reverence for the Saviour, but the thought had never entered the mind of Matthew that this great Teacher would condescend to notice him, much less choose him as a disciple. Therefore his astonishment was great when Jesus addressed him with the words, “Follow me.”

Without a doubtful murmur, or question as to his consequent pecuniary loss, Matthew rose up and followed his Master, and united his interest with the few disciples of Jesus. The despised publican felt that the Saviour had bestowed upon him an honor which he did not deserve. He gave no thought to the lucrative business he had exchanged for poverty and fatigue. It was enough that he would be in the presence of Christ, that he could learn wisdom and goodness from His lips, behold His marvelous works, and be a laborer with Him in His arduous toil.

Matthew was wealthy, but he was willing to sacrifice all for his Master. He had many friends and acquaintances whom he was anxious should become followers of Jesus, and he was desirous that they should have an opportunity to meet Him.⁶¹

A Feast in Service Nobler Than a Fast in Pride

“And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:29–32).

Calling together those who had been his associates in business, in pleasure, and in sin, [Levi Matthew] made a great feast for the Saviour. If Jesus would call him, who was so sinful and unworthy, He would surely accept his former companions, who were, thought Matthew, far more deserving than himself. Matthew had a great longing that they should share the benefits of the mercies and grace of Christ. He desired them to know that Christ did not, as did the scribes and Pharisees, despise and hate the publicans and sinners. He wanted them to know Christ as the blessed Saviour. . . .

Jesus never refused an invitation to such a feast. The object ever before Him was to sow in the hearts of His hearers the seeds of truth—through His winning conversation to draw hearts to Himself. . . .

Proud but foolish Pharisees, who fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness! Christ eats with publicans and sinners, that He may draw them to Himself. The world’s Redeemer cannot honor the fasts observed by the Jewish nation. They fast in pride and self-righteousness, while Christ eats in humility, with publicans and sinners.

Since the fall, the work of Satan has been to accuse, and those who refuse the light which God sends, pursue the same course today. They lay open to others those things which they consider an offense. Thus it was with the Pharisees. When they found something of which they could accuse the disciples, they did not speak to those whom they thought to be in error. They spoke to Christ of the things which they thought to be so grievous in His disciples. When they thought that Christ offended, they accused Him to the disciples. It was their work to alienate hearts. . . .

The poor publicans and sinners felt their need of help, and they accepted the instruction and aid which they knew Christ was able to give them.⁶²

Reflecting Christ’s Mission

“The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

Christ . . . came to reach to the very depths of human woe and misery. He placed Himself where He could reach the needy, the suffering, the oppressed, just where they were; and, although to all appearance they were the most unpromising, with what intense interest did He work for them! What holy joy arose in His heart as He saw them opening their hearts to Him, that He might fill them with His transforming grace and imbue them with His spirit of self-denial and self-sacrifice. He came to honor men with the privilege of being participants in the blessings of His kingdom. He called upon them to repent of their sins, receive of His pardoning love, and unite with Him in sowing the seeds of truth, laboring for the souls that were ready to perish.

It is not possible to give to Christ more service than is His due. If you have, as had the Pharisees, a self-complacent spirit, if you wrap about you the garments of self-righteousness and leave sinners in darkness and transgression, you give evidence that you are not converted; and those whom you deem publicans and sinners will go into the kingdom of heaven before you. Those who would object to eating with publicans and sinners should closely criticize their own course of action. . . .

The follower of Christ is not to live to himself. He who lives to himself is not a Christian. He has not been created anew in Christ Jesus. From the moment the sinner views Christ upon the cross, every barrier is broken down. He sees sin in its offensive character, and exercises repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

The disciple who loves Christ will love the souls for whom Christ has died, and will devote himself unreservedly to Christ. He will work as Christ worked; he will do as Christ did. He will go where the sinner is. He will educate all his powers, his tact and ability that he may become a laborer together with God. He will hold the secret of the cross before those who do not know God. Every soul who is indeed united with Christ will be a laborer together with God for the uplifting and saving of humanity. No other being in the world has the shadow of a claim upon our service. Every part of our nature, every moment of our existence has been purchased with the precious blood of the Son of God.⁶³

Lord of the Sabbath

“The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath” (Luke 6:5).

[Jesus]. . . knew that in healing upon the Sabbath day He would be regarded as a transgressor of the law. He was aware that the Pharisees would seize upon such acts with great indignation, and thereby seek to influence the people against Him. He knew that they would use these works of mercy as strong arguments to affect the minds of the masses who had all their lives been bound by the Jewish restrictions and exactions. Nevertheless He was not prevented by this knowledge from breaking down the senseless wall of superstition that barricaded the Sabbath, and teaching men that charity and benevolence were lawful upon all days. . . .

Jesus wished to correct the false teachings of the Jews in regard to the Sabbath and also to impress His disciples with the fact that deeds of mercy were lawful on that day. In the matter of healing the withered hand He broke down the custom of the Jews, and left the fourth commandment standing as God had given it to the world. By this act He exalted the Sabbath, sweeping away the senseless restrictions that encumbered it. His act of mercy did honor to the day, while those who complained of Him were, by their many useless rites and ceremonies, themselves dishonoring the Sabbath.

There are ministers today who teach that the Son of God broke the Sabbath and justified His disciples in doing the same. They take the same ground as did the caviling Jews, although ostensibly for another purpose, since they hold that Christ abolished the Sabbath.

Jesus in turning upon the Pharisees with the question whether it was lawful to do good upon the Sabbath day or evil, to save life or to kill, confronted them with their own wicked purposes. They were following upon His track to find occasion for falsely accusing Him; they were hunting His life with bitter hatred and malice, while He was saving life and bringing happiness to many hearts. Was it better to slay upon the Sabbath, as they were planning to do, than to heal the afflicted as He had done? Was it more righteous to have murder in the heart upon God’s holy day, than love to all men which finds expression in deeds of charity and mercy?⁶⁴

God gave the Sabbath to be a blessing to man; it was to be to him a memorial of God’s work of creation; it was to remind him of God’s sacred rest, for which reason He had “blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Exodus 20:11).⁶⁵

He Dwelt Among the Lowly

“The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Matthew 8:20).

The Saviour lived not to please Himself. In His life there was no trace of selfishness. Though in a world that He Himself had created, He claimed no part of it as His home.⁶⁶

Jesus did not seek the admiration or applause of the world. He commanded no army, He ruled no earthly kingdom. He passed by the wealthy and honored of the world. He did not associate with the leaders of the nation. He dwelt among the lowly of the earth. To all appearances He was merely a humble man, with few friends. Thus He sought to correct the world’s false standard of judging the value of men. He showed that they are not to be estimated by their outward appearance. Their moral worth is not determined by their worldly possessions, their real estate or bank stock. It is the humble, contrite heart that God values. With Him there is no respect of persons. The attributes that He prizes most are purity and love, and these are possessed only by the Christian.

Jesus did not choose His disciples from the learned lawyers, the rulers, the scribes, and Pharisees. He passed them by because they felt whole, as many feel in this age, and prided themselves on their learning and position. They were fixed in their traditions and superstitions, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. He who could read all hearts chose poor fishermen who were willing to be taught. He gave them no promise of large salary or worldly honor, but told them they should be partakers with Him in His sufferings. Jesus while in this world ate with publicans and sinners and mingled with the common people, not to become low and earthly with them, but in order by precept and example to present to them right principles, to lift them up from their low habits and manners. In all this He set us an example, that we should follow in His steps.

Those who have a religious experience that opens their hearts to Jesus will not cherish pride, but will feel that they are under obligation to God to be missionaries as was Jesus. They will seek to save that which was lost.⁶⁷

Night after night He would pray for His flock—pray that God would give them strength to obey; and then He would lie down upon the ground, as that was sometimes the only place He had to rest for the night.⁶⁸

A Life-Giving Production

“Seeing the multitudes, [Jesus] went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them” (Matthew 5:1, 2).

The Sermon on the Mount is a wonderful production, yet so simple that a child can study it without being misled. The mount of beatitudes is an emblem of the high elevation on which Christ ever stood. He spoke with an authority which was exclusively His own. Every sentence He uttered came from God. He was the Word and the Wisdom of God, and He ever presented truth with the authority of God. “The words that I speak unto you,” He said, “they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63).¹

All through this sermon on the mount is a line of advancement for Christian experience. The angels of darkness are to stand back, that the soul purchased by the infinite sacrifice of Christ may attain unto perfection of character. The word is sounded: “Stand back, this soul is not yours, it has been purchased by the precious blood of Christ. Stand back, I and My Father are one, and we have come to draw this soul to righteousness.” If the soul is not drawn to Christ, it is because the will is not on the side of God’s will, but on the side of the enemy. If man will but cooperate with God, God will work in him to will and to do of His good pleasure, and man will work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. The reason you do not realize the help of the Lord to a far greater degree is that you are so self-centered, your will is not on the side of God’s will. The Lord would have you make it manifest in your manners, in your dress, in your spirit, that you are blessed. He would have you show that the line of demarcation between the world and the followers of Christ is a distinct line, so decided that the difference between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not is always discernible. If the people of the world do not see that you are different from those that are around them, they will not be influenced by your profession of religion; for you will not be a savor of Christ, and you will win no soul to the service of God. But there will be no one in heaven with a starless crown. If you are saved, there will be some soul in the courts of glory that has found an entrance there through your instrumentality. Then why not entreat the Lord to put upon you His Spirit, that you may be able to awaken an interest in the truth in the minds of those around you?²

Feeling Our Poverty

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3).

The reason that we have not more of the Spirit and power of God with us is that we feel too well satisfied with ourselves. There is a marked tendency among those who are converted to the truth to make a certain measure of advancement, and then settle down into a state of stolidity where no further progress is attained. They stand right where they are, and cease to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But the religion of Christ is of a character that demands constant advancement. The Lord does not design that we shall ever feel that we have reached to the full measure of the stature of Christ. Through all eternity we are to grow in the knowledge of Him. . . . If we would draw upon His grace, we must feel our poverty. Our souls must be filled with an intense longing after God, until we realize that we shall perish unless Christ shall do the work for us.

As we come to feel our utter reliance upon Christ for salvation, are we to fold our hands and say, “I have nothing to do; I am saved; Jesus has done it all”? No, we are to put forth every energy that we may become partakers of the divine nature. We are to be continually watching, waiting, praying, and working. But do all that we may, we cannot pay a ransom for our souls. We can do nothing to originate faith, for faith is the gift of God; neither can we perfect it, for Christ is the finisher of our faith. It is all of Christ. All the longing after a better life is from Christ and is an evidence that He is drawing you to himself, and that you are responding to His drawing power. You are to be as clay in the hands of the potter; and if you submit yourself to Christ, He will fashion you into a vessel unto honor, fit for the Master’s use. The only thing that stands in the way of the soul who is not fashioned after the divine Pattern is that he does not become poor in spirit; for he who is poor in spirit will look to a higher Source than himself that he may obtain the grace that will make him rich unto God. While he will feel that he cannot originate anything, he will say, “The Lord is my helper” (Hebrews 13:6).³

We are to come to God as little children; and as we realize our poverty and weakness, we are not to tell it to men who can give us no strength, but to God; for He will know just what to do for us.⁴

Comfort to Those Who Mourn

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4).

It is right to be cheerful, and even joyful. It is right to cultivate cheerfulness of spirit through sanctification of the truth; but it is not right to indulge in foolish jesting and joking, in lightness and trifling, in words of criticism and condemnation of others. Those who observe such persons who make a profession of religion know that they are deceived. They know that the hands of such professors need to be cleansed, their hearts need to be purified. They need to experience genuine repentance for sin. What have they to mourn over? They should mourn over their inclination to sin, over the danger they are in from inward corruption and from outward temptation. They should be afraid because they have so feeble a sense of the sinfulness of sin, and so little idea of what constitutes sin.

When you truly repent of sin, you will not be satisfied to acknowledge simply that you are sinful, and let the matter rest there. Do you intend to remain sinful while life shall last? Do you mean to violate your conscience? Do you mean to do evil always? What does the Lord say to those who have had light, and yet have failed to live in accordance with it? “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (James 4:17, 10). . . . “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3). . . . He has an abiding principle in the soul, that enables him to overcome temptation. “Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not” (verse 6). God has power to keep the soul who is in Christ, when that soul is under temptation.⁵

Blessed are they that realize their poverty, their lost and undone condition, and mourn over their sins and errors. Although the Lord says the mourner shall be comforted, it is not that he shall exalt himself, as did the Pharisee. He who has mourned for his sins knows that there is no merit in himself. He beholds in Jesus “the chiefest among ten thousand,” “the one altogether lovely” (Song 5:10, 16), and he centers his affections upon Christ. If Jesus was the center of attraction to you, the one on whom your affections were placed, would you hide this love in your heart, and never let it out? No, you would tell of His love, you would catch His spirit, and imitate His example.⁶

The Only Heirs

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5).

He that is poor in spirit does not make a parade of his poverty; he shows that he is of this class by manifesting humility and meekness, by not depreciating others that he may exalt himself. He has no time for doing this; he sees too many defects in his own character which demand his attention. As he beholds the infinite love and mercy of God toward sinners, his heart is melted. He feels his poverty; but instead of calling attention to his weakness, he seeks continually for the riches of the grace of Christ, for the robe of His righteousness. The language of his heart is, “Less of self, and more of Thee.” He desires Jesus. He knows that there is nothing in himself whereby he can procure the freedom which Christ has purchased for him at the infinite price of His precious blood. He sees that the good works which he has done are all mingled with self, and he can take no glory to himself because of his attainments in the Christian life. He realizes that there is merit in naught else than the blood of Christ. But it is because of this very realization that he is blessed; for if he did not feel his need, he would not obtain the heavenly treasure.⁷

The most precious fruit of sanctification is the grace of meekness. When this grace presides in the soul the disposition is molded by its influence. There is a continual waiting upon God and a submission of the will to his. The understanding grasps every divine truth and the will bows to every divine precept, without doubting or murmuring. True meekness softens and subdues the heart and gives the mind a fitness for the engrafted word. It brings the thoughts into obedience to Jesus Christ. It opens the heart to the Word of God. . . .

Meekness in the school of Christ is one of the marked fruits of the Spirit. It is a grace wrought by the Holy Spirit as a sanctifier, and enables its possessor at all times to control a rash and impetuous temper. When the grace of meekness is cherished by those who are naturally sour or hasty in disposition, they will put forth the most earnest efforts to subdue their unhappy temper. Every day they will gain self-control, until that which is unlovely and unlike Jesus is conquered. They become assimilated to the divine Pattern, until they can obey the inspired injunction, “Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19).⁸

What Triggers Our Hunger and Thirst?

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6).

Our hungering and thirsting after righteousness will be in proportion to the food upon which we feed the soul. We shall hunger and thirst after righteousness more and more as we separate from the world, its customs, its practices, and conform our lives to the standard of righteousness. Jesus clothed His divinity with humanity that through faith humanity might lay hold upon divinity, and through hungering and thirsting after righteousness, come into close union with the divine. The privileges of the human agent are very great. We cannot be satisfied without God, neither is the Lord satisfied without the love which He has purchased at an infinite price. God has given us Christ, and with Him all heaven in order that He might reclaim our lost race, and attach us to Himself that we also might be filled with all the fullness of God. . . .

Would you become assimilated to the divine image? Would you be one who is hungering and thirsting after righteousness? Would you drink of the water which Christ shall give you, which shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life? Would you bear fruit to the glory of God? Would you refresh others? Then with heart hungering for the bread of life, the word of God, search the Scriptures and live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Your soul’s sanctification and righteousness will result from faith in the word of God which leads to obedience of its commands.⁹

God has promised the fullness of salvation; and yet while the world is full of those who are hungering and thirsting after the pleasures, the fashions, the applause of the world or that they may have their own way, how few are hungering and thirsting after righteousness and directing their desires along the channel where the fullness of heaven shall be given. Why not determine that you will place your will on the side of God’s will, that you may become a laborer together with Him? Jesus says, “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me” (Acts 1:8). Then is there any excuse for our weakness, for our coldness, for our lethargy? There are many who seem to think that when they have acknowledged that they are full of weakness, they have put a plaster over their sins. But we are not to talk of our inefficiency, but to find in Christ a full salvation.¹⁰

Deeds That Make Music in Heaven

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7).

Christ says to His redeemed people, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:34–40).

To be a patient toiler in that which calls for self-denying labor is a glorious work that Heaven smiles upon. Faithful work is more acceptable to God than the most zealous and thought-to-be, holiest, worship. True worship consists in working together with Christ. Prayers, exhortation, and talk are cheap fruits, which are frequently tied on, but fruits that are manifested in good works, in caring for the needy, the fatherless, and widows are genuine fruits, and grow naturally upon a good tree.

Pure religion and undefiled before the Father is this: “To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). The doing principle is the fruit that Christ requires us to bear; doing deeds of benevolence, speaking kind words, and manifesting tender regard for the poor, the needy, the afflicted. When one’s heart sympathizes with others burdened with discouragement and grief; when his hand clothes the naked, and the stranger is made welcome to a seat in his parlor and in his heart, then angels come very near, and an answering strain responds in Heaven. Every act, every deed of justice and mercy and benevolence, makes music in Heaven. . . . Every merciful act to the needy, or the suffering, is as though done to Jesus. Whoever succors the poor, or sympathizes with the afflicted and oppressed, and befriends the orphan, brings himself into a more close relationship to Jesus.¹¹

Purity Sharpens Spiritual Vision

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).

We cannot spiritually discern the character of God, or accept Jesus Christ by faith, unless our life and character are marked by purity, by the casting down of imaginations and of every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

It is sin that has dragged down and degraded the faculties of the soul; but through faith in Jesus Christ as our Redeemer we may be restored to holiness and truth. All who would learn of Christ must be emptied of human wisdom. The soul must be cleansed from all vanity and pride, and vacated by all that has held it in prepossession, and Christ must be enthroned in the heart.¹²

Impurity in thought or practice obscures spiritual vision so that the soul cannot contemplate and be charmed with the character of God. The world is full of disobedience, and the understanding of men has become so darkened by a sinful course of action that righteousness is not clearly discerned, and is not therefore appreciated above unrighteousness. The pure in heart shall see God whose character is represented in the law.¹³

If we are pure in heart, our words will be pure, our actions will be holy. Unless our hearts are pure and our hands clean, we cannot discern the beauty of God’s character, nor hold communion with the holy One. It is now that our hearts should be pure and holy. We have no promise that we shall be transformed in character when Christ appears. If we would offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness, we should put away everything that is sinful in thought, in word, and in deed. If we cherish iniquity, we cannot offer acceptable petitions; our praise cannot arise to God as sweet incense! O how much we need purity of heart! Let everyone that names the name of Christ depart from all iniquity. Let no one think that Christ can be satisfied with one little corner of our hearts, while we allow Satan to erect his throne within, and fill our moral atmosphere with defilement. Christ will abide in the soul only when the whole heart is given up to Him, and then the character will develop after the divine similitude. We cannot hide that which is in the heart. That which occupies the soul will be made manifest. If we are pure in heart, we shall see God; we shall gather more light and power, and become more like Jesus.¹⁴

Am I a True Peacemaker?

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9).

If the mind which was also in Christ Jesus be in you, you will practice the lessons of Christ, and because you appreciate His great mercy and love, you will be peacemakers. You will look to Jesus and will draw nourishment from Him, the living Vine, and as a branch you will bear the same kind of fruit as does the parent stock. The enemy of all righteousness will be ready to lead you into a course that will be the very opposite of that which the peacemaker should take. He who loves discord and strife will tempt you to act a part in connection with himself to stir up strife. He will lead you to think that you see in some brother or sister something that is wrong, and Satan will urge you to go and tell it to others; but Christ has told you to go to your brother and “tell him his fault between thee and him alone” (Matthew 18:15). Which leader are you going to obey? It is not in accordance with the natural heart to deal frankly and faithfully one with another. It appears easier to tell your brother’s fault to someone else than it does to tell it to him alone; but it is his ear alone that should hear your accusation. He who departs from the plain light which Christ has caused to shine upon his pathway loses the privilege of becoming Christ’s missionary, and becomes the agent of the evil one. How many church trials might be saved, how much bitterness and wrath might be saved, if Christ’s professed followers would only obey His words! [Matthew 5:9 quoted.] They who are blessed are those who work in harmony with God, who are laborers together with Christ. The grace which the Spirit of God imparts is a wellspring of life to the soul, and will refresh all who come in contact with the peacemaker.

How many souls have been lost because those who profess to be the followers of Christ have been busy in carrying out the plans of Satan, and have thereby stirred up strife, and have discouraged souls, and driven them on to Satan’s battleground, when they might have helped them by words of kindness and consolation. Satan is the one who works up strife. He lost heaven because he was filled with envy, jealousy, and evil surmising, because he desired to be equal with God. It is important that we consider that the spirit we cherish now, the works that we now do, will testify to our fitness or unfitness for the future life.¹⁵

God's Presence Amid Persecution

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:10-12).

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake" (not for their coarse, harsh spirit that leads them to stir up strife and dissension, but "for righteousness' sake"). The righteous are those who desire peace, and will have peace at the cost of everything save the sacrifice of principle. Truth they cannot sacrifice, though adherence to it costs them distress, reproach, suffering, and even death. "For theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake place the commandments of God first in their lives, and they allow no human policy, no promise of reward, no offer of honor, to come between them and their God. They cannot be induced to deny Christ and to betray His cause. The rich promises of God have a place in their memory, and when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against him. The Holy Spirit opens to the understanding the preciousness of the Scriptures.

[Matthew 5:11, 12 quoted.] These words are full, and broad, and deep, and you are not to be downcast, not to be shaken in faith, not to be filled with murmuring or complaining. Time and courage and faith are all precious, too precious to sacrifice to dejection, to mourning. Christ tells you to rejoice, and to be exceeding glad. All heaven is watching, and is ready to help you. . . .

A vague reliance upon God's mercy will not obtain for us access to the throne of grace, or draw down the blessing from God the Father which He has provided for those who do His will. Faith must center in the word of God, which is spirit and life. Every page of the sacred word is illumined with the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. The word of God is to be the support of the afflicted, the comfort of the persecuted. God Himself speaks to the believing, trusting soul; for God's Spirit is in His word, and a special blessing will be received by those who accept the words of God when illumined to their mind by the Holy Spirit. It is thus that the believer eats of Christ, the Bread of Life. Truth is seen in a new light, and the soul rejoices as in the visible presence of Christ.¹⁶

Salt and Light

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid" (Matthew 5:13, 14).

The saving salt is the pure first love, the love of Jesus, the gold tried in the fire. When this is left out of the religious experience, Jesus is not there; the light, the sunshine of His presence, is not there. What, then, is the religion worth? Just as much as the salt that has lost its savor. It is a loveless religion. Then there is an effort to supply the lack by busy activity, a zeal that is Christless. There is a wonderful keenness of perception to discover the defects in a brother or sister and make these prominent. We are professedly commandment keepers; then let us obey the commandments of God, the law that is love. Then like David we can say, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8).¹⁷

The good works of God's people have a more powerful influence than words. By their virtuous life and unselfish acts, the beholder is led to desire the same righteousness which produced so good fruit. He is charmed with that power from God which transforms selfish human beings into the divine image, and God is honored, His name glorified. But the Lord is dishonored and His cause reproached when His people are brought into bondage to the world. Their only hope of salvation is to separate from the world, and zealously maintain their separate, holy, and peculiar character. Oh! why will not God's people comply with the conditions laid down in His word? If they would do this, they would not fail to realize the excellent blessings freely given of God to the humble and obedient.

Perfection, holiness, nothing short of this, would give them success in carrying out the principles He has given them. Without this holiness, the human heart is selfish, sinful, and vicious. Holiness will lead its possessor to be fruitful and abound in all good works. He will never become weary in well-doing, neither will he look for promotion in this world. He will look forward for promotion to the time when the Majesty of heaven shall exalt the sanctified ones to His throne.¹⁸

The Work of Christ

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matthew 5:17, 18).

This is the work of Christ to convince men of sin, which is the transgression of the law, and through His mediation to bring them back to the path of obedience.¹⁹

Is not the story of the fall repeated by thousands of lips today, and even from the pulpit do we not hear the words of the tempter, Thou shalt not surely die? Is not the law of God represented as a yoke of bondage which men are free to violate as they choose? Satan insinuated to Adam and Eve that they might reach a higher, happier state by violation of the divine command, and today the same falsehood is spread through the world, even by those who claim to be sanctified. Do not these who claim sanctification while violating the commands of God become a false and fatal sign to the world? Do they not say to the sinner, “It shall be well with thee”? (Psalm 128:2). The Lord has defined sin as the transgression of His law, but they say they are saved in sin, and thus make Christ the minister of sin. These professed Christians are doing the very work that Satan did in Paradise, they are leading souls astray by precept and example. They say to the sinner, to the transgressor, It shall be well with thee; you will rise to a higher, holier state by violating the law of God. The lesson that is heard throughout the land is, “Disobey and live.” But how different is this teaching from the lessons of Christ.²⁰

The great adversary, the first rebel and apostate, makes war on the commandments of God, for “by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20). This is the reason that he would have the world believe that the law of God is not binding, for then he can keep men in ignorance of the fact that they are sinners and in need of a Saviour.²¹

God weighs every man in the balances of the sanctuary. In one scale there is placed the perfect, unchangeable law, demanding continuous, unswerving obedience; if in the other there are years of forgetfulness, of selfishness, or rebellion and self-pleasing, God says, “Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting” (Daniel 5:27). But Christ has made it possible for us to keep the law. He lived on this earth a life of perfect obedience, that His righteousness might be imputed to us.²²

Christ to Magnify the Law

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:27, 28).

By the law is the knowledge of sin, and in its light [the sinner] understands the evil of secret thoughts and deeds of darkness. God's law presents matters in a light in which he has never before viewed his life. He sees that what we speak with our tongue, what we do with our hands, what we exhibit in our outer life is but a very small part of what goes to make up our character. The law penetrates to the thoughts and intents of the heart. It searches out the dark passions indulged in secret, the jealousies, envyings, theft, murder, malignity, ambition, and evil that lurk hidden from the eyes of men. How often do men exalt those in whose hearts are dark things that for want of opportunity to display themselves are kept from sight. But God's law registers all hidden evil. The wise man declares, “God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

Many who claim to believe that the law has a binding obligation upon human intelligences think lightly of secret sins, and carry themselves with boldness, as satisfied in their self-righteousness as if they were really doers of the word of God. Their work bears the impress of their defective character, and God cannot stand as their helper. God cannot cooperate with them.

Character is tested and registered by heaven more by the inward spirit, the hidden motive, than by that which appears to men. Men may have a pleasing exterior and be outwardly excellent, while they are but whited sepulchers full of corruption and uncleanness. Their works are registered as unsanctified, unholy. Their prayers and works, devoid of the righteousness of Christ, do not ascend before God as sweet fragrance, but they are abomination in the eyes of the Lord. To those who will open their eyes, the law presents a perfect likeness of the soul, a complete photograph of the inner man; and as this picture is unveiled before the sinner, he is constrained to acknowledge that he is sold under sin, but that the law is holy, and just, and good.²³

Examine your Bibles as you have never done before. Unless you arise to a higher, holier attitude in your religious life, you will not be ready for the appearing of our Lord.²⁴

Giving Up Our Idols

“If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell” (Matthew 5:29, 30).

The Lord is waiting to do great things for His people. But they must be pure in heart. . . . Let us humble our hearts before God and believe He has pardoned all our transgressions and forgiven all our sins. We cannot honor God unless we do believe this, and make Jesus our personal Saviour. We must as a people rise up from our formality. We must enter the straight gate. Satan has placed his active agents along the passage to dispute the way of every soul. Christ has encouraged His followers not to be intimidated. Press on; urge your way through. “Strive to enter in at the straight gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, shall not be able” (Matthew 13:24). Darling, cherished idols will have to be given up, and the sins that have been indulged, even if it comes as close as the plucking out of the right eye or cutting off the right arm. Agonize! Force your way through the very armies of hell that oppose your passage.

Oh we must be terribly in earnest to impress upon every soul that there is a heaven to win and a hell to shun. Every energy of the soul must be aroused to force their passage, and seize the kingdom by force. Satan is active, and we must be active too. Satan is untiring and persevering, and we must be the same. There is no time to make excuses and blame others for our backslidings; no time now to flatter the soul [that] if circumstances had only been more favorable, how much better, how much easier [it would be] for us to work the works of God. We must tell even those who profess to believe in Christ, that they must cease to offend God by their sinful excuses. Jesus has provided for every emergency. If they will walk where He leads the way, He will make rough places plain. He, with His experience will create an atmosphere for the soul. He closes the door and brings the soul into seclusion with God, and the needy soul is to forget everyone and everything but God. Satan will talk with him, but speak aloud to God, and He will drive back the hellish shadow of Satan. With humble, subdued, thankful hearts they will come forth saying, “Thy gentleness hath made me great” (Psalm 18:35).²⁵

The Safest Bank in Any Economy

“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:20, 21).

Laying up treasure in heaven points out the duty of an unselfish use of our means. We are stewards of God’s possessions; they are not ours to use for the gratification of corrupt desires, for selfish indulgences. All heaven is watching with interest to see what use we are making of God’s entrusted talents. If we lay up treasure in heaven, we shall use the Lord’s goods to advance His cause, to save souls, and to bless humanity, and all that is so used the Lord will place to our account in the bank that never fails. When the heart loves God supremely, property is no hindrance to advancement in the Christian warfare, because the consecrated man will discern the best investments to make, and will use his wealth to bless the children of God.

The constant employment of the capabilities to amass wealth on earth binds the man to earth. He becomes a slave to mammon. When wealth increases, the idolatrous heart becomes forgetful of God, and grows self-secure and satisfied. Religious duties are neglected. There is an impatience manifested under restraint, and the man becomes self-sufficient. All spiritual things are clouded, for the mind’s eye is directed earthward. The worldly tendencies, both by nature and practice, have become more fully developed, and the spiritual faculties are paralyzed. . . .

Oh, let us contemplate the amazing sacrifice that has been made for us! Let us try to appreciate the labor and energy heaven is expending to reclaim the lost, and bring them back to the Father’s house. Motives stronger, and agencies more powerful, could never be brought into operation—the enjoyment of heaven, the exceeding rewards for right-doing, the society of angels, the communion and love of God and His Son, the elevation and extension of all our powers throughout eternal ages; and it hath not “entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). Are these not mighty incentives and encouragements to urge us to give our heart’s loving service to our Creator and Redeemer?²⁶

Which Master Are You Choosing?

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24).

While the world is master of the thoughts, principles, and actions, the Lord cannot be honored. The current of the world sets in against the soul with such force that it is borne along with the tide of its interests and infatuations. Satan, the angel of evil, the arch-enemy of truth, the father of lies, having successfully carried out his plan of ruining a holy race, follows up his advantage, and strives by every means to hinder the salvation of man and his reinstatement in the favor of God. He keeps the mind preoccupied with the plans and ambitions of the world; and heaven and Christ are crowded out of the thoughts and affections. . . .

How many today see the force and beauty of the truth; but they cannot serve God and mammon, and they hold to the world. The truth requires the sacrifice of the world’s honor, their position in business, their daily bread; and they falter and fail. They do not consider the promises of God to those who seek first the kingdom of heaven. They raise the excuse, “I cannot be different from those around me. What will people say?” “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey?” (Romans 6:16). We must not study how to serve ourselves, but how to do the will of God. Christ left His glory, and clothed His divinity with humanity. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. For our sakes He became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. And yet, after this great manifestation of love on the part of Heaven, we are reluctant to yield our meager treasures, so soon to pass away. The majority of the world sell their souls for a little worldly gain, when Christ has presented to us eternal riches.²⁷

If we are true servants of God there should be no question in our minds as to whether we should obey His commandments or seek our own temporal interests.²⁸

If the believers in the truth are not sustained by their faith in these comparatively peaceful days, what will uphold them when the grand test comes, and the decree goes forth against all those who will not worship the image of the beast, and receive his mark in their foreheads or in their hands? This solemn period is not far off. Instead of becoming weak and irresolute, the people of God should be gathering strength and courage for the time of trouble.²⁹

The Power of the Golden Rule

“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

Would that we all could remember that worldlings feel at liberty to watch and criticize the professed followers of Christ. Our course in temporal matters, our conduct toward one another is commented upon with keenness and severity. What we say in the church is not of so great consequence as our deportment in the home circle and among our neighbors. The kindly word, the thoughtful act, true politeness and hospitality will constantly exert an influence in favor of the Christian religion. Let not the testimony be borne concerning any of us, “Religion has made them no better. They are as self-indulgent, as worldly, as sharp in trade, as ever.” All who bear such fruit scatter from Christ, instead of gathering with Him. They place obstacles in the way of those whom they might by a consistent course have won to Jesus. It is our duty as Christians to give to the world unmistakable evidence that we are obeying the great commandment, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 19:19).³⁰

The standard of the golden rule is the true standard of Christianity; anything short of it is a deception.

When those who profess the name of Christ shall practice the principles of the golden rule, the same power will attend the gospel as in apostolic times.³¹

Self is a hard tyrant, and while this power rules in the life, we cannot do unto others as we would have them do to us. To fulfil the golden rule, the life must be transformed, the human nature must become a partaker of the divine. . . .

It is not talk, it is not profession, or claims to piety and godliness that are of value with God, but it is the work of righteousness that reveals a Christlike character. To obey the law of God means to be quick to see the necessities of our fellow beings, and quick to help them without stopping to inquire, Do they believe the same doctrines that I believe? To obey God’s law means to act as God’s helping hand in relieving the necessities of suffering humanity, no matter what the religious belief of those in need. Those who do this work, and who are loyal to the principles of God’s truth, are living the gospel.³²

False Prophets Teach the Broad Way

“Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. . . . Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:14, 15, 20).

In every age false prophets have been the most dangerous enemies Christianity has had. Men have appeared who claimed to be champions of truth, professing to have a great burden for the souls of their fellowmen. But they taught false doctrines and perverted the truth. The spirit they manifested, the work they wrought, testified to the character of their religion. Such men have arisen and do arise, and will continue to arise in our own day. They will criticize, judge others, will be always ready for controversy, and will resist the truth. They will put false interpretations upon the Scriptures. They will misstate the words of those who advocate truth, and some who listen to them, who do not have spiritual discernment, will be misled by these false teachers. . . .

There are many who profess to know Christ, “but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Titus 1:16). “These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots” (Jude 12). There are many who can make excellent speeches, speak smooth things, and prophesy deceit; but they are not to be received simply because of their smooth words and fair speeches. It is an easy matter to talk. The question is, What fruit do they bear unto holiness? It is the fruit that testifies to the character of the tree. To say and to do not is to be as a tree full of pretentious leaves, yet barren and fruitless. The punishment that awaits the hypocrite will be unmingled with mercy. Those who profess to know Christ and in works have denied Him have passed themselves off as gold, but in the sight of God they have been as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. In professing faith in the gospel, the hypocrite may gain the confidence of men, but nothing short of doing the sayings of Christ will give him an entrance into the strait gate, into the way cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in—the only way that leads from earth to heaven.³³

An Example of Genuine Faith

“The centurion . . . said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel” (Matthew 8:8–10).

The centurion who desired Christ to come and heal his servant felt unworthy to have Jesus come under his roof; but his faith was so strong that he entreated him just to say the word, and the work of healing would be done. “When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour” (Matthew 8:10–13).

Jesus here exalts faith in contrast with doubt. He shows the cause of stumbling on the part of the children of Israel. Their unbelief would lead to the rejection of light and would result in their condemnation and overthrow.³⁴

What kind of power did this centurion think was vested in Jesus? He knew it was the power of God. . . . The centurion saw with the eye of faith that the angels of God were all around Jesus, and that His word would commission an angel to go to the sufferer. He knew that His word would enter the chamber, and that his servant would be healed. And how Christ commended this man’s faith! . . .

There are many outside our people who are in the favor of God, because they have lived up to all the light that God has given them. For . . . years we have been urging the people to come up and accept the light and the truth concerning the righteousness of Christ, and they do not know whether to come and take hold of this precious truth or not. They are bound about with their own ideas. They do not let the Saviour in. . . . Shall we not arise, and get out of this position of unbelief? Shall we not bruise Satan under our feet? I beseech of you, Come up where the living waters flow.³⁵

Watching Our Words

“A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matthew 12:35–37).

The words are an indication of that which is in the heart. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matthew 12:34). But the words are more than an indication of character; they have power to react on the character. Men are influenced by their own words. Often under a momentary impulse prompted by Satan, they give utterance to jealousy or evil surmising, expressing that which they do not really believe; but the expression reacts on the thoughts. They are deceived by their words, and come to believe that true which was spoken at Satan’s instigation. Having once expressed an opinion or decision, they are often too proud to retract it, and try to prove themselves in the right, until they come to believe that they are. It is dangerous to utter a word of doubt, dangerous to question and criticize divine light. The habit of careless and irreverent criticism reacts upon the character, in fostering irreverence and unbelief. Many a man indulging this habit has gone on unconscious of danger, until he was ready to criticize and reject the work of the Holy Spirit.³⁶

Young and old have a conflict, a warfare, before them. They should not sleep for a moment. A wily foe is constantly on the alert to lead them astray and overcome them. Believers in present truth must be as watchful as their enemy and manifest wisdom in resisting Satan. Will they do this? Will they persevere in this warfare? Will they be careful to depart from all iniquity? Christ is denied in many ways. We may deny Him by speaking contrary to truth, by speaking evil of others, by foolish talking or jesting, or by words that are idle. In these things we manifest but little shrewdness or wisdom. We make ourselves weak; our efforts are feeble to resist our great enemy, and we are conquered. Through lack of watchfulness we confess that Christ is not in us. . . . Why should we wish to keep the friendship of our Lord’s enemies, and follow their customs, and be led by their opinions? There must be an entire, unreserved surrender to God, a forsaking and turning away from the love of the world and earthly things, or we cannot be Christ’s disciples.³⁷

Beware of Neglecting the Soul!

“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first” (Matthew 12:43–45).

There were many in Christ’s day, as there are today, over whom the control of Satan for the time seemed broken; through the grace of God they were set free from the evil spirits that had held dominion over the soul. They rejoiced in the love of God; but, like the stony-ground hearers of the parable, they did not abide in His love. They did not surrender themselves to God daily, that Christ might dwell in the heart; and when the evil spirit returned, with “seven other spirits more wicked than himself” (Matthew 12:45), they were wholly dominated by the power of evil.

When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature. The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan. But unless we do yield ourselves to the control of Christ, we shall be dominated by the wicked one. We must inevitably be under the control of the one or the other of the two great powers that are contending for the supremacy of the world. It is not necessary for us deliberately to choose the service of the kingdom of darkness in order to come under its dominion. We have only to neglect to ally ourselves with the kingdom of light. If we do not cooperate with the heavenly agencies, Satan will take possession of the heart, and will make it his abiding place. The only defense against evil is the indwelling of Christ in the heart through faith in His righteousness. Unless we become vitally connected with God, we can never resist the unhallowed effects of self-love, self-indulgence, and temptation to sin. We may leave off many bad habits, for the time we may part company with Satan; but without a vital connection with God, through the surrender of ourselves to Him moment by moment, we shall be overcome.³⁸

Our Real Relatives

“Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Matthew 12:50).

Christ never manifested any lack of respect for His mother or His brothers; but . . . He knew that some present would accept His words, and that this course would bring to them determined opposition from fathers and mothers and relatives. . . .

Says Christ, Obedience to My Father in heaven is filial obedience. This is the bond of union between Me and all who shall become members of the heavenly family. All who accept the word of truth will enter the hallowed circle that binds to Me every believer as brother or sister or mother.³⁹

What a support Christ would have found in His earthly relatives if they had believed in Him as one from heaven, and had cooperated with Him in doing the work of God! Their unbelief cast a shadow over the earthly life of Jesus. It was a part of the bitterness of that cup of woe which He drained for us.

The enmity kindled in the human heart against the gospel was keenly felt by the Son of God, and it was most painful to Him in His home; for His own heart was full of kindness and love, and He appreciated tender regard in the family relation. His brothers desired that He should concede to their ideas, when such a course would have been utterly out of harmony with His divine mission. They looked upon Him as in need of their counsel. They judged Him from their human point of view, and thought that if He would speak only such things as would be acceptable to the scribes and Pharisees, He would avoid the disagreeable controversy that His words aroused. . . .

With their short measuring line they could not fathom the mission which He came to fulfill, and therefore could not sympathize with Him in His trials. Their coarse, unappreciative words showed that they had no true perception of His character, and did not discern that the divine blended with the human. They often saw Him full of grief; but instead of comforting Him, their spirit and words only wounded His heart. His sensitive nature was tortured, His motives were misunderstood, His work was uncomprehended.⁴⁰

If we are doing the will of God, we are counted as the brethren and sisters of our Master. We are to remember this in our daily life. We are to be in harmony with God, but at enmity with Satan. There is too much fellowship with the prince of darkness.⁴¹

Rest Assured

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).

Your fears and uncertainties that rob you of peace and rest, [Jesus] would remove; but you must come to Him, and tell Him the secret woes of your heart.⁴²

Jesus invites the weary and heavy laden with promises of rest if they will come to Him. He invites them to exchange the galling yoke of selfishness and covetousness, which makes them slaves to mammon, for His yoke, which He declares is easy, and His burden, which is light. . . .

He would have them lay aside the heavy burdens of worldly cares and perplexities, and take His yoke, which is self-denial and sacrifice for others. This burden will prove to be light. Those who refuse to accept the relief Christ offers them, and will continue to wear the galling yoke of selfishness, tasking their souls to the utmost in plans to accumulate money for selfish gratification, have not experienced the peace and rest found in bearing the yoke of Christ, and lifting the burdens of self-denial and disinterested benevolence which Christ has borne in their behalf.⁴³

“Come unto me,” says Christ, “and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). How much lighter than the burden of sin and iniquity that you take along. How much lighter than the conscience which is constantly stinging and reproaching you. A violated conscience is hard to be endured. How much easier is the yoke of Christ than all this!

The trouble is, the meekness is lacking; the lowliness is not there. We are not willing to come right down to the simplicity of the gospel. We want honor one of another. We are not willing to suffer affliction with the people of God, as was Moses. We are not willing to have our names cast out as evil. And although all heaven is inviting us to break away from the influence of earth and fix our eye upon things of immortal worth, yet we keep them fixed upon the bubbles of earth. We are unwilling to have our affections elevated. We are like a prostrate vine, its tendrils clinging to worthless stubble. Let your tendrils entwine around the throne of God.⁴⁴

“Peace, Be Still”

“There arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And [Jesus] was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm” (Mark 4:37–39).

When Jesus was awakened to meet the storm, He was in perfect peace. There was no trace of fear in word or look, for no fear was in His heart. But He rested not in the possession of almighty power. It was not as the “Master of earth and sea and sky” that He reposed in quiet. That power He had laid down, and He says, “I can of Mine own self do nothing” (John 5:30). He trusted in the Father’s might. It was in faith—faith in God’s love and care—that Jesus rested, and the power of that word which stilled the storm was the power of God.

As Jesus rested by faith in the Father’s care, so we are to rest in the care of our Saviour. If the disciples had trusted in Him, they would have been kept in peace. Their fear in the time of danger revealed their unbelief. In their efforts to save themselves, they forgot Jesus; and it was only when, in despair of self-dependence, they turned to Him that He could give them help.

How often the disciples’ experience is ours! When the tempests of temptation gather, and the fierce lightnings flash, and the waves sweep over us, we battle with the storm alone, forgetting that there is One who can help us. We trust to our own strength till our hope is lost, and we are ready to perish. Then we remember Jesus, and if we call upon Him to save us, we shall not cry in vain. Though He sorrowfully reproves our unbelief and self-confidence, He never fails to give us the help we need. Whether on the land or on the sea, if we have the Saviour in our hearts, there is no need of fear. Living faith in the Redeemer will smooth the sea of life, and will deliver us from danger in the way that He knows to be best. . . .

Sin has destroyed our peace. While self is unsubdued, we can find no rest. The masterful passions of the heart no human power can control. We are as helpless here as were the disciples to quiet the raging storm. But He who spoke peace to the billows of Galilee has spoken the word of peace for every soul. However fierce the tempest, those who turn to Jesus with the cry, “Lord, save us,” will find deliverance.⁴⁵

Victory Over the Legion

“He that had been possessed with the devil prayed [his Saviour] that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee” (Mark 5:18, 19).

Christ saw humanity, through the working of the mighty growth of sin, demoniacally possessed by the prince of the power of the air, and putting forth gigantic strength in exploits of evil. But He saw also that a mightier power was to meet and conquer Satan. “Now is the judgment of this world,” He said; “now shall the prince of this world be cast out” (John 12:31). He saw that if human beings believed in Him, they would be given power against the host of fallen angels, whose name is legion. Christ strengthened His own soul by the thought that by the wonderful sacrifice which He was about to make, the prince of this world was to be cast out, and men and women placed where, through the grace of God, they would regain what they had lost.⁴⁶

Selfishness is a demon whose name is legion; in every age it has seemed that this demon would drive Christ and the spirit of self-sacrifice out of the world. Through its influence the church is weak when it ought to be a power. . . .

What has Jesus done to rescue a lost world from perdition? He did not send an angel to redeem the fallen world; but for our sakes He became a “man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). The love of Christ—how deep, how broad, how full! He designed to save man by His own infinite sacrifice. The cross of Calvary was to be to men a convincing argument that His interest and theirs were identical. . . .

Now those whom Christ calls His own, whom He has sacrificed so much for, will not, cannot, enjoy anything selfishly. Their interest will be identified with that of their Redeemer.⁴⁷

The first missionary that Jesus sent to the region of Decapolis was the man out of whom he had cast the legion of devils. The man had begged to accompany Jesus constantly, but Jesus “suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee” (Mark 5:19). This man bore in his own person the evidence that Jesus was the true Messiah. He related his own experience, telling how great things God had done for him.⁴⁸

Vitalizing Faith

“A woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind [Jesus], and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanchèd. And Jesus said, Who touched me? . . . And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace” (Luke 8:43–45, 47, 48).

To talk of religious things in a casual way, to pray for spiritual blessings without real soul hunger and living faith, avails little. The wondering crowd that pressed close about Christ realized no vital power from the contact. But when the poor, suffering woman, in her great need, put forth her hand and touched the hem of Jesus’ garment, she felt the healing virtue. Hers was the touch of faith. Christ recognized that touch, and He determined there to give a lesson for all His followers to the close of time. He knew that virtue had gone out of Him, and turning about in the throng he said, “Who touched my clothes?” Surprised at such a question, His disciples answered, “Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?” (Mark 5:30, 31).

Jesus fixed His eyes upon her who had done this. She was filled with fear. Great joy was hers; but had she overstepped her duty? Knowing what was done in her, she came trembling, and fell at His feet, and told Him all the truth. Christ did not reproach her. He gently said, “Go in peace, and be whole of thy plague” (verse 34).

Here was distinguished the casual contact from the touch of faith. Prayer and preaching, without the exercise of living faith in God, will be in vain. But the touch of faith opens to us the divine treasure house of power and wisdom; and thus, through instruments of clay, God accomplishes the wonders of His grace.

This living faith is our great need today. We must know that Jesus is indeed ours; that His Spirit is purifying and refining our hearts. If the followers of Christ had genuine faith, with meekness and love, what a work they might accomplish!⁴⁹

It was living faith that caused the woman . . . to touch the hem of Christ’s garment. This is the faith that we must have, and then we shall not speak of our trials and conflicts; for through them all, we shall have joy unspeakable and full of glory.⁵⁰

The Mission of the Seventy

“The Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest” (Luke 10:1, 2).

Jesus’ great heart of love was filled with longing to proclaim the words of life to all nationalities, and He did this in a large measure. He placed Himself in the great thoroughfares of travel, where the crowds passed to and fro, and preached to large concourses of different peoples. But He saw numerous fields opening up for missionary labor. There was abundant opportunity for the twelve disciples to work, and not only for them, but for a very large number of workers. He educated a larger number to employ in missionary work. . . .

The instruction was after the same order as He gave to the twelve when He sent them forth. “Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth” (Luke 12:33). They were not to keep their goods, bind them up in a napkin, and hide them in the earth. The Lord would have them put to use the talents He had given them, and put them out to the exchangers, by using every ability of money, mind, or influence in furthering the communication of the light of truth to souls who sat in darkness.⁵¹

The disciples were not only to preach the kingdom of God, but were to heal the sick, and prepare the field for the coming of the great Physician. They were to proclaim His divine character, and awaken an interest in the minds of the people, announcing Him to be the Messiah, and giving publicity to His work and mission.

These disciples were enjoined to salute no man by the way. They were not to enter into formal salutations that would open a way for controversy. . . . [Christ] sent them forth empty-handed, to depend upon the hospitality of those whom they should meet. They were in no way to disguise their humble origin. As they mingled with the people, they were to sit with them at their tables, to go with those who should invite them, to pay no attention to caste or position. Their one object was to proclaim the Gospel to every man, no matter what might be the nation or character of their hearers.⁵²

The Urgency of the Hour

“And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead” (Matthew 8:21, 22).

A soul is of more value than all the world; and to let things of a temporal nature come in between us and the work of saving souls is displeasing to the God of heaven. . . . We have as yet scarcely begun to realize the importance of the work entrusted to us. . . .

When souls are deciding for or against the truth, do not, I beseech you, allow yourselves to be drawn away from your field of labor. Do not abandon it to the enemy, I might say, even if one lay dead in your house. Christ said, “Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead” (Matthew 8:22). . . .

Christ meant something when He said, “And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life” (Matthew 19:29). He intended to impress upon us the fact that we must make eternal things of first importance, and so relate ourselves to the cause and work of God that we shall not be hindered by things of a temporal nature. Everything of this character must come in secondary. The armor of God, once put on, is not to be laid off for slight excuses.

What we need now is untiring energy and perseverance, so that we will not be broken off from the work by difficulties and home perplexities. If we do allow our interest to be thus separated, the enemy will understand it, and he will make trouble right in our families to draw us away from the work. But if we firmly take our stand as God’s workmen, saying, “The Lord has given us a message, and we cannot be faithful watchmen unless we stand at our post of duty; we will carry the work through at all hazards,” then we shall find that angels of God will minister to our households at home, and will say to the enemy, “Stand back.” It is a great and solemn work in which we are engaged, and God will help us to carry it forward, if we learn to rely wholly upon Him. . . .

Some have made it a point never to let temporal matters come between them and the work of God, and they have lost much in consequence of this. But what of that? What are temporal things when compared with the eternal? We have enlisted in the army of the Lord, and now let none of us create such a condition of things that we shall have to desert it.⁵³

Witnessing Under Persecution

“When they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Mark 13:11–13).

You need not be surprised that God will flash the knowledge obtained by diligent searching of the Scriptures into your memory at the very time when it is needed. But if you let the precious moments of probationary time pass, and neglect to fill your minds and the minds of your children with the gems of truth, if you are not acquainted with the words of Christ, if you have never tested the power of His grace in trial, you cannot expect that the Holy Spirit will bring Christ’s words to your remembrance. We are to serve God daily with our undivided affection, and then trust Him. . . .

You must carry Christ with you to the very close of probationary time, and let no man take your crown; keep an eye single to the glory of God, and stand as did Paul, believing that God has power to keep that which has been committed to His trust against that day. In believing that God will keep that which has been committed to His trust, we show confidence in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But we desire you to understand what you are to do at the present time. You are to keep your eye single to the glory of God. There is too much talk and too little prayer. A great deal more is spoken of things that we think we know and understand, than should be spoken, because our knowledge is only superficial. There should be more humble trust and confidence in our Saviour. We should have the simplicity of Christ; we want to be like Him, having our lives hid with Christ in God. . . .

We expect trials to come in these last days; we are not looking for anything else; but may God give us grace that we may endure the trials when they do come, and not faint under persecution. We do not desire to be in a position where we shall have no strength at that time. Then let us become acquainted with God now.⁵⁴

Persevere in Prayer

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened” (Luke 11:9, 10).

How can we believe that we shall receive the things we ask for, when we have no evidence that we shall? God’s word is pledged. Is not that sufficient evidence? If we grasp the promises by living faith, trusting entirely in Jesus, the blessing will come in due time. It may not come in the way we expect; but it will come in the way that God directs, and by the means that He chooses to employ. Satan may tempt you to think that the Lord has forgotten you; but tell him that the word of the Lord standeth sure, having this seal, “The Lord knoweth them that are his” (2 Timothy 2:19); and keep on praying.

Again: Satan may try to tempt you by saying that God will not have pity upon you and hear your prayers, because you are such a sinner. Do not listen to his story; but throw right into his face the words of our Saviour, “I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matthew 9:13). If we were not sinners, we would have no need of a Saviour. We are sick with sin from the crown of our head to the sole of our feet, and this is why we need a Physician. While we are not to approach the throne of God in self-righteousness and self-sufficiency, thinking that we have any goodness to recommend us to Him; while we are not to forget our weakness and sinfulness, it is at the same time our duty to believe that Jesus will impart to us of His healing, strengthening power. Our faith must grasp the eternal. We must move from principle, looking not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen.

It is difficult to exercise living faith when we are in darkness and discouragement. But this of all others is the very time when we should exercise faith. “But,” says one, “I do not feel at such times like praying in faith.” Well, then, will you allow Satan to gain the victory, simply because you do not *feel* like resisting him? When he sees that you have the greatest need of divine aid, he will try the hardest to beat you back from God. If he can keep you away from the Source of strength, he knows that you will walk in darkness and sin. There is no sin greater than unbelief. And when there is unbelief in the heart, there is danger that it will be expressed. The lips should be kept in as with bit and bridle.⁵⁵

Rest in the Lord

“The apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat” (Mark 6:30, 31).

An intensity such as never before was seen is taking possession of the world. In amusements, in money-making, in the contest for power, in the very struggle for existence, there is a terrible force that engrosses body and mind and soul. In the midst of this maddening rush, God is speaking. He bids us come apart and commune with Him. “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). . . .

The abiding rest—the consciousness that God is true—who has it? That rest is found when all self-justification is put away, and an entire surrender is made to Christ, to be and do only what He wills. Those who do not comply with these conditions cannot find rest.

Let us turn aside from the dusty, heated thoroughfares of life to rest in the shadow of Christ’s love, and learn from Him the lesson of quiet trust. Not a pause for a moment in His presence, but personal contact with Christ, to sit down in companionship with Him—this is our need. Many, even in their seasons of devotion, fail of receiving the blessing of real communion with God. They are in too great haste. With hurried steps they press through the circle of Christ’s loving presence, pausing perhaps a moment within the sacred precincts, but not waiting for counsel. They have no time to remain with the divine Teacher. With their burdens they return to their work.

These workers can never attain the highest success until they learn the secret of strength. They must give themselves time to think, to pray, to wait upon God for a renewal of physical, mental, and spiritual power. They need the uplifting of His Spirit. Receiving this, they will be quickened by fresh life. The wearied frame and tired brain will be refreshed, and the burdened heart will be lightened and encouraged.

Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. He will be to you as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. He will give you rest that the world can neither give nor take away. Come unto Me, He says, and your heart will be filled with the peace that passes all understanding.¹

More of Jesus

"[Jesus and the apostles] departed into a desert place by ship privately. And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him. And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things" (Mark 6:32-34).

When our weakness becomes strength in the strength of Christ, we shall not be craving for amusement. These holidays that are considered so indispensable will not be used simply for the gratification of self, but will be turned into occasions in which you can bless and enlighten souls. When weary, Jesus sought for a place of rest in the desert, but the people had had a taste of the heavenly manna, and they came out to Him in large companies. In all their human woe and suffering and distress, they sought His retreat, and there was no rest for the Son of God. His heart was moved with compassion, for they were as sheep without a shepherd, and His great heart of love was touched with the feeling of their infirmities, and He taught them concerning the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus has presented to us precious truth full of spiritual light and vitality. But has this truth been brought into the inner sanctuary of the soul? Does Christ abide in your hearts by faith? If Christ is in you, you will make Him manifest to others. We must have more of Jesus, and less, far less, of self. The prayer of our hearts should be, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God" (Psalm 42:1). Jesus must abide in the heart; and where He is, the carnal desires will be subdued and be kept in subjection by the operation of the Spirit of God. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:4, 5).

I feel like mourning that the image of Christ is not clearly discernible in those who profess to be His followers; for I know that Jesus is disappointed, that the heavenly intelligences are disappointed, and those who are seeking for the truth are disappointed. Unless Christ is formed within, the hope of glory, you cannot rightly represent Him to those with whom you come in contact.²

Bread for All

"There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would" (John 6:9-11).

In full reliance upon God, Jesus took the small store of loaves; and although there was but a small supply for His own family of disciples, He did not invite them to eat but began to distribute to them, bidding them serve the people. The food multiplied in His hands; and the hands of the disciples, reaching out to Christ, Himself the Bread of Life, were never empty. The little store was sufficient for all. After the wants of the people had been supplied, the fragments were gathered up, and Christ and His disciples ate of the precious, heaven-supplied food.

The disciples were the channel of communication between Christ and the people. This should be a great encouragement to His disciples today. Christ is the great Center, the Source of all strength. His disciples are to receive their supplies from Him. The most intelligent, the most spiritually minded, can bestow only as they receive. Of themselves they can supply nothing for the needs of the soul. We can impart only as we receive, and we can receive only as we impart. As we continue to impart, we shall continue to receive; and the more we impart, the more we shall receive.³

As we seek to proclaim the truth for this time, angels of God will be present to minister to the hearts of the people. These heavenly angels are all around us, waiting for opportunities to impress the minds of the people, that they in turn may become instruments in carrying the truth to other souls.

My brethren and sisters, we need to be converted. We need the power of the living God to come upon us. . . . Let us begin to put forth earnest efforts to carry the truth to places where it is needed. Let us seek for the souls that are perishing around us. . . . We cannot do anything to help ourselves, for we are poor mortals beset with temptations on the right hand and on the left. But with the help that Christ will give us, we may become established in the doctrines of the Word, and give its teachings to others. As we explain the Word of God, heavenly angels will be present to minister grace to the speaker and to the hearers.⁴

Walking on Water

“The ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. . . . Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. . . . And Peter . . . said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” (Matthew 14:24, 25, 28–31).

Ardent Peter is nearly beside himself with delight. He sees his Master boldly treading the foam-wreathed waves, coming to save His followers, and he loves his Lord as never before. He yearns to embrace and worship Him. He longs to meet Him and walk by His side upon the stormy water. He cries, “Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water” (Matthew 14:28). Jesus granted his request; but Peter had taken only a step upon the surface of the boiling deep, when he looked back proudly toward his companions to see if they were watching his movements, and admiring the ease with which he trod upon the yielding water.

In taking his eyes from Jesus, they fell upon the boisterous waves that seemed greedily threatening to swallow him; their roaring filled his ears, his head swam, his heart failed him with fear. As he is sinking, he recovers presence of mind sufficient to remember that there is One near who can rescue him. He stretches out his arms toward Jesus, crying, “Lord, save me, or I perish!” The pitying Saviour grasps the trembling hands that are reached toward Him, and lifts the sinking form beside His own. Never does that kindly face and that arm of strength turn from the supplicating hands that are stretched out for mercy. Peter clings to his Lord with humble trust, while Jesus mildly reproaches him: “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” (verse 31).

The trembling disciple now clings firmly to the hand of the Master till they are both safely seated in the boat among their joyful companions. But Peter was subdued and silent; he had no reason to boast over his fellows, for he had very nearly lost his life through exaltation and unbelief. When he took his eyes from Jesus in order to note the admiration of others, he lost guidance, and doubt and fear seized upon him. So it is in the Christian life; nothing but an eye firmly fixed upon the Saviour will enable us to tread the stormy billows of the world.⁵

Nourished to Endure

“He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. . . . Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? . . . From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:56, 57, 60, 66–68).

God knows who among us will turn aside and give heed to seducing spirits. He knows those who are cherishing defects of character, and permitting these defects to have an overcoming power upon them, until they shall be led, as was Judas, to betray their Lord. . . .

Christ brought a testing truth to bear upon His disciples . . . and had they borne the test, they would have manifested the faith that makes the soul a partaker of the divine nature; but the test found their faith an empty profession, and at the suggestion of the enemy they were turned against their Lord. The difficulties, the self-denials, seemed more than they could surmount, and they walked no more with Him.

We shall all be tested by trial and temptation, and we shall be able to endure only by having genuine faith, by having root in ourselves. It will not do for us to depend upon others. We must know that we have a hold from above. May God help us to realize the importance of examining our hearts to see whether or not we are in the faith. There are many who will fail because they do not gather every ray of light emanating from the word of life; they do not cherish the divine precepts, and dwell upon the precious promises of God. If they did this, fruits of righteousness would appear in their life, and every day they would be growing stronger and stronger, and more and more like Christ.

Our bodies are composed of what we eat; and by partaking of nourishing food, we have good blood, firm muscles, and vigorous health. So in our spiritual nature, we are composed of what we dwell upon. If we take the lessons which Christ has given us and make them practical, living out His instructions, we are then eating the flesh and drinking the blood of our Saviour, and becoming more and more like Him in life and character.⁶

March 6

God's Law Supreme

"In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. . . . Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matthew 15:9, 13, 14).

Men of evil minds bring in false doctrines, and in many cases these false doctrines have supplanted the truth of God. The Lord designed that His church should not receive the commandments of men, but acknowledge His law alone. He designed that the pure, unadulterated truth should be proclaimed in the world. Self-denial and cross-bearing was to characterize His children. They were to represent to the world the character of Christ, and keep before the world a representation of the eternal world; for among them was to be found the spirit, the character, that should be developed by coming under the control of the divine government. They were to be obedient to higher laws than the princes of this world originate, and yield submission to a greater power than kings can command.⁷

The one who first brought temptation into the courts of heaven is constantly working against the peace and prosperity of the church on earth. To those who will listen to his words, Satan represents the authority of the church as harsh and lacking in sympathy, because it seeks to free the members from corrupting influences. It was Satan's purpose in heaven to dethrone God and himself take the place of the Most High. He failed in this purpose and was cast out from the heavenly courts; and since that time he has tried to instill in the hearts of men and women the belief that God is arbitrary and harsh in His dealings with His creatures.

The church does injustice to God when it allows to exist as part of itself elements that are bringing dishonor to His cause. In the responsibilities God has laid upon His church, He gives to each individual a part to act, with encouragement to draw upon the wisdom of God for His help. But there are those who depart from the way of the Lord, and who take sides with the tempter and his sympathizers; and there should be those in the church who in the fear of God will act with justice and righteousness and faithfulness in administering reproof.⁸

By the words, "Let them alone" (Matthew 15:14), Christ did not mean that His followers were to make no effort to correct their untruthful doctrines. He was charging His disciples to enter into no controversy with them.⁹

March 7

Great Faith Where Least Expected

"A certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of [Jesus], and came and fell at his feet: The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter" (Mark 7:25-29).

Jesus had just departed from His field of labor because the scribes and Pharisees were seeking to take His life. They murmured and complained, they manifested unbelief and bitterness, and refused the salvation so freely offered them. Here Christ meets one of an unfortunate and despised race that has not been favored with the light of God's word; yet she yields at once to the divine influence of Christ, and has implicit faith in his ability to grant the favor she asks. She begs for the crumbs that fall from the Master's table. If she may have the privilege of a dog, she is willing to be regarded as a dog. She has no national or religious prejudice or pride to influence her course, and she immediately acknowledges Jesus as the Redeemer, and as being able to do all that she asks of Him.

The Saviour is satisfied. He has tested her confidence in Him, and He now grants her request, and finishes the lesson to the disciples. Turning to her with a look of pity and love, he says, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt" (Matthew 15:28). From that hour her daughter became whole. The demon troubled her no more. The woman departed, acknowledging her Saviour, and happy in the granting of her prayer.

This was the only miracle that Jesus wrought while on this journey. It was for the performance of this act that He went to the borders of Tyre and Sidon. He wished to relieve the afflicted woman, and at the same time to leave an example in His work of mercy toward one of a despised people for the benefit of His disciples when He should no longer be with them. He wished to lead them from their Jewish exclusiveness to be interested in working for others besides their own people.

This act opened the minds of the disciples more fully to the labor that lay before them among the Gentiles. They saw a wide field of usefulness outside of Judea.¹⁰

March 8

The Only Sign

“When the people were gathered thick together, [Jesus] began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation” (Luke 11:29, 30).

It was not Christ’s mission to exalt Himself as an astrologer. His work was with sinful human beings, whom he came to save from hopeless woe and misery. The angel that foretold His birth declared, “Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). . . .

Even the wicked Herod could perceive the greatness of the works of Christ; but the scribes and Pharisees could not be convinced. The works which they could not explain away they charged to the agency of the devil. The Holy Spirit was sent down to bless this people, but they barred the door of their hearts against His influence. Christ well knew that however strong and uncontroversial the evidence He might give them, they would not receive it. Therefore He kept steadily at the work which had been planned in the councils of heaven, healing the sick and relieving the oppressed. He knew that in this work He was giving ample proof of His mission to those who were honest in heart. His heart was grieved by their obstinacy and determined resistance of light and truth. . . .

We are to learn a lesson from the sin of this people. Today there are many who have taken their position on the side of unbelief, as if it were a virtue, the sign of a great mind, to doubt. Because the works of God cannot be explained by finite minds, Satan brings his sophistry to bear upon them, and entangles them in the meshes of unbelief. If these doubting ones would come into close connection with God, He would make His purposes clear to their understanding.

The position of those who resist light is thus set forth by the apostle Paul: “If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4). The operation of the Spirit is foolishness to the unrenewed heart; but to those who are humble, teachable, honest, childlike, and who desire to know the will of the Father, His word is revealed as the power of God unto salvation.¹¹

March 9

Healthy Individual Discernment

“[Jesus] asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 16:13–17).

The truth which Peter had confessed is the foundation of the believer’s faith. It is that which Christ Himself has declared to be eternal life. But the possession of this knowledge was no ground for self-glorification. Through no wisdom or goodness of his own had it been revealed to Peter. . . . Only the spirit of adoption can reveal to us the deep things of God.¹²

If we get the wisdom of man before us as the wisdom of God, we are led astray by the foolishness of man’s wisdom. Here is the great danger with many. They have not an experience for themselves. They have not been in the habit of prayerfully considering for themselves, with unprejudiced, unbiased judgment, questions and subjects that are new, which are liable to arise. They wait to see what others will think. If they dissent, that is all that is needed. The evidence in their own minds then is positive that it is all of no account whatever. This class is not small; but although their numbers are large, it does not change the fact that they are weak minded through long yielding to the enemy, inexperienced, and will always be as sickly as babes, walking by others’ light, living on others’ experience, feeling as others feel, acting as others act. They act as though they had not an individuality. Their identity is submerged in others. They are merely shadows of others whom they think about right. These will all fail of everlasting life unless they become sensible of their wavering character and correct it. They will be unable to cope with the perils of the last days. They will possess no stamina to resist the devil; for they do not know that it is he. Someone must be at their side to inform them whether it is a foe approaching, or a friend. They are not spiritual, therefore spiritual things are not discerned. They are not wise in those things which relate to the kingdom of God. None, young or old, are excusable in trusting to another to have an experience for them. . . . A noble self-reliance is needed in the Christian experience and warfare.¹³

Heaven's Glory in the Last Days

“Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light” (Matthew 17:1, 2).

While Jesus bows in lowliness upon the damp and stony ground, suddenly the heavens open, the golden gates of the City of God are thrown wide, and holy radiance descends upon the mount, enshrouding the kneeling form of Christ. He arises from His prostrate position, and stands in Godlike majesty; the soul-agony is gone from His countenance, which now shines with a serene light, and His garments are no longer coarse and soiled, but white and glittering like the noonday sun.

The sleeping disciples are awakened by the flood of glory that illuminates the whole mount. They gaze with fear and amazement upon the shining garments and radiant countenance of their Master. . . . Two glorious figures stand engaged in conversation with Him. They are Moses, who talked with God face to face amid the thunder and lightnings of Sinai, and Elijah, that prophet of God who did not see death, but was conducted to heaven in a chariot of fire. These two, whom God had seen fit to favor above all others who ever lived upon earth, were delegated by the Father to bring the glory of heaven to His Son, and comfort Him.¹⁴

Previous to His transfiguration, Jesus had told His disciples that there were some then with Him who should not see death until they should see the kingdom of God come with power. In the transfiguration on the mount, this promise was fulfilled, for they there saw the kingdom of Christ in miniature.¹⁵

At the transfiguration, Jesus was glorified by His Father. From His lips came these words: “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him” (John 13:31). Before His betrayal and crucifixion He was strengthened for His last dreadful sufferings. As the members of Christ's body approach the period of their final conflict they will grow up into Him, and will possess symmetrical characters. As the message of the third angel swells to a loud cry, great power and glory will attend the closing work. It is the latter rain which revives and strengthens the people of God to pass through the time of Jacob's trouble referred to by the prophets. The glory of that light which attends the third angel will be reflected upon them. God will preserve His people through that time of peril.¹⁶

Facing Momentous Obstacles

“There came to [Jesus] a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. . . . And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17:14–16, 18–21).

Whenever it is necessary for the advancement of the cause of truth and the glory of God that an opponent be met, how carefully and with what humility should [the advocates of truth] go into the conflict. With heart-searching, confession of sin, and earnest prayer, and often fasting for a time, they should entreat that God would especially help them and give His saving, precious truth a glorious victory, that error might appear in its true deformity and its advocates be completely discomfited. Those who battle for the truth, against its opposers, should realize that they are not meeting merely men, but that they are contending with Satan and his angels, who are determined that error and darkness shall retain the field and the truth be covered up with error. As error is most in accordance with the natural heart, it is taken for granted to be clear. Men who are at ease love error and darkness and are unwilling to be reformed by the truth. . . . If those who stand in vindication of the truth, trust to the weight of argument, with but a feeble reliance upon God, and thus meet their opponents, nothing will be gained on the side of truth, but there will be a decided loss.¹⁷

With fasting and earnest prayer, with deep heart searching, stern self-examination, lay bare the soul; let no act escape your critical examination. Then, with self dead and your life hid with Christ in God, offer your humble petitions. If you regard iniquity in your heart, the Lord will not hear you. If He had heard your prayers, you would have been exalted. . . . Oh, how important it is that faithfulness in little things characterize our lives, that true integrity mark all our course of action, and that we ever bear in mind that angels of God are taking cognizance of every act!¹⁸

The Greatest Ones Serve

“If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all” (Mark 9:35).

Those who profess our exalted faith, who are keeping God’s commandments and expecting the soon coming of our Lord, should be distinct and separate from the world around them, a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Among the peculiarities which should distinguish God’s people from the world in these last days is their humility and meekness. “Learn of me,” says Christ, “for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:29). Here is the repose which so many crave and in vain spend time and money to obtain.

Instead of being ambitious to be equal with or higher than another in honor and position, we should seek to be the humble, faithful servants of Christ. This spirit of self-aggrandizement made contention among the apostles even while Christ was with them. They disputed who should be greatest among them. . . .

When the mother of two sons made a request that her sons should be especially favored, one sitting on the right hand and the other on the left in His kingdom, Jesus impressed upon them that the honor and glory of His kingdom was to be the reverse of the honor and glory of this world. Whoever would be great must be a humble minister unto others, and who would be chief must be a servant, even as the Son of God was a minister and servant unto the children of men.¹⁹

Christ says, “Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” “Take my yoke upon you” (Matthew 11:29). Shall we do this? Shall we wear the yoke of Christ? Shall we be renewed in the spirit of our mind, and daily cultivate humility and childlike simplicity, and be willing to be the least of all and the servant of all? Without this spirit our life is not hid with Christ in God. The self-importance which many manifest is exactly opposite to the meekness and lowliness of Christ. Those who think least of self and most of Jesus will be greatest in the kingdom of heaven.²⁰

“He that is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matthew 23:11), declared Christ. He that doeth service will humble himself, and in so doing he will be placed where the Lord can safely honor him, because he has the Spirit of Christ.²¹

Childlike Faith

“Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:2–6).

It was not enough for the disciples of Jesus to be instructed as to the nature of His kingdom. What they needed was a change of heart that would bring them into harmony with its principles. Calling a little child to Him, Jesus set him in the midst of them; then tenderly folding the little one in His arms He said, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3). The simplicity, the self-forgetfulness, and the confiding love of a little child are the attributes that Heaven values. These are the characteristics of real greatness.

Again Jesus explained to the disciples that His kingdom is not characterized by earthly dignity and display. At the feet of Jesus all these distinctions are forgotten. The rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, meet together, with no thought of caste or worldly preeminence. All meet as blood-bought souls, alike dependent upon One who has redeemed them to God.

The sincere, contrite soul is precious in the sight of God. He places His own signet upon men, not by their rank, not by their wealth, not by their intellectual greatness, but by their oneness with Christ. The Lord of glory is satisfied with those who are meek and lowly in heart. “Thou hast also given me,” said David, “the shield of thy salvation: . . . and thy gentleness”—as an element in the human character—“hath made me great” (Psalm 18:35).²²

When ministers and people will exchange their natural pride of heart and independence for a childlike, teachable spirit; when, instead of trusting to their own understanding, and conforming to the maxims and customs of the world, they will sit at the feet of Jesus, and earnestly inquire, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6) then His wisdom will direct them, His Spirit work with their efforts, and we shall see the youth who now drift into the ranks of Satan serving under the banner of the Prince of Life.²³

March 14

Something for Everyone

"[John said,] Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part" (Mark 9:38–40).

Some . . . are inclined to indulge the spirit manifested by the apostle John when he said: "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us" (Luke 9:49). Organization and discipline are essential, but there is now very great danger of a departure from the simplicity of the gospel of Christ. What we need is less dependence upon mere form and ceremony, and far more of the power of true godliness. If their life and character are exemplary, let all work who will, in any capacity. Although they may not conform exactly to your methods, not a word should be spoken to condemn or discourage them. When the Pharisees desired Jesus to silence the children who sang His praise, the Saviour said: "If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out" (Luke 19:40). Prophecy must be fulfilled. So in these days, the work must be done. There are many departments of labor; let everyone act a part as best he can. The man with one talent is not to bury that in the earth. God has given to every man his work according to his ability. Those to whom larger trusts and capabilities have been committed should not endeavor to silence others who are less able or experienced. Men with one talent may reach a class that those with two or five talents cannot approach. Great and small alike are chosen vessels to bear the water of life to thirsting souls. Let not those who preach the word lay their hands upon the humblest worker and say: "You must labor in this channel or not work at all." Hands off, brethren. Let everyone work in his own sphere, with his own armor on, doing whatever he can do in his humble way. Strengthen his hands in the work. This is no time for pharisaism to control. Let God work through whom He will. The message must go.

All are to show their fidelity to God by the wise use of His entrusted capital, not in means alone, but in any endowment that will tend to the upbuilding of His kingdom. . . . And while only a few are engaged in this work, thousands ought to be as much interested as they. God never designed that the lay members of the church should be excused from labor in His cause.²⁴

March 15

Yielding to Do His Will

"Jesus . . . said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:16, 17).

He who fully purposes in his heart to do the will of God, at whatever self-denial or self-sacrifice, will certainly know the truth through his own experience. Those who will obey God's commandments, and not deviate from the precepts of heaven, will enter into life. To will to do the will of God, is to yield the whole mind and affections to the control of God. Such a one will know of the doctrine, not be in questioning and doubt, not be halting between two opinions; for he will be willing to submit all to God. . . . It is when we give ourselves to Christ, to do His will, that we realize the truth of the saying of David, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Psalm 119:130). It is then that reason and conscience are fully in harmony with the will of God, and there is no collision between the truth of God and the soul. The doctrines that Christ taught are essential for the salvation of the soul; for perfection of character is the result of willing obedience to the truth as it is in Jesus. This is the faith that works by love and purifies the soul.²⁵

We must live to please Jesus; by thus living our faith and confidence in Him will grow stronger day by day. We will comprehend what He has done for us, and what He is willing to do for us, and will possess a cheerfulness as well as an earnest desire to do something to show our love for Jesus. Doing this will thus become habit. We will not question whether we will obey, but will follow the light and work the work of Christ. We will not study convenience, nor question whether our temporal interests will be improved if we obey. Those who love Jesus will love to obey all his commandments. They will search the Bible closely to know of the doctrine. Naught but truth will satisfy them.²⁶

The sinner who has felt the power of Christ's cleansing blood, has a deep and abiding sense that he owes his all to that Saviour who has purchased him with His own precious life. All who have this consciousness and appreciation of the love of Christ will esteem it the highest privilege of their lives to devote every power of their being to His service. The transforming grace of Christ molds the desires of the heart, and there is a ready willingness to make any sacrifice for the truth's sake.²⁷

Rivers of Living Water

“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive)” (John 7:37–39).

As the palm tree drawing nourishment from fountains of living water is green and flourishing in the midst of the desert, so the Christian may draw rich supplies of grace from the fountain of God’s love, and may guide weary souls, that are full of unrest and ready to perish in the desert of sin, to those waters of which they may drink, and live. . . .

We may individually have an experience of the greatest value. The fact that iniquity abounds, that we are surrounded by infidels and skeptics, or by professed Christians who have a name to live, and are dead, is no reason why one of us should be swept away by the current toward perdition. Because there is an almost universal forsaking of God, there is the greater need that we stand firm and loyal.²⁸

The words of inspiration, pondered in the heart, will be as living streams flowing from the river of the water of life. . . .

Then take your Bible and present yourself before your heavenly Father, saying, “Enlighten me; teach me what is truth.” The Lord will regard your prayer, and the Holy Spirit will impress the truth upon your soul.²⁹

We may have had a measure of the Spirit of God, but by prayer and faith we are continually to seek more of the Spirit. It will never do to cease our efforts. If we do not progress, if we do not place ourselves in an attitude to receive both the former and the latter rain, we shall lose our souls, and the responsibility will lie at our own door. . . .

We must pray that God will unseal the fountain of the water of life. And we must ourselves receive of the living water. Let us, with contrite hearts, pray most earnestly that now, in the time of the latter rain, the showers of grace may fall upon us. At every meeting we attend, our prayers should ascend that at this very time God will impart warmth and moisture to our souls. As we seek God for the Holy Spirit, it will work in us meekness, humbleness of mind, a conscious dependence upon God for the perfecting latter rain.³⁰

How Did Christ Speak?

“There was a division among the people because of [Christ]. And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him. Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man” (John 7:43–46).

“Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46), declared the officers who were sent to take him. His words comforted, strengthened, and blessed those who were hungering for that peace which He alone could give. O how tender and forbearing was Christ! how filled with pity and tenderness were His lessons to the poor, the afflicted, and the oppressed!

The educated were charmed with Christ’s teaching, and the uneducated were always profited; for He appealed to their understanding. His illustrations were taken from the things of daily life, and although they were simple, they had in them a wonderful depth of meaning. The fowls of the air, the lilies of the field, the seed, the shepherd and the sheep—with these objects, Christ illustrated immortal truth. . . .

Christ always used the most simple language, yet His words were received by deep, unprejudiced thinkers; for they were words that tested their wisdom. Spiritual things should always be presented in simple language, even though learned men are being addressed; for such are generally ignorant regarding spiritual things. The simplest language is the most eloquent. Educated and uneducated need to be addressed in the plainest, simplest manner, so that the truth may be comprehended and find lodgment in the heart. So Christ addressed the vast crowds that thronged about Him; and all, learned and unlearned, were able to comprehend His lessons.

Christ’s words, so comforting and cheering to those that listened to them, are for us today. As a faithful shepherd knows and cares for his sheep, so Christ cares for His children. He knows the trials and difficulties surrounding each one. . . .

Christ has weighed every human affliction, every human sorrow. He bears the weight of the yoke for every soul that yokes up with him. He knows the sorrows which we feel to the depth of our being, and which we cannot express. If no human heart is aroused to sympathy for us, we need not feel that we are without sympathy. Christ knows; and He says, Look unto me, and live.³¹

The Sinless One Forgives

“And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, he that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more” (John 8:3–11).

In raising this woman to a life of virtue, Jesus performed a greater act than that of healing the most grievous bodily malady; He cured the sickness of the soul which is unto death everlasting. This penitent woman became one of the firmest friends of Jesus. She repaid His forgiveness and compassion with a self-sacrificing love and worship. Afterward, when she stood sorrow-stricken at the foot of the cross, and saw the dying agony on the face of her Lord and heard His bitter cry, her soul was pierced afresh; for she knew that this sacrifice was on account of sin; and her responsibility as one whose deep guilt had helped to bring about this anguish of the Son of God seemed very heavy indeed. She felt that those pangs which pierced the Saviour’s frame were for her; the blood that flowed from His wounds was to blot out her record of sin; the groans which escaped from His dying lips were caused by her transgression. . . .

It is not the true follower of Christ who turns from the erring with cold, averted eyes, leaving them unrestrained to pursue their downward course. Christian charity is slow to censure, quick to detect penitence, ready to forgive, to encourage, to set the wanderer in the path of virtue, and stay his feet therein. . . . Those who are ever forward to accuse others, quick to detect them in wrong, and zealous that they should be brought to justice, are often guiltier in their own lives than those whom they accuse.³²

Lighting up Our World

“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).

“God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). Those who walk in darkness are following another leader than Jesus. Darkness is the atmosphere of Satan. . . . You are to “shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9). No words of complaint, no murmuring at hardship and trial will escape the lips of him who is walking in the light as Christ is in the light. He will rejoice in the light, and will enjoy the pure atmosphere that surrounds the Light of the world. The light shining from Christ upon His obedient children, will be reflected from their lives into the darkness of the world. The Light Giver makes them light bearers. “Ye are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14).

How many who profess to believe the word of God are, day by day, with earnest faith and prayer, gathering the precious light from Jesus, and letting it shine forth to the world so brightly that the darkness and evil are rebuked, and the world is forced to give glory to God? Are you bringing the purity, the patience, and the love of Jesus into your life? Is your light shining in clear, steady rays? If not, your profession is only mockery. Have the mists of worldliness gathered about your soul so that your light is growing feeble and obscure? Come close to the great Source of light, that they may be dispelled. Why remain in darkness? Why talk gloom?³³

The whole earth is to be lightened with the glory of God. But how difficult for some to see and acknowledge the light and be converted, that I, Christ says, should heal them. The atmosphere of selfishness, pride, formality, and self-righteousness surrounds their souls, and it is very difficult for them to discern light as light and appreciate it. Some walk away from the light into darkness, and how much greater is the darkness that enshrouds their souls because they have had the light. . . . The light that has been graciously given has not been appreciated and brought into the practical life, and many are not doers of the word. Every true believer should have a realization of his solemn responsibility before God, to be a missionary seeking to save those that are lost. We should see armies of consecrated workers seeking to do, not their own will or pleasure, but the will of God.³⁴

The Goal Before Us

"[Jesus said,] I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him" (John 8:28, 29).

Never did Christ deviate from loyalty to the principles of God's law. Never did He do anything contrary to the will of His Father. Before angels, men, and demons He could speak words that from any other lips would have been blasphemy: "I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29). Day by day for three years His enemies followed Him, trying to find some stain in His character. Satan, with all his confederacy of evil, sought to overcome Him; but they found nothing in Him by which to gain advantage.³⁵

Christ was the only begotten Son of God, yet He became a servant. . . . He was ordained to do a work that even the angels of heaven could not accomplish. He alone could be trusted to do the work required for the redemption of a world all seared and marred with the curse. And in this gift the Father gave all heaven to the world.

What a change was this for the Son of God, Him who was the adored of angels, the Light of heaven! He might have gone to the pleasant homes of the unfallen worlds, to the pure atmosphere where disloyalty and rebellion had never intruded; and there He would have been received with acclamations of praise and love. But it was a fallen world that needed the Redeemer. "I came not to call the righteous," said He, "but sinners to repentance" (Mark 2:17). He came to represent the Father in bringing the message of hope and salvation to our world. He lived not for Himself; He did not consult His own ease and pleasure; He did not yield to temptation; and He condescended to die in order that sinful men might be redeemed, and live eternally in the mansions He was to prepare for them. His mission was to teach souls who were dying in their sins. . . . While man refuses to become pure, holy, and undefiled, as God's law requires him to do, he is walking away from Christ. . . .

Man is to live only for the accomplishment of the same work given the Son of God to do. He is honored in being a laborer together with God; and the Lord appreciates his workmanship. God has left nothing undone that He could do for us. He gave a perfect example of His character in the character of His Son; and it is the work of Christ's followers, as they behold the incomparable excellency of His life and character, to grow in His likeness.³⁶

Free at Last!

"Jesus [said] to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31, 32).

Here is the secret of content and peace and happiness: Obedience of the laws of nature and of God. The true Christian, possessing the meekness and lowliness of Christ, is content with plain, convenient, healthful garments, and seeks to live a life of usefulness and conform his habits to the example of Jesus. Such a one will find the truest happiness, the reward of well-doing. Such a one will be lifted above the slavery of an artificial life into the freedom and grace of Christlike simplicity.³⁷

Men may talk of freedom, of gospel liberty. They may assert that they are not in bondage to the Law. But the influence of a gospel hope will not lead the sinner to look upon the salvation of Christ as a matter of free grace, while he continues to live in transgression of the law of God. When the light of truth dawns upon his mind, and he fully understands the requirements of God, and realizes the extent of his transgressions, he will reform his ways, become loyal to God through the strength obtained from his Saviour, and lead a new and purer life.³⁸

Full and abundant is the provision that has been made that we may have mercy, grace, and peace. Why, then, do human beings act as if they entertained the idea that the truth is a yoke of bondage? It is because the heart has never tasted and seen that the Lord is good. The soul that cherishes the love of Christ is full of freedom, light, and joy in Christ. In such a soul there are no divided thoughts. The whole man yearns after God. He goes not to men for counsel, to know what is duty, but to the Lord Jesus, the Source of all wisdom. He searches the Word of God, that he may find out what standard has been set up.³⁹

As you cast yourself on Christ, you are fulfilling His purpose for you. You are no longer a law to yourself. But no violence is done to your will and your freedom of action. The mind is brought under the authority of a new law. But it is the royal law of liberty. The whole being is surrendered to God. The heart is transformed.⁴⁰

Truth never brings the soul into bondage. It is turning from truth to error that brings the soul into captivity. The one who is bond up in close relationship with Christ is freed from the slavery of sin.⁴¹

March 22

Our Self-Existent Creator

“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58).

Christ is the pre-existent, self-existent Son of God. . . . In speaking of His pre-existence, Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages. He assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God.⁴²

The Son of God shared the Father’s throne, and the glory of the eternal, self-existent One encircled both. About the throne gathered the holy angels, a vast, unnumbered throng—“ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands” (Revelation 5:11), the most exalted angels, as ministers and subjects, rejoicing in the light that fell upon them from the presence of the Deity. Before the assembled inhabitants of heaven the King declared that none but Christ, the Only Begotten of God, could fully enter into His purposes, and to Him it was committed to execute the mighty counsels of His will. The Son of God had wrought the Father’s will in the creation of all the hosts of heaven; and to Him, as well as to God, their homage and allegiance were due. Christ was still to exercise divine power, in the creation of the earth and its inhabitants. But in all this He would not seek power or exaltation for Himself contrary to God’s plan, but would exalt the Father’s glory and execute His purposes of beneficence and love.⁴³

The exaltation of the Son of God as equal with the Father was represented as an injustice to Lucifer, who, it was claimed, was also entitled to reverence and honor. If this prince of angels could but attain to his true, exalted position, great good would accrue to the entire host of heaven; for it was his object to secure freedom for all. But now even the liberty which they had hitherto enjoyed was at an end; for an absolute Ruler had been appointed them, and to His authority all must pay homage. Such were the subtle deceptions that through the wiles of Lucifer were fast obtaining in the heavenly courts.

There had been no change in the position or authority of Christ. Lucifer’s envy and misrepresentation and his claims to equality with Christ had made necessary a statement of the true position of the Son of God; but this had been the same from the beginning.⁴⁴

Our Creator is Jesus Christ. He is the author of our being.⁴⁵

From Jesus is our life derived. In Him is life that is original—unborrowed, underived life.⁴⁶

March 23

Make Haste While It Is Day

“[Jesus said,] I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4).

So many who might work are doing nothing. They are the sport of Satan’s temptations. Every church member who has a knowledge of the truth is expected to work while the day lasts; for the night cometh, wherein no man can work. Erelong we shall understand what that night means. The Spirit of God is being grieved away from the earth. The nations are angry with one another. Widespread preparations are being made for war. The night is at hand. Let the church arouse and go forth to do her appointed work. Every believer, educated or uneducated, can bear the message.

Eternity stretches before us. The curtain is about to be lifted. What are we thinking of, that we cling to our selfish love of ease, while all around us souls are perishing? Have our hearts become utterly callous? Can we not see and understand that we have a work to do in behalf of others? My brethren and sisters, are you among those who, having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not? Is it in vain that God has given you a knowledge of His will? Is it in vain that He has sent you warning after warning of the nearness of the end? Do you believe the declarations of His word concerning what is coming upon the world? Do you believe that God’s judgments are hanging over the inhabitants of the earth? How, then, can you sit at ease, careless and indifferent?

Every day that passes brings us nearer the end. Does it bring us also near to God? Are we watching unto prayer? Those with whom we associate day by day need our help, our guidance. They may be in such a condition of mind that a word in season will be sent home by the Holy Spirit as a nail in a sure place. Tomorrow some of these souls may be where we can never reach them again. What is our influence over these fellow travelers? What effort do we make to win them to Christ?⁴⁷

The end is near, stealing upon us stealthily, imperceptibly, like the noiseless approach of a thief in the night. May the Lord grant that we shall no longer sleep as do others, but that we shall watch and be sober. The truth is soon to triumph gloriously, and all who now choose to be laborers together with God will triumph with it. The time is short; the night soon cometh when no man can work. Let those who are rejoicing in the light of present truth now make haste to impart the truth to others.⁴⁸

Healing by Simple Means in Faith

“As Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. . . . [Jesus] spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing” (John 9:1–3, 6, 7).

The disciples were not called upon to discuss the question of who had sinned or not sinned, but to understand the power of God, His mercy and compassion, in giving sight to the blind. It was that all might be convinced that there was no healing virtue in the clay or in the pool wherein he was sent to wash, but that virtue was in Christ.⁴⁹

We have the sanction of the word of God for the use of remedial agencies. Hezekiah, king of Israel, was sick, and a prophet of God brought him the message that he should die. He cried unto the Lord, and the Lord heard His servant and sent him a message that fifteen years should be added to his life. Now, one word from God would have healed Hezekiah instantly; but special directions were given, “Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover” (Isaiah 38:21). . . .

Christ anointed the eyes of a blind man with clay and bade him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (John 9:7). . . . The cure could be wrought only by the power of the Great Healer, yet Christ made use of the simple agencies of nature. While He did not give countenance to drug medication, He sanctioned the use of simple and natural remedies.

When we have prayed for the recovery of the sick, whatever the outcome of the case, let us not lose faith in God. If we are called upon to meet bereavement, let us accept the bitter cup, remembering that a Father’s hand holds it to our lips. But should health be restored, it should not be forgotten that the recipient of healing mercy is placed under renewed obligation to the Creator. When the ten lepers were cleansed, only one returned to find Jesus and give Him glory. Let none of us be like the unthinking nine, whose hearts were untouched by the mercy of God.⁵⁰

Shall We Be Blinded—or Healed?

“Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth” (John 9:39–41).

If rational beings really desire the truth, God will give them sufficient light to enable them to decide what is truth. If they have a heart to obey, they will see sufficient evidence to walk in the light. But if they in heart desire to evade the truth, He will not work a miracle to gratify their unbelief. He will never remove every chance or occasion to doubt. If they honestly, sincerely grasp the light, and walk in it, that light will increase until lingering doubts will be dispelled. But if they choose darkness, their questioning and caviling over the truth will increase, their unbelief will be strengthened, and the light which they would not accept will become to them darkness, and how great will be that darkness! It will be as much greater than before the light came, as the light which was rejected was clearer and more abundant than the light which first shone upon them. Thus it was with the Jewish nation; thus it will be with the Christian world in every generation. The rejectors of light treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath. There are those who walk amid perpetual doubts. They feed on doubts, enjoy doubts, talk doubts, and question everything that it is for their interest to believe. To those who thus trifle with the plain testimonies of God’s word, and who refuse to believe because it is inconvenient and unpopular to do so, the light will finally become darkness; truth will appear to the darkened understanding as error, and error will be accepted as truth. . . .

Truth is progressive; and those who are preparing for the last great day will go forward in accordance with the accumulated light which shines upon them from the prophecies and from the lessons of Christ and the apostles. No one will be condemned in the day of judgment because of a lack of knowledge which he never had an opportunity to obtain. . . . The truth which God’s messengers have presented by pen and by voice, the treasures of the word of God which they have opened to the people, the light which has penetrated the darkened chambers of the mind, will, if rejected, be witnesses against them in the last great day.⁵¹

Just for You

“[Jesus said,] I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. . . . My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one” (John 10:14, 27–30).

Jesus knows us individually, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows us all by name. He knows the very house in which we live, the name of each occupant. He has at times given directions to His servants to go to a certain street in a certain city, to such a house, to find one of His sheep.

Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Saviour died. The distress of every one touches His heart. The cry for aid reaches His ear. He came to draw all men unto Himself. He bids them, “Follow Me,” and His Spirit moves upon their hearts to draw them to come to Him. Many refuse to be drawn. Jesus knows who they are. He also knows who gladly hear His call, and are ready to come under His pastoral care. . . . He cares for each one as if there were not another on the face of the earth. . . .

The soul that has given himself to Christ is more precious in His sight than the whole world. The Saviour would have passed through the agony of Calvary that one might be saved in His kingdom. He will never abandon one for whom He has died. Unless His followers choose to leave Him, He will hold them fast.

Through all our trials we have a never-failing Helper. He does not leave us alone to struggle with temptation, to battle with evil, and be finally crushed with burdens and sorrow. Though now He is hidden from mortal sight, the ear of faith can hear His voice saying, Fear not; I am with you. . . . I have endured your sorrows, experienced your struggles, encountered your temptations. I know your tears; I also have wept. The griefs that lie too deep to be breathed into any human ear, I know. Think not that you are desolate and forsaken. Though your pain touch no responsive chord in any heart on earth, look unto Me, and live. . . .

Because we are the gift of His Father, and the reward of His work, Jesus loves us. He loves us as His children. Reader, He loves you. Heaven itself can bestow nothing greater, nothing better. Therefore trust.⁵²

Sowing With Humility

“Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (John 10:16).

God still has a people in Babylon; and before the visitation of His judgments these faithful ones must be called out, that they partake not of her sins and “receive not of her plagues” (Revelation 18:4). Hence the movement symbolized by the angel coming down from heaven, lightening the earth with his glory and crying mightily with a strong voice, announcing the sins of Babylon. In connection with his message the call is heard: “Come out of her, My people” (Matthew 18:4). These announcements, uniting with the third angel’s message, constitute the final warning to be given to the inhabitants of the earth.⁵³

It should ever be manifest that we are reformers, but not bigots. . . . Our laborers should be very careful not to give the impression that they are wolves stealing in to get the sheep, but should let the ministers understand their position and the object of their mission—to call the attention of the people to the precious truths of God’s word. . . .

On entering a new place to labor, we should be careful not to create prejudice in the minds of the Catholics, or do anything to lead them to think us their enemies. . . . There are many among them who will be saved. God will just as surely test this people as He is testing us; and according to their willingness to accept the light He gives them, will be their standing before Him. We should sow the seed beside all waters; for it is God that gives the increase.⁵⁴

The people must be given the truth, straightforward, positive truth. But this truth is to be presented in the spirit of Christ. We are to be as sheep in the midst of wolves. Those who will not, for Christ’s sake, observe the cautions He has given, who will not exercise patience and self-control, will lose precious opportunities of working for the Master. The Lord has not given His people the work of making a tirade against those who are transgressing His law. In no case are we to make a raid on the other churches. Let us remember that, as a people entrusted with sacred truth, we have been neglectful and positively unfaithful. . . . Had we put forth earnest efforts to reach those who, if converted, would give a true representation of what present truth would do for human beings, how much further advanced our work would now be.⁵⁵

Put to the Test

“If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not” (John 10:37).

A profession of Christianity is nothing in the sight of God; but true, humble, willing obedience to His requirements designates the children of His adoption, the recipients of His grace, the partakers of His great salvation. Such will be peculiar, a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. . . . Many love God in word, not in deed and in truth. Their course of action, their works, testify of them that they are not children of the light but of darkness. Their works have not been wrought in God, but in selfishness, in unrighteousness. Their hearts are strangers to His renewing grace. They have not experienced the transforming power which leads them to walk even as Christ walked.⁵⁶

Dear brethren and sisters, the increased light that you receive places you under greater obligation to God. Your Christian growth should be in accordance with the privileges you enjoy. Each day as it passes should find you better prepared to meet new trials and bear new responsibilities. Do you appreciate this fact? Do you realize your duty to others? Consider the influence that every word and act of your life may have upon those around you. A lasting impression may be made, which will react upon yourself in blessing or in cursing. This thought gives an awful solemnity to life, and should drive us to God in humble prayer that He will guide us by His wisdom.

If all could realize this subject as it has been presented to me, many would live much more carefully than they now do. It is easy for professed Christians to extol Jesus, His perfections and His loveliness, while, under the appearance of great devotion, they are very exacting toward others, exercising over them an iron rule. It is easy for them to talk of the truth, and the importance of keeping the commandments of God, when they have never made a practical application of the principles of truth in their everyday life. They have not made a success of serving God, and so have lost the precious comfort and support which is derived from communion with Him.

We belong to Jesus. He has bought us with His precious blood; and we owe Him a debt of gratitude which we can never repay, but which we should daily acknowledge by willing, unselfish service. If we realize this as we should, we shall be Christlike. Like Him, we shall deny self that we may do others good.⁵⁷

What Manner of Spirit Have We?

“When the time was come that [Jesus] should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them” (Luke 9:51–56).

It is no part of Christ’s mission to compel men to receive Him. It is Satan, and men actuated by his spirit that seek to compel the conscience. Under a pretense of zeal for righteousness, men who are confederate with evil angels bring suffering upon their fellow men, in order to convert them to their ideas of religion; but Christ is ever showing mercy, ever seeking to win by the revealing of His love. He can admit no rival in the soul, nor accept of partial service; but He desires only voluntary service, the willing surrender of the heart under the constraint of love. There can be no more conclusive evidence that we possess the spirit of Satan than the disposition to hurt and destroy those who do not appreciate our work, or who act contrary to our ideas.⁵⁸

We see so many who estimate the character of their brethren and sisters by the manner in which they treat them. We are not here to be made much of, but to be helpful to others; and we must not measure the religious standing of others by their willingness to serve us. We love people who are pleasant, and who have no disagreeable ways; then let us gather to *our* souls the graces of the Spirit of Christ, and bring them into our life, that God may not turn from us with the same disgust with which we turn from others. Defects of character often close our hearts to those who need encouragement to overcome them. The Lord will close His heart to us who are wayward, unpleasant, disrespectful, disobedient, irreverent, and forgetful of Him as a guest whom we should honor. Shall we require of others that deference, that respect, that honor which we refuse to give to Jesus in Christian politeness? Let our pride, our selfishness be humbled in the dust. Let self be hid with Christ in God, and let us remember that if we have an unforgiving spirit toward the erring, the Lord will not forgive our trespasses.⁵⁹

Commandment Keepers or Breakers?

“A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10:30–37).

The Levite and the priest represent a class in the church who manifest an indifference to the very ones who need their sympathy and help. This class, notwithstanding their position in the church, are commandment breakers. The Samaritan represents a class who are true helpers with Christ and who are imitating His example in doing good. . . .

Some have no experience in these duties. They have all their lives been like the Levite and the priest, who passed by on the other side. There is a work for the church to do, which, if left undone, will bring darkness upon them. The church as a whole and individually should bring their motives under faithful examination and compare their lives with the life and teachings of the only correct Pattern. Christ regards all acts of mercy, benevolence, and thoughtful consideration for the unfortunate, the blind, the lame, the sick, the widow, and the orphan as done to Himself; and these works are preserved in the heavenly records and will be rewarded. On the other hand, a record will be written in the book against those who manifest the indifference of the priest and the Levite to the unfortunate, and those who take any advantage of the misfortunes of others and increase their affliction in order to selfishly advantage themselves. God will surely repay every act of injustice and every manifestation of careless indifference to and neglect of the afflicted among us. Everyone will finally be rewarded as his works have been.⁶⁰

How His Kingdom Comes

“The kingdom of God cometh not with observation [outward show]: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20, 21).

The government under which Jesus lived was corrupt and oppressive; on every hand were crying abuses—extortion, intolerance, and grinding cruelty. Yet the Saviour attempted no civil reforms. He attacked no national abuses, nor condemned the national enemies. He did not interfere with the authority or administration of those in power. He who was our example kept aloof from earthly governments. Not because He was indifferent to the woes of men, but because the remedy did not lie in merely human and external measures. To be efficient, the cure must reach men individually, and must regenerate the heart.

Not by the decisions of courts or councils or legislative assemblies, not by the patronage of worldly great men, is the kingdom of Christ established, but by the implanting of Christ’s nature in humanity through the work of the Holy Spirit. . . .

Now, as in Christ’s day, the work of God’s kingdom lies not with those who are clamoring for recognition and support by earthly rulers and human laws, but with those who are declaring to the people in His name those spiritual truths that will work in the receivers the experience of Paul: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Galatians 2:20).⁶¹

The kingdom of God comes not with outward show. It comes through the gentleness of the inspiration of His word, through the inward working of His Spirit, the fellowship of the soul with Him who is its life. The greatest manifestation of its power is seen in human nature brought to the perfection of the character of Christ.

The followers of Christ are to be the light of the world; but God does not bid them make an effort to shine. He does not approve of any self-satisfied endeavor to display superior goodness. He desires that their souls shall be imbued with the principles of heaven; then, as they come in contact with the world, they will reveal the light that is in them. Their steadfast fidelity in every act of life will be a means of illumination.

Wealth or high position, costly equipment, architecture or furnishings, are not essential to the advancement of the work of God; neither are achievements that win applause from men and administer to vanity. Worldly display, however imposing, is of no value in God’s sight.⁶²

April 1

Children Whom God Can Approve

"[Jesus said,] Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein" (Mark 10:14, 15).

The time of probation is given us that we may perfect a character fit for eternity. How solemn is the thought, parents, that your children are in your hands to educate and train that they may develop characters which God will approve, or characters which Satan and his angels can play upon as they choose! Jesus spoke from the pillar of cloud and of fire, and bade His people instruct their children diligently concerning the commandments of God. Who are obeying this instruction? Who are seeking to make their children such as God will approve? Who keep the thought in mind that all the talents and gifts of their children belong to God, and should be wholly consecrated to His service? Hannah dedicated Samuel to the Lord, and God revealed Himself to him in his childhood and youth. We must labor far more for our children and for the youth; for God will accept them to do great things in His name in teaching the truth to those in foreign lands, to those who are in the darkness of error and superstition. If you indulge your children, gratifying their selfish wishes; if you encourage in them the love of dress, and develop vanity and pride, you will do a work that will disappoint Jesus, who has paid an infinite price for their redemption. He desires that the children shall serve Him with undivided affection.¹

Jesus is drawing the children, and He bids us, Suffer them to come; as if He would say, They will come if you do not hinder them. Let not your un-Christlike character misrepresent Jesus. Do not keep the little ones away from Him by your coldness and harshness. Never give them cause to feel that heaven will not be a pleasant place to them if you are there. Do not speak of religion as something that children cannot understand, or act as if they were not expected to accept Christ in their childhood. Do not give them the false impression that the religion of Christ is a religion of gloom, and that in coming to the Saviour they must give up all that makes life joyful.

As the Holy Spirit moves upon the hearts of the children, cooperate with His work. Teach them that the Saviour is calling them, that nothing can give Him greater joy than for them to give themselves to Him in the bloom and freshness of their years.²

April 2

Tested by Prosperity

"[Jesus told His disciples,] It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:25–27).

I was shown in vision that the condition of many Sabbath-keepers was like the young man who came to Jesus to know what he should do to inherit eternal life. . . . Said the angel. "Will God permit the rich men to keep their riches, and yet enter into the kingdom of God?" Said another angel, "No, never." . . .

I saw that it was God's plan that these riches should be used properly, and distributed to bless the needy, and to advance the work of God. . . . Here they are proved to see how much God is loved, how much the truth is loved, and like the young man in the Bible, many go away sorrowful, because they cannot have their riches and a treasure in heaven too. They cannot have both. . . .

Then I saw that with God all things are possible. Truth set home to the heart by the Spirit of God will crowd out the love of riches. The love of Jesus and of riches cannot dwell in the same heart. The love of God so far surpasses the love of riches, that the possessor breaks away from his riches and transfers his affections to God. And then he is led through his love to God to administer to the wants of God's cause. It is his highest pleasure to make a right disposition of his Lord's goods. . . .

Those who receive the truth, but do not live it . . . cling to their possessions, and are not willing to distribute of their substance to advance the cause of God. They have no faith to venture and trust God. Their love of this world swallows up their faith. God has called for a portion of their substance, but they heed it not. They reason thus, that they have labored hard to obtain what they have, and they cannot lend it to the Lord, for they may come to want. "O ye of little faith!" That God who cared for Elijah in the time of famine will not pass by one of his self-sacrificing children. He who has numbered the hairs of their head will care for them, and in days of famine they will be satisfied. While the wicked are perishing all around them for want of bread, their bread and water will be sure. Those who will still cling to their earthly treasure, and will not make a right disposition of that which is lent them of God, will lose their treasure in heaven, lose everlasting life.³

The Giver of Life

“[Jesus] cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth” (John 11:43, 44).

In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived.⁴

Had Christ been in the sickroom, Lazarus would not have died; for Satan would have had no power over him. In the presence of the Life-giver, death could not have aimed his dart at Lazarus. Therefore Christ remained away. . . . He permitted Lazarus to pass under the dominion of death, and the suffering sisters saw their brother laid in the grave. Christ knew that as they looked on the face of their dead brother, their faith in their Redeemer would be severely tried. Thus He was pruning the branches, that they might bring forth more fruit. He knew that because of the struggle through which they were now passing, their faith would shine forth with far greater power. He suffered every pang of sorrow that they endured. He loved them no less because He tarried; but He knew that for them, for Lazarus, for Himself, and for His disciples, a victory was to be gained.⁵

It was [Christ’s] purpose to remain where He was till the death of Lazarus took place, that He might give the people an evidence of His divinity, not by restoring a dying man, but by raising to life a man that had been buried.

This should be an encouragement to us. We are sometimes tempted to think that the promise, “Ask, and it shall be given you seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matthew 7:7), is not fulfilled unless the answer comes immediately when the request is made. It is our privilege to ask for special blessings, and to believe that they will be given us. But if the blessings asked for are not immediately granted, we are not to think that our prayers are not heard. We shall receive, even if the answer is delayed for a time. In carrying out the plan of redemption, Christ sees enough in humanity to discourage Him. But He does not become discouraged. In mercy and love He continues to offer us opportunities and privileges. So we are to rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. The answer to our prayers may not come as quickly as we desire, and it may not be just what we have asked; but He who knows what is for the highest good of His children will bestow a much greater good than we have asked, if we do not become faithless and discouraged.⁶

The Innocent to Die for the Guilty

“Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but . . . prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad” (John 11:47–52).

How blindly did the haughty Caiaphas acknowledge the mission of Jesus as a Redeemer! . . .

What is the life of this Galilean worth, in comparison with the life of the nation? Whether innocent or guilty, if He stands in the way of the nation’s well-being, is it not doing God a service to remove Him? Better that one man perish than that the whole nation be destroyed.

This false idea had been taken from heathenism. Among the heathen, the dim consciousness that one was to die for the human race had led to the offering of human sacrifices. So Caiaphas thought to save the guilty nation, not from transgression, but in transgression, that they might continue in sin.⁷

The Saviour understood the plottings of the priests against Him; He knew that they longed to remove Him from their midst, and that their wishes would soon be accomplished; but it was not His place to hasten the culminating event. . . . Jesus had now given three years of public labor to the world. His example of self-denial and disinterested benevolence was before them. His life of purity, of suffering, and devotion, was known to all. Yet this short period of three years was as long as the world could endure the presence of its Redeemer.

His life had been one of persecution and insult. Driven from Bethlehem by a jealous king, rejected by His own people at Nazareth, condemned to death without a cause at Jerusalem, Jesus, with His few faithful followers, finds a temporary asylum in a strange city. He who was ever touched by human woe, who healed the sick, restored sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and speech to the dumb, who fed the hungry and comforted the sorrowful, was driven from the people whom He had labored to save.⁸

Drinking of the Master's Cup

"[James and John] said unto [Jesus], Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared" (Mark 10:37–40).

All who follow Christ will deny self, will share in His humiliation, will suffer affliction and persecution, and be hated of all men for His name's sake. James was killed with a sword by Herod, and John's life would have been extinguished if God had not kept his light burning to be a faithful witness. . . .

The request that was made for the exaltation of John and James in the kingdom of Christ will be granted if they so improved their talents in the service of God as to fit them for that place. But John and James were on test and trial, and if they proved true, if they held fast the faith once delivered to the saints, they would have the position that the Father had prepared for them, and the position would be according to their unselfish fidelity. . . . Each one of us will be dealt with according to the same rule. Shall we not all take the lesson to heart? The way in which we use the Lord's entrusted talents will make a decided difference as to what shall be our future, eternal reward. Those who feel under obligation to God to improve every talent He has lent them to His glory, will be rewarded in proportion to their faithful zeal in His service. Those who misapply the precious talents God has given, who, instead of using them for God's glory, make them serve selfish purposes, will be rewarded as was the man in the parable who went and hid his Lord's money in the earth. Those who are careless, indolent, selfish, who think more of their own exaltation than they do of the honor of God, will not be found keeping the first four and the last six commandments, and cannot be rewarded as those will be rewarded who have manifested pure devotion in the service of God. The record of our lives is accurately kept by the recording angel, and we shall each be rewarded according as our works have been. There will be many who will be greatly surprised in the last day.⁹

A Different Kind of Kingdom

"The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:25–28).

"The princes of the Gentiles" were ambitious, and sought for place and power; but their course in this respect resulted from false ideas of greatness and the pride of the human heart. Among the disciples of Christ an entirely different state of things was to exist. One was not to aspire to dominion over his brethren, and to seek to be lord over God's heritage. . . .

[Christ] had set them an example of unselfish care for others. He was Lord of heaven, and angels obeyed His word; yet He condescended to take upon Himself the weaknesses and infirmities of human nature, to live man's example and to die his sacrifice. He did not, while upon earth, choose for Himself wealth and honor and pleasant associations; but His life was spent among humble peasants in ministering to the wants of the needy and the afflicted. . . .

The instruction that Christ gave was not designed merely for the little group that listened to His words, but was recorded for the benefit of all His followers to the close of time. The truths He unfolded . . . were never more needed than at the present time. . . .

The people of God should be firmly united in love, strengthening one another against temptations and trials; but how often Satan diverts the mind to selfish objects. He knows our wrong traits of character, and he takes advantage of every opportunity to arouse them to activity. He excites contention, and leads professed Christians to seek for the supremacy, while through pride and self-esteem he blinds their eyes to their own defects of character. While the disciples were contending among themselves as to which of them should be greatest, they little thought that Jesus heard them; but He read their hearts, and understood their ambitious desires. Just so it is at the present time. Jesus is weighing the character of every individual. If our motives are not pure, if our desire to please self is stronger than our desire for righteousness or to glorify God, we may rest assured that nothing is hidden from His eye, and that the desires of our hearts, as well as the acts of our lives, will be considered in the Judgment.¹⁰

April 7

One-Hour Laborers to Shine Brightest

“Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham” (Luke 19:8, 9).

What a lesson is there for us in the history of Zacchaeus’ conversion! If we have injured others through any unjust business transaction, if we have overreached in trade, or defrauded any man, even though it be within the pale of the law, yet if we are Christians, we shall confess our wrong, and make restitution as far as in us lies. We should give evidence that there is a genuine work of grace within our hearts. If earthly courts award to us property that is not justly ours, we are not to accept the decision of unjust judges. Though we may be clear on the records of men, yet in the books of heaven we will be written as oppressors, and the case will go against us when judgment shall take place in the courts of God.

Before Zacchaeus had looked upon the face of Christ, he had begun the work that makes him manifest as a true penitent. . . . When the human agent is awakened by the Holy Spirit, the least that he can do is to acknowledge his wrong, and to work earnestly to restore both principal and interest to those whom he has defrauded.¹¹

When those who have had abundance of light throw off the restraint which the word of God imposes, and make void His law, others will come in to fill their places and take their crown.

While many have reduced the word, the truth, the holy law of Jehovah, to a dead letter, and by their example testify that the law of Jehovah is a hard, rigorous burden; while they say, “We will lay off this yoke, we will be free, we will no longer remain in covenant relation with God, we will do as we please,” there will be men who have had very meager opportunities, who have walked in ways of error because they knew not any other or better way, to whom beams of light will come. As the word from Christ came to Zacchaeus, “I must abide at thy house,” so the word will come to them; and the one supposed to be a hardened sinner will be found to have a heart as tender as a child, because Christ has deigned to notice him.¹²

April 8

The Most Worthy Cause

“There came unto [Jesus] a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat” (Matthew 26:7).

Mary’s heart was filled with gratitude at the compassion of Jesus. Seven times she had heard His stern rebuke to the demons which then controlled her heart and mind, and she had listened to His strong cries to His Father in her behalf. She knew how offensive everything impure was to the unsullied mind of Christ, and she overcame her sin in the strength of her Saviour. She was transformed, a partaker of the divine nature.¹³

There are many who urge that they cannot do more for God’s cause than they now do; but they do not give according to their ability. The Lord sometimes opens the eyes blinded by selfishness by simply reducing their income to the amount they are willing to give. . . .

In determining the proportion to be given to the cause of God, be sure to exceed, rather than fall short, of the requirements of duty. Consider for whom the offering is to be made. . . . When Christ is the object of our affections, those who have received His pardoning love will not stop to calculate the value of the alabaster box of precious ointment. Covetous Judas could do this; but the receiver of the gift of salvation will only regret that the offering has not a richer perfume and greater value.¹⁴

That gift was no waste. It is true that the ointment might have been sold for bread and clothing; thus a small number of destitute persons might have been fed for a short time; but it would have remained to be seen whether they would have been really benefited. Mary could not have bestowed that gift which to her seemed a faint representation of Christ’s boundless love. Mary’s act was immortalized; for it showed her love for her Saviour. . . .

Mary represents the church, and her act has a lesson for the church in all ages. Christ has not bidden us bestow all our labor and all our gifts upon the poor. We have a work to do in behalf of those who are fulfilling His commission, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).¹⁵

In the breaking of the alabaster box, in that the ointment filled the whole room with its fragrance, we have a representation of the sacrifice of Christ, which was to fill the whole world with the fragrance of infinite love.¹⁶

Avarice Not Excused

"[Christ's] disciples . . . had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always" (Matthew 26:8–11).

Jesus might have pointed out Judas to the disciples as the cause of such severe judgment being passed on Mary. He might have revealed to them the hypocrisy of his character; He might have made known his utter want of feeling for the poor, and his embezzlement of money appropriated to their relief. He could have raised their indignation against him for his oppression of the widow, the orphan, and the hireling; but He refrained from exposing the true character of Judas. He reproached him not, and thus avoided giving him an excuse for his future perfidy.

But He rebuked the disciples. . . . Jesus, looking into the future, spoke with certainty. . . . Kingdoms would rise and fall; the names of monarchs and conquerors would be forgotten; but the memory of this woman's deed would be immortalized upon the pages of sacred history.¹⁷

The look that Jesus cast upon the selfish Judas convinced him that the Master had penetrated his hypocrisy, and read his base, contemptible character. This was a more direct reproof than Judas had before received. He was provoked by it, and thus a door was opened through which Satan entered to control his thoughts. . . .

In spirit and practice many resemble Judas. As long as there is silence in regard to the plague-spot in their character, no open enmity is seen; but when they are reproved, bitterness fills their hearts.¹⁸

Judas valued Jesus at the price for which he sold Him; his niggardly soul balanced the life of the Son of God against a paltry sum of money. The same cold, calculating spirit is manifested by many who profess Christ today. Their offerings to His cause are grudgingly bestowed or withheld altogether under various plausible excuses. A pretense of wide philanthropy, unlimited by church or creed, is not unfrequently one of them, and they plead, like Judas, It is better to give it to the poor. But the true Christian shows his faith by investing in the cause of truth; he is known by his works, for "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26).¹⁹

Greater Forgiveness—Greater Love

"There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And [Jesus] said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. . . . Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven" (Luke 7:41–43, 47, 48).

Those who have lived in rebellion against God, when they do repent and turn to the Lord, are most fervent in their love. They give better service to God than those who have grown cold in His service, who have for years professed to be His children and loyal to His law. A wonderful change takes place in a truly converted soul. The old imperfections that made them uncourteous and forbidding are not manifested. They love Jesus, and those for whom He died. How do you know when you turn away from those who do not seem desirable, but that you are turning away from those for whom Jesus is seeking? Perhaps, at the very moment that you turn from them, they are in the greatest need of your tenderness and compassion. There is too much of this critical spirit, of standing back in indifference to the welfare of others. We need Christian love. We need to learn meekness and lowliness of heart in the school of Christ. We should be filled with the spirit of the message of warning and mercy which we are to bear to a dying world. We have only begun to drink of the fountain of life. As we follow on to know the Lord, increasing light will shine upon us, and our path will grow brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

We should study more earnestly the character of our Saviour. We should imitate the lovely Pattern that God has given us. We should dwell upon the matchless charms of Jesus until there will be nothing satisfying in this perishing world. We should desire to reflect His image in kindness, in courtesy, in gentleness, and love, then "when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2, 3). In a little while everyone who is a child of God will have His seal placed upon him. Oh that it may be placed upon our foreheads! Who can endure the thought of being passed by when the angel goes forth to seal the servants of God in their foreheads?²⁰

April 11

Must the Stones Cry Out—or Shall We?

“When [Jesus] was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out” (Luke 19:37–40).

God will have a people on the earth who will not be so cold and dead but that they can praise and glorify Him. He will receive glory from some people, and if His chosen people, who keep His commandments should hold their peace, the very stones would cry out.

Jesus is coming, but not as at His first advent, a babe in Bethlehem; not as He rode into Jerusalem, when the disciples praised God with a loud voice and cried, Hosannah; but in the glory of the Father and with all the retinue of holy angels with Him, to escort Him on His way to earth. All heaven will be emptied of the angels. While the waiting saints will be looking for Him and gazing into heaven, as were the “men of Galilee” (Acts 1:11) when he ascended from the Mount of Olivet. Then those only who are holy, those who have followed fully the meek Pattern, will with rapturous joy exclaim as they behold Him, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us” (Isaiah 25:9). And they will be changed “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump” (1 Corinthians 15:52), that wakes the sleeping saints, and calls them forth from their dusty beds, clothed with glorious immortality, shouting, Victory! Victory! over death and the grave. The changed saints are caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air, never more to be separated from the object of their love.

With such a prospect as this before us, such a glorious hope, such a redemption that Christ has purchased for us by His own blood, shall we hold our peace? Shall we not praise God even with a loud voice, as the disciples did when Jesus rode into Jerusalem? Is not our prospect far more glorious than theirs was? Who dare then forbid us glorifying God, even with a loud voice, when we have such a hope, big with immortality and full of glory? We have tasted of the powers of the world to come, and long for more.²¹

April 12

Where Are the Fresh Figs?

“Seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, [Jesus] came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. . . . And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots” (Mark 11:13, 14, 20).

The barren fig tree received the withering curse of God because it was a pretentious hypocrite, professing superiority over the other fig trees by displaying its luxuriant foliage, while it was as destitute of fruit as the leafless trees. The barren fig tree well represents those who profess to keep the commandments, as did the Jews, thus presenting the appearance of fruitfulness, yet whose religion, like that of the Pharisees, is a sham, bearing no fruit to the glory of God.

Redeem the time while you are spared to work. All your good works cannot save you; but it is nevertheless impossible for you to be saved without good works.²²

Fruitful Christians will be connected with God, and intelligent in the things of God. The truth and the love of God is their meditation. They have feasted upon the words of life. . . .

All who are connected with the light will let their light shine to the world, and will, in their testimonies, praise God, to whom their hearts will flow forth in gratitude. Those who have a vital union with Christ will rejoice in the assurance of His love. Nothing of the world can make them sad when Jesus makes them glad by His presence. . . . It is the privilege of every child of God to store his mind with divine truth, and the more he does this the more vigor and clearness of mind he will have to fathom the deep things of God. He will be more and more earnest and vigorous, as the principles of the truth are carried out in his daily life.

We should all be working together with God. No idlers are acknowledged as His servants. The members of the church should individually feel that the life and prosperity of the church is affected by their course of action. . . .

God wants, not only that you should give of your means, but that you should give yourselves. He wants you. He claims your personal interest, your talents. The very best and most vigorous thoughts should be devoted to His cause and to glorifying His name.²³

April 13

Believing and Receiving

“Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:23, 24).

It is faith that connects us with heaven, and brings us strength for coping with the powers of darkness. In Christ, God has provided means for subduing every sinful trait, and resisting every temptation, however strong. But many feel that they lack faith, and therefore they remain away from Christ. Let these souls, in their helpless unworthiness, cast themselves upon the mercy of their compassionate Saviour. Look not to self, but to Christ. He who healed the sick and cast out demons when He walked among men is the same mighty Redeemer today. Faith comes by the word of God. Then grasp His promise, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). Cast yourself at His feet with the cry, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:24).

“If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed,” said Jesus, “ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove” (Matthew 17:20). Though the grain of mustard seed is so small, it contains that same mysterious life principle which produces growth in the loftiest tree. When the mustard seed is cast into the ground, the tiny germ lays hold of every element that God has provided for its nutriment, and it speedily develops a sturdy growth. If you have faith like this, you will lay hold upon God’s word, and upon all the helpful agencies He has appointed. Thus your faith will strengthen and will bring to your aid the power of heaven. The obstacles that are piled by Satan across your path, though apparently as insurmountable as the eternal hills, shall disappear before the demand of faith. “Nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Matthew 17:20).

Not because we see or feel that God hears us are we to believe. We are to trust His promises. When we come to Him in faith every petition enters into the heart of God. When we have asked for His blessing, we should believe that we receive it, and thank Him that we have received it. Then we are to go about our duties, assured that the blessing will be realized when we need it most. When we have learned to do this, we shall know that our prayers are answered.²⁴

April 14

A Condition for Forgiveness

“When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses” (Mark 11:25, 26).

Will those whose names are upon the church books, who claim to be sons and daughters of God, consider their relation to God and to their fellowmen? . . . Can we cast the first stone in condemnation of a brother when God is extending His mercy to us and forgiving our trespasses against Him? Should God enter into judgment with us our debt would be found to be immense, yet our heavenly Father forgives the debt. Men will be dealt with by God, not according to their opinion of themselves, not according to their self-confidence, but according to the spirit they reveal toward their erring brethren. We are not forgiven *because* we forgive, but *as* we forgive.²⁵

Consider, brethren, how relentless we are to one another, how pitiless; how we hurt and wound one another, when we should love as Christ has loved us. Let us make a complete change. Let us cultivate the precious plant of love, and delight to help one another. We must be kind, forbearing, patient with one another’s errors; we must keep our sharp criticisms for ourselves, but hope all things of our brethren.

Some of you seem to be earnestly seeking forgiveness of sins, for freedom in God. Do you deserve the pardon that you are seeking? No, you do not; nevertheless, God is willing to grant it freely. And dare you withhold from your brethren the forgiveness and affection of which you do not think them worthy? Would you have God deal thus with you? Deal with your brethren as you wish God to deal with you. If we expect our prayers for forgiveness to be heard, we must offer them in a forgiving spirit. We must forgive others in the same manner, and to the same extent, that we ourselves hope to be forgiven. The hard-heartedness that professed Christians manifest toward one another is not Christlike, but savors of the satanic. We must every one of us open our hearts wide to the love of Jesus, and encourage pity and affection for our brethren. . . .

In view of [Christ’s] unmerited love and mercy toward us, how can we cherish malice, or even one feeling of unkindness toward our brethren, the purchase of His blood? Let us put away all suspicion and hatred, and all feelings of bitterness, even toward our worst enemies, those who seek to do us harm.²⁶

The Final Work

“Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them” (Matthew 21:12–14).

Among the last acts of [Jesus’s] ministry was the second cleansing of the Temple. So in the last work for the warning of the world, two distinct calls are made to the churches. The second angel’s message is, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” (Revelation 14:8). And in the loud cry of the third angel’s message a voice is heard from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities” (Revelation 18:4, 5).²⁷

The progress of reform depends upon a clear recognition of fundamental truth. While, on the one hand, danger lurks in a narrow philosophy and a hard, cold orthodoxy, on the other hand there is great danger in a careless liberalism. The foundation of all enduring reform is the law of God. We are to present in clear, distinct lines the need of obeying this law. Its principles must be kept before the people. They are as everlasting and inexorable as God Himself.²⁸

In the time of the end every divine institution is to be restored. . . . Constrained by the love of Christ, [God’s remnant people] are to cooperate with Him in building up the waste places. They are to be repairers of the breach, restorers of paths to dwell in.²⁹

The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them. The light of the Sun of Righteousness is to shine forth in good works—in words of truth and deeds of holiness. . . .

All around us are heard the wails of a world’s sorrow. On every hand are the needy and distressed. It is ours to aid in relieving and softening life’s hardships and misery. . . . If Christ is abiding in us, our hearts will be full of divine sympathy. The sealed fountains of earnest, Christlike love will be unsealed.³⁰

Preparing the Children

“Jesus saith . . . Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?” (Matthew 21:16).

As God wrought through children at the time of Christ’s first advent, so He wrought through them in giving the message of His second advent.³¹

[In Scandinavia,] the clergy of the state church opposed the movement, and through their influence some who preached the message were thrown into prison. In many places where the preachers of the Lord’s soon coming were thus silenced, God was pleased to send the message, in a miraculous manner, through little children. As they were under age, the law of the state could not restrain them, and they were permitted to speak unmolested.³²

The work of all parents is to train their children in the way of the Lord. This is not a matter that can be trifled with, or set aside, without incurring the displeasure of God. We are not called upon to decide what course others shall pursue, or how we may get on the most easily, but, What saith the Lord? . . .

The Christian family is to be a training school from which children are to graduate to a higher school in the mansions of God. Scolding, loud-voiced commands, or threatenings should never be heard. Parents should keep the atmosphere of the home pure and fragrant with kind words, with tender sympathy and love; but at the same time, they are to be firm and unyielding in principle. If you are firm with your children, they may think that you do not love them. This you may expect; but never manifest harshness.³³

The Lord will work through the words of even little children who have been instructed from their babyhood to love and fear Him. Through their instrumentality the Lord will teach men to be kind and tenderhearted, and to seek Him in simplicity of heart.³⁴

Parents, teach your children to become workers with you in the church. Educate them in such a way that they will delight to be workers together with God. Impress upon their minds the thought that as they grow older, their opportunities for service will enlarge, and their power and ability will increase proportionately. Let them understand that those who give themselves to God will become channels of blessing to others who know Him not. Teach them how to have power to prevail with God. If this were done faithfully by every parent, we should see consecrated workers everywhere.³⁵

April 17

Rendering to Whom It Is Due

“[Some asked:] Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? . . . [Jesus answered,] Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and super-scription? They say unto him, Caesar’s. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:17, 19–21).

[Christ’s] reply was no evasion, but a candid answer, and in many minds a vexed question was settled. Forever after they held to the right principle.³⁶

Some have not come up and united in the plan of systematic benevolence, excusing themselves because they were not free from debt. They plead that they must first “owe no man anything.” But the fact that they are in debt does not excuse them. I saw that they should render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s. Some feel conscientious to “owe no man anything,” and think that God can require nothing of them until their debts are all paid. Here they deceive themselves. They fail to render to God the things that are His. Everyone must bring to the Lord a suitable offering. Those who are in debt should take the amount of their debts from what they possess, and give a proportion of the remainder.

Some have felt under sacred obligations to their children. They must give each a portion, but feel themselves unable to raise means to aid the cause of God. They make the excuse that they have a duty to their children. This may be right, but their first duty is to God. Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s. Rob not God by withholding from Him your tithes and offerings. It is the first sacred duty to render to God a suitable proportion. Let no one throw in his claims and lead you to rob God. Let not your children steal your offering from God’s altar for their own benefit. . . .

Anciently the covetousness of some led them to withhold a suitable proportion; they made their offering stunted. This was recorded in heaven, and they were cursed in their harvest and their flocks just as they withheld. Some were visited with affliction in their families. God would not accept a lame offering. It must be without blemish, the best of their flocks, and the best fruits of their fields. And it must be a freewill offering, if they would have the blessing of the Lord rest upon their families and their possessions.³⁷

April 18

The Two Great Commandments

“[A lawyer asked:] Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:36–40).

Our whole being is required in the service of God. No reservation is to be made. But someone says, “Well, I do not know how I would succeed in the things of this world were I to carry out this instruction.” You would succeed much better; for you would find that godliness is profitable unto all things, providing that which is essential for your welfare in this world and your happiness in the next. You would succeed much better; for you would have God to work with you. You would live as seeing Him who is invisible, realizing that you were working in the sight of the unseen world.³⁸

Such love must dwell in your hearts, that you will be ready to give the treasures and honors of this world if thereby you may influence one soul to engage in the service of Christ.

God bids you with one hand, faith, take hold of His mighty arm, and with the other hand, love, reach perishing souls. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. Follow Him. Walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Walk even as He walked. This is the will of God, even your sanctification. The work you have to perform is to do the will of Him who sustains your life for His glory. If you labor for yourselves, it can profit you nothing. To labor for others’ good, to be less self-caring and more in earnest to devote all to God, will be acceptable to Him and be returned by His rich grace.

God has not apportioned you your lot to merely watch over and care for yourselves. You are required to minister to, and watch over, others, and in this exercise you will manifest those evils in your character which need correcting, and will strengthen those weak points that need strengthening. This is the part of the work we have to perform; not impatiently, fretfully, unwillingly, but cheerfully, gladly, in order to reach Christian perfection. To remove from us everything which is not exactly agreeable is not imitating Christ.³⁹

We cannot obey the law unless it is written on the heart. Only the truth as it is in Jesus can illuminate the soul, enabling us to do good and only good to those with whom we are associated.⁴⁰

Aglow With Christ's Love

“The scribe said unto [Jesus], . . . there is one God; and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God” (Mark 12:32–34).

The law of God, plainly defined by Christ, is not so many separate precepts, some of which are of great importance, while others are of small importance, and may be belittled and ignored: Our Lord presents the first four and the last six commandments as a divine whole. Under the two heads, love to God and love to our neighbor, a divine unity binds all the precepts together. By these two principles man's character is tested, and he is shown to be obedient or disobedient.

These two principles are immutable, as eternal as is the throne of God. Those who obey the first, loving God supremely, will pour out the riches of God's goodness in love and compassion to their fellowmen. This is a faith that works by love, and purifies the soul. This means far more than a mere acknowledgment of the truth, more than ceremonious worship, or the offering of sacrifices. Those who truly obey the law offer to God the whole service required by Him.

In keeping God's commandments there is great reward, even in this life. Our conscience does not condemn us. Our hearts are not at enmity with God, but at peace with Him. But self-love, self-exaltation, cannot in any way be acceptable to God.

The grace of God, which, if received, leads to the practice of right things, is the line of demarcation between God's children and the multitude that believe not. While one is brought into captivity to Christ, another is brought into captivity and bondage to the prince of darkness. He who has responded to the drawing of Christ is aglow with His love. He shows forth the praises of Him who has called him out of darkness into His marvelous light. He cannot help employing his talent of speech to show forth the grace which has been so abundantly bestowed on him. He has enlisted in the army of those who strive to advance the glory of God, and has thus become a channel of light.⁴¹

The Weightier Matters

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Matthew 23:23).

You may be quite exact in some things, yet neglect the weightier matters—judgment, mercy, and the love of God. Although the customs of the world are no criterion for us, yet . . . the pitying sympathy and the benevolence of the world for the unfortunate in many cases shame the professed followers of Christ. Many manifest indifference toward those whom God has thrown among them for the purpose of testing and proving them, and developing what is in their hearts. God reads. He marks every act of selfishness, every act of indifference toward the afflicted, the widows, and the fatherless; and He writes against their names: “Guilty, wanting, law-breakers.” We shall be rewarded as our works have been. Any neglect of duty to the needy and to the afflicted is a neglect of duty to Christ in the person of His saints.

When the cases of all come in review before God, the question, What did they profess? will not be asked, but, What have they done? Have they been doers of the word? Have they lived for themselves, or have they been exercised in works of benevolence, in deeds of kindness and love, preferring others before themselves, and denying themselves that they might bless others? If the record shows that this has been their life, that their characters have been marked with tenderness, self-denial, and benevolence, they will receive the blessed assurance and benediction from Christ: “Well done.” “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:21, 34). Christ has been grieved and wounded by your marked selfish love and your indifference to the woes and needs of others.

Many times our efforts for others may be disregarded and apparently lost. But this should be no excuse for us to become weary in well-doing. How often has Jesus come to find fruit upon the plants of His care and found nothing but leaves! We may be disappointed as to the result of our best efforts, but this should not lead us to be indifferent to others' woes and to do nothing. . . .

We need to encourage patient, painstaking efforts. Courage is now wanted, not lazy despondency and fretful murmuring. We are in this world to do work for the Master and not to study our inclination and pleasure, to serve and glorify ourselves.⁴²

April 21

Shall We Be Blind Guides or Shining Lights?

“Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also” (Matthew 23:24–26).

[Matthew 23:15, 27, 28 quoted.] These fearful denunciations were made upon the Jews, because, while teaching the law of God to the people, they were not doers of the Word. Had they kept the law of God, they would have discerned Christ and His mission. So it is in our day. There are those who walk in darkness when light shines from every page of the written Word. They study the Scriptures that they may interpret them to suit themselves. They sink the Scriptures to their own perverted ideas. They are not honest. They doubt that which they have every reason to believe. They become reasoners in doubt, experts in finding fault. God’s word is misinterpreted, misstated, misapplied, and has no power upon the life and character. If professed Christians really believe in God, they will not disregard His commandments.⁴³

Do the words of Christ spoken in reproof to the Pharisees find an application in our days? He said, “But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! [Because you keep the law of God?—No.] for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in” (Matthew 23:13). Do we not in our own day find just such teachers, who will not obey the plainest statements of truth, who turn from the light of God’s word, and then do their utmost to pervert the Scriptures and to blind the eyes of those who are seeking to understand the word of God? These transgressors of God’s law seek with all their power to hedge up the way so that souls shall grope in vain for the door that Christ has opened, and which He says no man can shut. Are there not teachers today who seek to close, if possible, the door of the understanding? They will not enter into the light themselves, and neither will they permit others to enter in.⁴⁴

Christ designed that His believing children should be the light of the world, the salt of the earth. The holy life, the Christian example, of one good man in a community sheds a light that is reflected upon others. How great, then, would be the influence of a company of believers all walking in the commandments of God.⁴⁵

April 22

Let Us Take Heed

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets” (Matthew 23:29–31).

Many have the idea that the Jewish age was one of darkness, superstition, and ignorance. They have received the erroneous idea that repentance, and faith, and divine enlightenment were reserved for the Gospel dispensation, and that these have no part in the Hebrew religion. Many think that the Jewish religion consisted only in forms and ceremonies, but there never could have been a greater deception. The Jewish nation was taken into close relationship with God, and was esteemed by Him as a peculiar people, an holy priesthood, a royal nation.

Today the Christian world looks upon the Jews as a people who are under the divine curse because of their rejection and crucifixion of Christ. But, instead of looking upon them as sinners above all others, they should seek to learn a lesson from their condition, and inquire why it is that the judgment of God fell upon them in so signal a manner. It was because they rejected the great light which had been given them from the time of their delivery from Egyptian bondage. It was because the Lord had revealed to them, through His prophets, and through holy men of old, His will, and they chose to walk in their own ways, and to follow their own will. Calamity overtook the Jews because they failed to keep the commandments of God. God had told them if they did not keep His commandments, He could not fulfill His covenant of promise, for this covenant was to be fulfilled only upon condition of obedience. The history of Israel should be to us a most solemn warning of the calamities that will overtake us if we are disobedient to God’s commandments.⁴⁶

The same spirit that existed among the Jews, leading them to substitute gain for godliness, and outward pomp for inward purity, curses the Christian world today. It spreads like a defiling leprosy among the professed worshipers of God. Sacred things are brought down to a level with the vain matters of the world. Vice is mistaken for virtue, and righteousness for crime. . . . It is necessary that Jesus should occupy His temple in the human heart every day, and cleanse it from the defilement of sin.⁴⁷

April 23

Following the Rays of Light

“Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation” (Matthew 23:36).

God has brought out a people in these last days and has given to them a knowledge of His law. Christ has shed a flood of light upon their pathway, revealing Himself as the invisible Leader of Israel in both the Old and in the New Testament. Christ has made His people the depositaries of His law. They are to keep and to teach the commandments of God, and to show their binding obligations upon men. Christ has promised that to those who obey His commandments He will be as a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night, guiding them in and lighting them along the pathway cast up for the ransomed of the Lord. . . .

They are to keep the fear of the Lord ever before their eyes; for the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It is better to obtain a knowledge of God’s revealed will through an understanding of His word than to have the praise of men, the honors of the world, and great pleasure. God’s word assures us that in keeping His commandments there is a great reward. No earthly consideration should for one moment be looked upon as an inducement to turn from the commandments of God and refuse to lift the cross. Christians should look upon riches, ease, pleasure, and worldly honors, as those things that are represented by wood, hay, and stubble, that will perish in the fires of the last day.

Let none to whom has been represented the duty of keeping God’s commandments, seek to find some objection by which they may seem to excuse themselves from obedience. Let them remember the great perverter of God’s word, who was a liar from the beginning of his rebellion in heaven, and let them know that he is ready to lead them blindfold away from the plainest statements of God’s word, and make that which is clear and distinct uncertain and questionable. It is his work to deceive and to make of no effect the words of Jehovah. Plant your feet on the platform of eternal truth. Follow every ray of light that you see, and that which is shadowy will be made clear to your understanding as you walk in the light. . . .

When Moses led the Israelites to the waters of the Red Sea, the command of God was, “Go forward.” . . . What lesson should we learn from this? To go forward, walking in the light that God permits to shine upon our pathway, and not stopping to question and doubt.⁴⁸

April 24

Cherish the Light and Act Upon It

“Thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee” (Matthew 11:23, 24).

Christ pronounced a woe upon the cities and the people who had been favored with His labors, who had witnessed His gracious works, and listened to His gracious words, and had failed to repent. To those who made a great profession of godliness while failing to bring forth corresponding works, He gave His most scathing rebukes. . . .

If those who have had great light will not respond to the invitation to become laborers with God, then God will take and use those who have had far less light and much fewer opportunities. . . . There is no time to lose. Men and women should be ministering in unenlightened communities in regions beyond. . . . Women who have the cause of God at heart can do a good work in the districts in which they reside. Christ speaks of women who helped Him in presenting the truth before others, and Paul also speaks of women who labored with him in the gospel. But how very limited is the work done by those who could do a large work if they would! . . .

Instruction has been given, but how few have acted upon it! How few have been sufficiently interested to go without the camp bearing the reproach of Christ! God calls for personal effort from those that know the truth. He calls for Christian families to go into communities that are in darkness and error, to go into foreign fields, to become acquainted with a new class of society, and to work wisely and perseveringly for the cause of the Master. To answer this call, self sacrifice must be experienced. While many are waiting to have every obstacle removed, souls are dying without hope and without God in the world. Many, very many, for the sake of worldly advantage, for the sake of acquiring knowledge of the sciences, will venture into pestilential regions, and will go into countries where they think they can obtain commercial advantage; but where are the men and women who will change their location, and move their families into regions that are in need of the light of the truth, in order that their example may tell upon those who shall see in them the representatives of Christ? . . . The chief Missionary came to our world, and He has gone before us to show us the way.⁴⁹

The Power of One Small Gift

“Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living” (Mark 12:41–44).

The poor widow manifested love, faith, and benevolence combined, in contributing her two mites; for she gave all that she had, without questionings or doubts in regard to her uncertain future. Christ represents her little offering as the greatest gift of all that had been cast into the treasury that day. The rich gave of their abundance. They did not need to exercise faith, for they had means enough left to supply all their wants. It was not the value of the coin that was regarded by Christ, but the devoted purity of the motive which prompted the sacrifice. This small gift, with God’s blessing upon it, could become instrumental in accomplishing important results. The widow’s mite, cast into the treasury with thousands of other coins, would appear insignificant, and be lost to human vision, but not to the eye of God. The Source of all riches, the great Benefactor, would make this sincere, genuine offering of the highest value for good. The widow’s mite has been like a stream, small at the source, but continuing to flow through all time, until it has widened, and deepened, and run in a thousand channels, contributing to the extension of the truth, and supplying the wants of the needy. The influence of this small gift has acted and reacted upon humanity in every age of the world, and in every country upon the globe. The tiny rills which have flowed into the treasury of the Lord from the liberal, self-denying poor, have formed a living fountain, and its streams flow forth refreshing the needy, and resulting in the salvation of thousands of souls.⁵⁰

Those who withhold from the treasury of God and hoard their means for their children, endanger the spiritual interest of their children.⁵¹

Those make a sacrifice who deprive themselves of some gratification and take the means they formerly used to gratify the appetite and put it into the treasury of the Lord. Like the widow’s two mites, such gifts will be noticed of God.⁵²

Never to Return

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matthew 23:37–39).

Christ’s representation is a most striking one. He would have gathered His chosen people together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wing. He would have given them protection, they would not have been left defenseless. When the hen sees that her brood is in danger, she calls them under her sheltering wings. She will resist any enemy that may approach. She will die rather than that those who have fled for protection under her sheltering wings should suffer. This will Christ do for those who fly to Him for refuge. He will gather His children together under His mediatorial wings, and there they will be safe.

But the chosen nation of God must receive its eternal retribution for its refusal of the Son of God. “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Matthew 23:38), Christ said. . . .

The Jewish nation would none of the counsels of Christ; they despised all His reproofs. They would not come to Him, that they might have life. Therefore He declared to them, Your destruction lies at your own door; you yourselves are responsible.⁵³

As the light and life of men was rejected by the ecclesiastical authorities in the days of Christ, so it has been rejected in every succeeding generation. Again and again the history of Christ’s withdrawal from Judea has been repeated. When the Reformers preached the word of God, they had no thought of separating themselves from the established church; but the religious leaders would not tolerate the light, and those that bore it were forced to seek another class, who were longing for the truth. In our day few of the professed followers of the Reformers are actuated by their spirit. Few are listening for the voice of God, and ready to accept truth in whatever guise it may be presented. Often those who follow in the steps of the Reformers are forced to turn away from the churches they love, in order to declare the plain teaching of the word of God. And many times those who are seeking for light are by the same teaching obliged to leave the church of their fathers, that they may render obedience.⁵⁴

April 27

Greeks in the Outer Court

“There were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus” (John 12:20, 21).

Gentiles were permitted to enter the outer court, but it was only lawful for the Jews to penetrate to the inner enclosure. Had a Samaritan passed this sacred boundary, the Temple would have been desecrated, and his life would have paid the penalty of its pollution. But Jesus, who was virtually the foundation and originator of the Temple—the services and ceremonies of which were but a type of His great sacrifice, pointing to Him as the Son of God—encircled the Gentiles with His human arm of sympathy and association, while, with His divine arm of grace and power, He brought to them the salvation which the Jews refused to accept.⁵⁵

These Greeks represented the nations and tribes and peoples who would awake to their great need of a power out of and above finite power.⁵⁶

It is the needy that Jesus is seeking. Brethren and sisters, do you feel that you are needy? Are you saying, as did the Greeks that came to Jerusalem, “We would see Jesus” (John 12:21)? The Greeks came to seek Jesus at a time when the Pharisees were upon His track, trying by every possible way to find something whereby they could accuse, condemn, and kill Him. How grateful was the sincere desire and confidence of the Greeks to the Master at this time of trial and sorrow. The Greeks wanted to see Him because they had heard of His mighty works, they had heard of His wisdom and truth; and they believed on Him, for they had searched the prophecies and felt assured that He was the desire of their hearts.

The great danger with the people who profess to believe the truth for this time is that they will feel as if they were entitled to the blessing of God because they have made this or that sacrifice, done this or that good work for the Lord. Do you imagine, because you have decided to obey God, that He is under obligation to you, and that you have merited His blessing by thus doing? Does the sacrifice you have made look of sufficient merit to entitle you to the rich gifts of God? If you have an appreciation of the work that Christ has wrought out for you, you will see that there is no merit in yourself or in your work. You will see your lost condition. There is but one thing to do, and that is to look continually to Jesus, to believe in Him whom the Father hath sent.⁵⁷

April 28

The Mystery of Life

“[Jesus said,] The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal” (John 12:23–25).

Year by year man preserves his grain by apparently throwing away his choicest sample. For a time this must be hidden under the furrow, to be watched over by the Lord. Then appears the blade, then the ear, and then the corn in the ear. But this development cannot take place unless the grain is buried out of sight, hidden and, to all appearances, lost.

The seed buried in the ground produces fruit, and in their turn the seeds of this fruit are planted. Thus the harvest is multiplied. So the death of Christ on the cross of Calvary will bear fruit unto eternal life. The contemplation of this sacrifice will be the glory of those who, as the fruit of it, will live through the eternal ages.

With this lesson Christ connects the self-sacrifice that all should practice. . . . “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour” (John 12:26).

This is the only honor we should seek. And we should seek it with a determination and an earnestness proportionate to the value of the treasure we have in view—eternal life in the kingdom of God. Christ claims the complete consecration of man to himself. This is the condition upon which man is exalted. As he submits his mind, his body, his soul, to God, so he will be honored. Self-renunciation is the great law of self-preservation, and self-preservation is the law of self-destruction.

He who lives for self, and devotes his life to self-serving, will lose his life. He may gather much, but he imparts little. All such are as the grain that is eaten. Those who think and plan for self only, who desire everything to minister to their ideas and advance their interests, pursue a course of selfish idolatry. God says of them, “Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone” (Hosea 4:17). Those who love this temporal life so well that they will scheme for themselves, and work upon worldly plans, will find at last that they are bankrupt; for they are without the eternal riches. But those who hate this life, who choose death rather than a life without Christ, win heaven.⁵⁸

The Drawing Power of the Cross

“I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32).

The Bible does not teach that man must repent before he comes to Christ. Our Saviour has been lifted up upon the cross of Calvary, and the love of Christ shining from the cross speaks constantly to the sinner of the sufferings of Jesus for fallen man. His love for the fallen race constantly draws sinners to Him. The transgressor may resist this love, may refuse to be drawn to Christ; but if he does not resist, he will be drawn to Jesus, and a knowledge of the plan of salvation will lead him to the foot of the cross in repentance for his sins, which have caused the sufferings of God’s dear Son.⁵⁹

It is by beholding Christ upon the cross of Calvary that the sinner is drawn to his Saviour; and as he realizes that Christ has died for him, his heart is melted into contrition and tenderness. He repents toward God because he has transgressed the divine law, and he has faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ as his substitute and surety.⁶⁰

Conviction of sin is the first step in conversion, and by the law is the knowledge of sin. When the sinner has a realization of his sin, he is in a condition to be drawn to Christ by the amazing love that has been shown for him on the cross of Calvary. When he is humble and penitent, he does not look for pardon to the law which he has broken, but he looks to God, who has provided forgiveness and sanctification through his well-beloved Son. As he beholds the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world, he grows to love Him, and by beholding he becomes changed into His image.⁶¹

As the sinner, drawn by the love of Christ, approaches the cross, and prostrates himself before it, there is a new creation. A new heart is given him. He becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. Holiness finds that it has nothing more to require.⁶²

Jesus is drawing all men; who will respond to this drawing? Many will be greatly influenced by the life and example of those who profess to have responded to this divine love that is drawing the hearts of men. Many will watch you who profess His name, to see whether it makes you better men and better women. They will watch to see if you are Christlike, kind and courteous in your family. The Lord has said, “By their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20).⁶³

A Special Assignment

“Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light” (John 12:35, 36).

A life spent in active work for God is a blessed one. Multitudes who are wasting their time in trifles, in idle regrets, and in unprofitable murmurings, might have altogether a different experience if they would appreciate the light God has given them, and let it shine upon others; and many make life miserable by their own selfishness and love of ease. By a diligent activity, their lives might become as bright rays of sunshine to guide those who are in the dark road to death into the pathway to heaven. If they take this course, their own hearts will be filled with peace and joy in Jesus Christ. It is for our profit in this life, and for our eternal interest, that we manifest earnestness and zeal in the work of God.

Many say, “If I knew Jesus would come in five years, I would make it my first business to win souls to Christ; for this would be the all-important consideration.” And these very persons may not live two years, or even one. We should first seek God, and His holiness. In His wise providence we are incapable of looking into the future, which often causes us disquietude and unhappiness. But one of the greatest evidences we have of the loving-kindness of God is His concealment of the events of the morrow. Our ignorance of tomorrow makes us more vigilant and earnest today. We cannot see what is before us. Our best-laid plans sometimes seem to be unwise and faulty. We think, “If we only knew the future!” but God would have His children trust in Him, and be ready to go where He shall lead them. We know not the precise time when our Lord shall be revealed in the clouds of heaven, but He has told us that our only safety is in a constant readiness—a position of watching and waiting. Whether we have one year before us, or five, or ten, we are to be faithful to our trust today. We are to perform each day’s duties as faithfully as though that day were to be our last.

We are not doing the will of God if we wait in idleness. To every man He has given his work, and He expects each one to do his part with fidelity. We are to sow beside all waters, and to work continuously for Jesus.⁶⁴

A Powerfully Vivid Example

“Before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. . . . He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded” (John 13:1, 4, 5).

Very soon Christ was to offer Himself as a sacrifice for the world. At this time, in the last hours that the disciples would have with their Master, Satan made a determined effort to arouse contention among them. Sorrow filled Christ’s heart as He saw them yielding to the spirit of strife, and disputing as to who should be greatest. Had they been in a right frame of mind, they would have received great blessing. But they came to the supper with hearts filled with selfishness, and with tempers heated by contention.

Christ heard their whisperings, and saw their flushed faces. Without a word, He laid aside His outer garment, and girding Himself with a towel, as if He had been a servant, proceeded to wash the feet of His disciples. His action opened their eyes. They were too astonished and too ashamed to speak. Bitter shame and humiliation filled their hearts. They saw themselves in altogether a new light.¹

In the very act of girding Himself with a towel to wash the feet of His disciples, Jesus would subdue and cleanse them from their alienation, and dissension, and jealousy, and pride. Not one of them was in an acceptable state before God, with such a spirit of unhappy dissension. The renewed heart, cleansed from every defilement, was of far more consequence than the outward application of water to their dusty feet. Jesus could not give them the lessons He so much desired to impart unless they would come into a proper state of humility and affection. Dissension always creates hatred, but Christ washed it away in the act of washing His disciples’ feet. A change of feeling did come; the union of heart and love for one another did exist. They became meek, teachable, and loving, and would have conceded to anyone the highest place. They were prepared to partake of the last supper with fragrant feelings of love, deep and full, for their Master and for one another.²

Any Service, However Humble

“Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me” (John 13:8).

During this ceremony [of feet washing], the Holy Spirit was impressing the hearts of the disciples, sweeping away the selfishness that they had shown in their dealings with one another. Not long before, some of them had been offended because their brethren sought the highest place. All this now appeared so insignificant, the mountain was reduced to such a molehill, that shame took the place of disputing. “He that is greatest among you shall be your servant,” declared Christ (Matthew 23:11). He that doeth service will humble himself, and in so doing, he will be placed where the Lord can safely honor him.³

The object of this service is to call to mind the humility of our Lord, and the lessons He has given in washing the feet of His disciples. There is in man a disposition to esteem himself more highly than his brother, to work for himself, to serve himself, to seek the highest place; and often evil surmisings and bitterness of spirit spring up over mere trifles. This ordinance, preceding the Lord’s Supper, is to clear away these misunderstandings, to bring man out of his selfishness, down from his stilts of self-exaltation, to the humility of spirit that will lead him to wash his brother’s feet. . . .

All who keep before them, in the act of feet-washing, the humiliation of Christ, all who will keep their hearts humble, who will keep in view the true tabernacle and service, which the Lord pitched and not man, will never fail to derive benefit from every discourse given, and spiritual strength from every communion. They are established for a purpose. Christ’s followers are to bear in mind the example of Christ in His humility. This ordinance is to encourage humility, but it should never be termed humiliating in the sense of being degrading to humanity. It is to tender our hearts toward one another. Those who come . . . with their hearts open to the influences of the Spirit of God will be greatly blessed.⁴

He who washed the feet of His disciples was the Majesty of heaven. He had the hoarded love of eternity in His heart, but He was in their midst as one who served; and in washing their feet, He gave them evidence that He would do any service, however humble, in order to make them heirs together with Him of all the eternal wealth of heaven’s treasure.⁵

A New Ordinance to Replace the Old

“He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For [Jesus] knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean” (John 13:10, 11).

Christ knew the heart of Judas, yet He washed his feet. . . . We must understand that because we suppose one to be in error and sin, we are not to divorce ourselves from him, refuse to have any association with him, and make our suppositions prominent. The example of Christ will not sustain anyone in these conclusions. Many a soul may be saved by further effort on the part of his brother; but a careless separation from him, leaving him exposed to the temptations of Satan, and driving him upon the devil’s battleground, is not the method of Christ. He sought to restore, not to destroy. . . .

When this simple ordinance is being performed, the followers of Christ should bear in mind that this is the time for all to search their hearts to see if they are willing to humble themselves in spirit, and follow the example of Christ. He gives them this ordinance as a test, a heart-searcher. The Holy Spirit will be present on every occasion to convince of sin, of any wrong action done to a brother. . . .

The Lord is present on every occasion when this humble ceremony is performed. He is the unseen Witness. He reads every heart, with its concealed purposes, its wrongdoings, its sin. You can neglect, you can leave, these seasons of divine appointment; and of you Christ’s words may be appropriately spoken, “Ye are not all clean” (John 13:11). . . .

In this ordinance, Christ discharged His disciples from the cares and burdens of the ancient Jewish obligations in rites and ceremonies. . . . This ordinance does not speak so largely to man’s intellectual capacity as to his heart. His moral and spiritual nature needs it. If His disciples had not needed this, it would not have been left for them as Christ’s last established ordinance in connection with, and including, the last supper. It was Christ’s desire to leave to His disciples an ordinance that would do for them the very thing they needed—that would serve to disentangle them from the rites and ceremonies which they had hitherto engaged in as essential, and which the reception of the gospel made no longer of any force. To continue these rites would be an insult to Jehovah.⁶

Happy in This Ordinance

“If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (John 13:14–17).

In this ordinance [of feet washing], Christ discharged His disciples from the cares and burdens of the ancient Jewish obligations in rites and ceremonies. These no longer possessed any virtue; for type was meeting antitype in Himself. . . . He gave this simple ordinance that it might be a special season when He Himself would always be present, to lead all participating in it to feel the pulse of their own conscience, to awaken them to an understanding of the lessons symbolized, to revive their memory, to convict of sin, and to receive their penitential repentance. He would teach them that brother is not to exalt himself above brother, that the dangers of disunion and strife shall be seen and appreciated; for the health and holy activity of the soul are involved.⁷

Is any sin cherished? Let it be cut away from the soul by confession. The first look, the first act, of contrition and repentance that you direct toward Christ, does not escape His notice. The first step you take toward Him will bring Him more than a step toward you. All things, especially on this occasion, are ready for your reception. He will meet you in your weakness, repenting, broken-hearted soul, with His divine strength.⁸

Reconciliation one with another is the work for which the ordinance of feet washing was instituted. By the example of our Lord and Master, this humiliating ceremony has been made a sacred ordinance. Whenever it is celebrated, Christ is present by His Holy Spirit. It is this Spirit that brings conviction to hearts. As Christ celebrated this ordinance with His disciples, conviction came to the hearts of all save Judas. So we shall be convicted as Christ speaks to our hearts. The fountains of the soul will be broken up. The mind will be energized, and, springing into activity and life, will break down every barrier that has caused disunion and alienation. Sins that have been committed will appear with more distinctness than ever before; for the Holy Spirit will bring them to our remembrance. The words of Christ, “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (John 13:17), will be clothed with new power.⁹

The Lord's Supper

“The Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come” (1 Corinthians 11:23–26).

The salvation of men depends upon a continual application to their hearts of the cleansing blood of Christ. Therefore, the Lord's Supper was to be observed more frequently than the annual pass-over. This solemn ordinance commemorates a far greater event than the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt. That deliverance was typical of the great atonement which Christ made by the sacrifice of His own life for the final redemption of His people.¹⁰

We do not make it our business, as we gather around the table of our Lord, to ponder about and mourn over our shortcomings. The ordinance of feet-washing embraced all this. . . . We do not come with our minds diverted to our past experience in the religious life, whether that experience is elevating or depressing. We do not come to revive in our minds the ill-treatment we have received at the hands of our brethren. The ordinance of humility is to clear our moral horizon of the rubbish that has been permitted to accumulate. We have assembled now to meet with Jesus Christ, to commune with Him. Every heart is to be open to the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Our minds and hearts are to be fixed on Christ as the great center on whom our hopes of eternal life depend. We are not to stand in the shadow, but in the saving light of the cross.¹¹

The ceremony of feet washing and the Lord's Supper, in its simplicity and spirituality, is to be observed with true solemnity, and with hearts full of thankfulness. . . . All the vigor of mind and the healthfulness of body are to be fresh to engage in the work of the gospel, to lead souls from sin into the upward path of holiness. In this ordinance is presented the necessity of economizing all the thoughts, all the energies, all the affections and faculties, to wear Christ's yoke, to come into partnership with Him.¹²

The Christian's Credentials

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34, 35).

If each will search and see what sins are lurking in his own heart to shut out Jesus, he will find such a work to do that he will be ready to esteem others better than himself. He will no longer seek to pluck the mote out of his brother's eye while a beam is in his own eye.

Let no Christian be found an accuser of the brethren. Satan is the one who bears this title; he accuses them before God day and night, he stirs up the enemies of our faith to accuse us, and he prompts those of like precious faith to criticize and condemn one another. We are not to take part in his work. These are days of trial and of great peril, the adversary of souls is upon the track of every one; and while we stand out separate from the world, we should press together in faith and love. United, we are strong; divided, we are weak.

We are exhorted to love as brethren, to be kind, courteous, forbearing, in honor preferring one another. Love for God and for one another constitutes the divine credentials which the children of God bear. . . . Those who cherish this love will sacredly guard the interests of one another. No evil reports will be carried; tattling and gossip will cease; Christ and the truth will be magnified.

None who continue to cherish a querulous, fault-finding disposition can enter heaven; for they would mar its peace and harmony. They will be left outside the city of God, with all who stir up strife. Nor should they be permitted to remain in the church to prevent unity and destroy its usefulness. Let them be reproved, and if they do not change their course, let them be separated from the church. But all may, if they will, conquer these evil traits. The members of the church should pledge themselves to walk together in harmony. Each should set a guard over his own heart, not permitting himself to think evil of his brethren, but giving them credit for all the good qualities they possess. We should store the mind with the precious promises and instructions of God's word. When Satan seeks to divert the attention to things of no profit, then we should think and talk of these heavenly promises, and the tempter will be vanquished.¹³

May 7

Words of Comfort

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:1–3).

Christ had said everything encouraging that He could, in order that the faith of His disciples might not fail when He hung upon the cross. If, after His crucifixion and burial, in the place of giving way to their sorrow, the disciples had carefully reviewed what Christ had told them to prepare them for this time, they would not have been so wholly discouraged. They would have seen light amid the darkness.¹⁴

During these last sorrowful hours, Christ told His disciples that on the night of His trial, they would all be offended because of Him, and that He would be left alone. He told them that for a little while after His death they would be sorrowful, but that their sorrow would be turned into joy. He told them that the time was coming when they would be put out of the synagogues, and that those who killed them would think that they were doing God service. He stated plainly why He told them these things while He was yet with them—that when His words were fulfilled, they would remember that He had told them of them before. . . . He was plain and definite, that in their coming trial, the disciples might know that the Most High would not forget or forsake them. . . .

The object of Christ’s departure was the opposite of what the disciples feared. It did not mean a final separation from Him. He was going to prepare a place for them, that He might come again, and receive them unto Himself.

Not only to the disciples, but to us, are these words of comfort spoken. In the last scenes of this earth’s history, war will rage. There will be pestilence, plague, and famine. The waters of the deep will overflow their boundaries. Property and life will be destroyed by fire and flood. We should be preparing for the mansions that Christ has gone to prepare for them that love Him. There is a rest from earth’s conflict. Where is it? “That where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:3). Heaven is where Christ is. Heaven would not be heaven to those who love Christ if He were not there. Are we individually forming characters that will be meet for the society of Christ and the heavenly angels?¹⁵

May 8

Only One Way

“Jesus saith . . . , I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

It makes every difference with the future eternal well-being of men whether they follow God’s way or their own way. Their way may be entirely wrong. Are there many paths to heaven? If so, man may take any path that suits his fancy. But there is only one true way. . . .

The Lord will uplift us if we will consent to be uplifted. He who recognizes God in Christ, who receives Christ as the world’s Redeemer and his personal Saviour, enters in at the door. He does not climb up some other way.¹⁶

Sometimes those who profess to be followers of Christ, will say, “You must not be surprised if I am rough, if I speak bluntly, if I manifest temper; for it is my way.” But is not Heaven surprised at such manifestations, since the plan of salvation has been devised, since an infinite sacrifice has been made on Calvary’s cross, that we might reflect the image of Jesus? Will *your way* lead to heaven? Suppose one should come up to the pearly gates, and say, “I know that I have been rude and unkind, and it is my disposition to lie and to steal; but I want an entrance into the heavenly mansions;” would *that way* give him an entrance into the portals of the heavenly city? No; it is those who keep Christ’s way that will enter there. He says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). If any one thinks he can climb up some other way, he will find that it will not lead him to the mansions of glory. We want Christ’s way. His life must be in us, even as blood is the life that nourishes the body.¹⁷

We are not saved as a sect; no denominational name has any virtue to bring us into favor with God. We are saved individually as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . We may have our names recorded on the books of the most spiritual of the churches, and yet we may not belong to Christ, and our names may not be written on the Lamb’s book of life. Christ said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). If we could reach heaven through our own merits and efforts, then Christ need not have come to the world, to endure suffering, reproach, and shame, to be subjected to humiliation, mockery, insult, and death. He made an infinite sacrifice, because it was the only way whereby man could be saved.¹⁸

Power From Above

“Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father” (John 14:10–12).

Christ desired the disciples to understand that they were not to be bereft of power because He was going to His Father. The promise He made to them is for us. If we will take it just as it reads, we shall feel such confidence and such trust in God and the truth that He will be able to reveal His power through us. By our good works we shall show our faith. We can receive power and grace from Christ to enable us to work the works of God. And let us ever remember that we are never to take any credit to ourselves for the work we do. There is nothing good in us; therefore we should not seek to glorify ourselves. God is to receive all the glory. . . .

Constantly we are to strive to elevate ourselves and others, in accordance with the directions of the Word of God. With all the power we have we are to seek to reach the standard of character Christ has set before us. This is what God wants us to do. When in humble faith we rely on Christ as our sufficiency, our strength, our all and in all, then it is that the power of God rests upon our work.

Christ’s words show that there is a close connection between heaven and earth; that to those who believe in the power of truth God manifests Himself as He does not to the world. There are those who seem to think that if the minister leaves them, they will be stranded. Why do they not hang their helpless souls on Christ? Why do they not believe that although they have no minister, Jesus is with them. Let them follow the minister into the field with their prayers. Christ has told them that the works that He has done they may do also. He says, “Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14:13). But He does not say this to those who do not abide in Him.

Do not depend upon human beings for spiritual help. Resist the temptation to make flesh your arm. Look to God as children look to an earthly father. Believe that He loves you and that He will help you, even as He has promised.¹⁹

A Promise to You

“[Jesus said,] If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it” (John 14:14).

The enemy of our souls would be glad to steal away these precious promises from us, and cast darkness before our eyes, so that we should not be able to appropriate the good things that God means that we shall have. God is waiting to do great things for us as soon as we come into a right relation with Him; but if we hold ourselves in doubt and unbelief, the enemy can keep the control of our minds, and intercept the promises of God. Unbelief always results in a great loss to our souls. It was said concerning one place where Christ visited, “He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief” (Matthew 13:58). Christ cannot work in our behalf if we do not manifest faith in Him. We should train our souls to have faith in God. But instead of this, how many there are who educate themselves to doubt. . . .

You say, “How can I talk faith, how can I have faith, when clouds and darkness and despondency come over my mind? I do not feel as though I could talk faith; I do not feel that I have any faith to talk.” But why do you feel in this way? It is because you have permitted Satan to cast his dark shadow across your pathway, and you cannot see the light that Jesus sheds upon your pathway. But another says: “I am very frank; I say just what I feel, I talk just as I think.” Is that the best way to do? No; God wants us to educate ourselves so that we shall speak right words—words that will be a blessing to others, that will shed rays of light upon their souls.

Suppose that at times we are destitute of the joy we should like to experience, can we not feel assured that the promises of God are still yea and amen in Christ Jesus? The promises of God do not rest upon feeling. They have a foundation as distinct from feeling as light is from darkness. We must learn to move from principle, and when we learn to do this, we shall move understandingly, and not be controlled by varying emotions.²⁰

How foolish it would be to go into a cellar and mourn because we were in the dark! If we want light we must come up into a higher room. It is our privilege to come into the light, to come into the presence of God.²¹

Oh, educate the soul to believe the promises of God. Would He make such promises if He did not love us? We are His purchased property; bought at an infinite price.²²

The Comforter Given on Conditions

“If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (John 14:15–18).

Either God or Satan has the control of the intellect. If man sustains no vital relation to God, he reveals that he is connected with another leader, who is controlling his mind, and holding him in darkness, that he may not see the evidences of truth. The world cannot receive the Spirit of truth, because they have not made the truth, which would make them wise unto salvation, their study.²³

Jesus says if we love Him and keep His commandments, He will pray the Father, and He will send the Comforter to bless us.²⁴

This promise God has made to you. When you get discouraged, do not depend upon human beings for aid. Christ declares, The Comforter shall be with you. Go right to God in prayer. Bow before Him, saying, “Lord, help me; for I am in difficulty, and I do not know what to do. You have promised to give your children what they ask in your name. We ask for strength to resist the temptations of the enemy.”

Thus you will obtain a most valuable experience. As you follow on to know the Lord, you will know that His goings forth are prepared as the morning. And when you receive help and comfort, sing to the praise of God. Talk with God. Thus you will become a friend of God. You will rely on Him. You will obtain a faith that will trust whether you feel like trusting or not. Remember that feeling is not an evidence that you are a Christian. Implicit faith in God shows that you are His child. Trust in God. He will never disappoint you.²⁵

Whenever one renounces sin, which is the transgression of the law, his life will be brought into conformity to the law, into perfect obedience. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. The light of the word carefully studied, the voice of conscience, the strivings of the Spirit, produce in the heart genuine love for Christ, who gave Himself a whole sacrifice to redeem the whole person, body, soul, and spirit. And love is manifested in obedience.²⁶

Christ’s Glory Manifested Now

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (John 14:21).

We are not in a dreamland of inaction. We are soldiers of Christ, enlisted in the work of showing our loyalty to Him who has redeemed us. What we are in the heavenly home, when saved, eternally saved, will be the reflection of what we now are in character and holy service. Shall we not show our loyalty by keeping God’s commandments here, in this our place of probation? Shall we not raise the standard of loyalty to the God of heaven, irrespective of consequences, unheeding the reviling and hatred of the churches that have apostatized from the service of their Creator?

The Lord has a people on the earth, who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. He has His thousands who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Such will stand with Him on Mount Zion. But they must stand on this earth, girded with the whole armor, ready to engage in the work of saving those who are ready to perish. . . .

We need not wait till we are translated to follow Christ. God’s people may do this here below. We shall follow the Lamb of God in the courts above only if we follow him here. Following Him in heaven depends on our keeping His commandments now. We are not to follow Christ fitfully or capriciously, only when it is for our advantage. We must choose to follow Him. In daily life we must follow His example, as a flock trustfully follows its shepherd. We are to follow Him by suffering for His sake, saying, at every step, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15). His life practice must be our life practice. And as we thus seek to be like Him, and to bring our wills into conformity to His will, we shall reveal Him.

Are we following Christ with unswerving loyalty, keeping His life of perfect obedience, of purity and self-sacrifice, ever before us, that, by beholding, we may become changed into His image? Do we strive to imitate His fidelity? If we educate ourselves to say, Be thou my Pattern; if by the eye of faith we see Him as a living Saviour, we shall be strengthened to follow Him. Then with the undefiled we shall follow Him in the future life. As eye- and heart-witnesses, we can bear testimony to His majesty; for by faith we have been with Him in the holy mount.²⁷

May 13

Fit for the Master's Presence

"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23).

Jesus invites us to accept His presence; we are to open the door of the heart, and let Him in. But He will not share a divided heart. If it be given to the service of mammon, if selfishness and pride fill its chambers, there will be no room for the heavenly Guest; He will not take up His abode with us until the soul-temple has been emptied and cleansed.²⁸

When we remove the rubbish from the door of the heart, the Lord will come in and make His abode with us.²⁹

By the Spirit the Father and the Son will come and make their abode with you. There is no excuse for wavering or sinning. But in order to be upright, you must keep all these rich and full promises in memory's hall. Clear the mind of all objectionable, foolish things; retain the precious truths that you have heard here. And "when the enemy shall come in like a flood," these precious, golden words of promise will come into your mind and strengthen your soul. "When the enemy shall come in like a flood" that would sweep you from the Rock, "the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19). What is that standard? What weapon did Jesus present to the enemy in His temptation in the wilderness? The Word of God. He said, "It is written."

Now, you are to remember what is written, and when the enemy comes and tempts you to seek this or that place of amusement where you cannot take Jesus with you, just say firmly, "No, I cannot go there." Make up your mind, and know how to say "No" squarely.³⁰

The law of God is the standard by which character is to be tested; if we erect a standard to suit ourselves, and attempt to follow a criterion of our own devising, we shall utterly fail to secure heaven at last.³¹

Here in this life is the testing, trying time. The angels of God are watching the development of character, and weighing moral worth. The whole question is settled in this, Is he obedient or disobedient to the commandments of God? Has the sinner been transformed in this world, through the merits of Christ, to an obedient servant, so that he is fitted to join the heavenly society and be accepted as a joint heir with Christ?³²

May 14

The Comforter Teaches and Reminds

"The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

It is the Holy Spirit that is to bring to our remembrance the words of Christ. The theme Christ chose to dwell upon in His last discourse to His disciples was that of the office of the Holy Spirit. He opened before them a wide tract of truth. They were to receive His words by faith, and the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, was to bring all things to their remembrance. The consolation given by Christ in this promise was found in the fact that the divine influence was to be with His followers to the end. But this promise is not accepted and believed by the people today, and therefore is not cherished by them, nor is its fulfillment seen in the experience of the church. The promise of the gift of the Spirit of God is left as a matter to be little considered by the church. It is not impressed upon the people, and the result is only that which might be expected—spiritual drought, spiritual darkness, spiritual declension and death. Minor matters occupy the mind and soul, but divine power which is necessary for the growth and prosperity of the church, which would, if possessed, bring all other blessings in its train, is lacking, although it is offered to us in infinite plenitude. Just as long as the church is satisfied with small things, it is disqualified to receive the great things of God.

But why do we not hunger and thirst after the gift of the Holy Spirit, since it is the means whereby the heart may be kept pure? The Lord designs that divine power shall cooperate with human effort. It is all-essential for the Christian to understand the meaning of the promise of the Holy Spirit just prior to the coming of our Lord Jesus the second time.³³

You need not be surprised that God will flash the knowledge obtained by diligent searching of the Scriptures into your memory at the very time when it is needed. But if you let the precious moments of probationary time pass, and neglect to fill your minds and the minds of your children with the gems of truth, if you are not acquainted with the words of Christ, if you have never tested the power of His grace in trial, you cannot expect that the Holy Spirit will bring Christ's words to your remembrance. We are to serve God daily with our undivided affection, and then trust Him.³⁴

May 15

A Peace Above the World

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

It is said that at one time an infidel came to argue the question of his unbelief with Mr. Moody. The evangelist said to the unbeliever, “Let us pray before we talk of these matters;” and they bowed down, and while Mr. Moody prayed, God changed the man’s heart. It was God that wrought where argument would have failed. Let us work upon this plan, and pray for one another, bringing one another right into the presence of God by living faith. The Lord knows all the thoughts and feelings of the heart; and how easily He can melt us, how His spirit, like a fire, can subdue the flinty heart, and, like a hammer, can break the rock into pieces! . . . And when Jesus shall come in unto you, He will sweetly say, “Peace be unto you.” He will not give such peace as the world gives; but the peace that passes all understanding. And with the peace of Christ in you, when you see a brother falling away, you will be enabled to say just the right thing at the right time.³⁵

We cannot always be upon our knees in prayer, but we can let the heart be ascending to God continually for His blessing, and we will have help just as sure as we keep in this state of mind. The evil angels may be all around you to press their darkness upon you, but the will of God is greater than their power. And if you do not in word or action, or in any way, make Christ ashamed of you, the sweet blessing and peace of God will be in your heart every day you live. . . . We must meet difficulties, and in order to meet and overcome them we must have Jesus with us. Satan will say to you that you are a very great sinner, and that you need not pray, for Jesus will not hear you. But you can tell him that because you are a sinner is the very reason why you need to pray; for Christ came to save sinners, and He died upon Calvary’s cross in order that sinners might come to Him and be saved. Build a wall of scriptures around you, and you will see that the world cannot break it down. Commit the Scriptures to memory, and then throw right back upon Satan when he comes with his temptations, “It is written.” This is the way that our Lord met the temptations of Satan, and resisted them. Be determined that you will not live without the presence and light and love of Jesus, and then you will have precious victories, and will know who is the Source of your strength.³⁶

May 16

No Harmony With Sin

“[Jesus declared,] the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me” (John 14:30).

The keen eyes of jealousy had been watching Christ, trying to find something whereby He might be condemned. But nothing could be found. . . . No envy, no worldly ambition, no pride, no selfishness, could be found in Him.³⁷

It is impossible for man to fully comprehend the strength of Satan’s temptations to our Saviour. Every enticement to evil, which men find so difficult to resist, was brought to bear upon the Son of God in as much greater degree as His character was superior to that of fallen man.³⁸

There was in Christ absolutely nothing of which Satan could take advantage. Jesus had not defiled His soul by one wrong action, one doubt, or even one murmuring thought. We may open the door of the mind and invite Satan’s suggestions, or by pressing close to the side of Jesus, we may obtain strength to resist every evil influence.³⁹

Oh, that each might say when tempted, as did our Lord, “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me” (John 14:30). We want to uproot from our hearts every plant that our heavenly Father has not planted, that we may not be led to utter selfish and perverse things. Oh, for more of Christ, and less of self!⁴⁰

Satan could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to gain the victory. He had kept His Father’s commandments, and there was no sin in Him that Satan could use to his advantage. This is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble.

It is in this life that we are to separate sin from us, through faith in the atoning blood of Christ. Our precious Saviour invites us to join ourselves to Him, to unite our weakness to His strength, our ignorance to His wisdom, our unworthiness to His merits. God’s providence is the school in which we are to learn the meekness and lowliness of Jesus. The Lord is ever setting before us, not the way we would choose, which seems easier and pleasanter to us, but the true aims of life. It rests with us to cooperate with the agencies which Heaven employs in the work of conforming our characters to the divine model. None can neglect or defer this work but at the most fearful peril to their souls.⁴¹

May 17

Pruned for Greater Fruit-Bearing

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit” (John 15:1, 2).

Just as the strength and nourishment of the grapevine are taken up in abundant foliage, and the fruit is not brought to perfection unless the vine is pruned, so the strength of the Christian will fail of its true end, unless the heavenly husbandman prunes away the useless growth. In prosperity the followers of Jesus often turn their thoughts and energies toward gratifying themselves, to securing worldly treasure, to the enjoyment of ease and pleasure and luxury, and they bring forth little fruit to the glory of God; then the heavenly husbandman, in order to promote the fruitfulness of the branches, comes with the pruning knife of disappointment, loss, or bereavement, and cuts away the hindering growth.

One evening a gentleman who was much depressed because of deep affliction was walking in a garden, where he observed a pomegranate tree nearly cut through the stem. Greatly wondering, he asked the gardener why the tree was in this condition, and he received an answer that explained to his satisfaction the wounds of his own bleeding heart. “Sir,” said the gardener, “this tree used to shoot out so strong that it bore nothing but leaves. I was obliged to cut it in this manner; and when it was almost cut through, it began to bear fruit.”

Our sorrows do not spring out of the ground. In every affliction God has a purpose to work out for our good. Every blow that destroys an idol, every providence that weakens our hold upon earth and fastens our affections more firmly upon God is a blessing. The pruning may be painful for a time, but afterward it “yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness” (Hebrews 12:11). We should receive with gratitude whatever will quicken the conscience, elevate the thoughts, and ennoble the life. The fruitless branches are cut off. . . . Let us be thankful that through painful pruning, we may retain a connection with the living Vine; for if we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with Him. The very trial that taxes our faith the most severely and makes it seem as though God had forsaken us is to lead us more clearly to Him, that we may lay all our burdens at the feet of Christ and experience the peace which He will give us in exchange.⁴²

May 18

Cleansed and Nourished by His Word

“Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me” (John 15:3, 4).

The branches represent the believers in Jesus Christ. Those who truly believe will do the same works that He did. They are united to Christ by the faith that works by love and purifies the soul. As the branch is nourished by the sap which flows from the parent stock, so the believer in Christ is sustained by the life of Christ. The branches represent the very youngest of the followers of Christ, as the branch includes all the tiny tendrils that belong to it. Jesus is our center. He is the parent stock that bears the branches. In Him our eternal life is centered. The words that He has spoken unto us are spirit and life, and those who feed upon His word, and are doers of His word, represent Him in character. His patience, meekness, humility, and love pervade their hearts.⁴³

All who receive Christ by faith become one with Him. The branches are not tied to the vine; they are not joined to it by any mechanical process of artificial fastening. They are united to the vine, so as to become part of it. They are nourished by the roots of the vine. So those who receive Christ by faith become one with Him in principle and action. . . .

Baptism may be repeated over and over again, but of itself it has no power to change the human heart. The heart must be united with Christ’s heart, the will must be submerged in His will, the mind must become one with His mind, the thoughts must be brought into captivity to Him. A man may be baptized, and his name be placed on the church roll, and yet his heart be unchanged. Hereditary and cultivated tendencies may still work evil in his character.

The regenerated man has a vital connection with Christ. As the branch derives its sustenance from the parent stock and, because of this, bears much fruit, so the true believer, united with Christ, reveals in his life the fruits of the Spirit. The branch becomes one with the vine; storm cannot carry it away; frost cannot destroy its vital properties. Nothing is able to separate it from the vine. It is a living branch, and it bears the fruit of the vine. So with the believer. By good words and good actions he reveals the character of Christ.⁴⁴

May 19

Attached to the Vine—Detached From Sin

“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).

There is a wide difference between a pretended union and a real connection with Christ by faith. A profession of the truth places men in the church, but this does not prove that they have a vital connection with the living Vine. A rule is given by which the true disciple may be distinguished from those who claim to follow Christ but have not faith in Him. The one class are fruit bearing, the other, fruitless. The one are often subjected to the pruning knife of God that they may bring forth more fruit; the other, as withered branches, are ere long to be severed from the living Vine. . . .

Can we conceive of a closer, more intimate relation to Christ than is set forth in the words: “I am the Vine, ye are the branches”? The fibers of the branch are almost identical with those of the vine. The communication of life, strength, and fruitfulness from the trunk to the branches is unobstructed and constant. The root sends its nourishment through the branch. Such is the true believer’s relation to Christ. He abides in Christ and draws his nourishment from Him.

This spiritual relation can be established only by the exercise of personal faith. This faith must express on our part supreme preference, perfect reliance, entire consecration. Our will must be wholly yielded to the divine will, our feelings, desires, interests, and honor identified with the prosperity of Christ’s kingdom and the honor of His cause, we constantly receiving grace from Him, and Christ accepting gratitude from us.

When this intimacy of connection and communion is formed, . . . there must be a painful work of detachment as well as a work of attachment. Pride, selfishness, vanity, worldliness—sin in all its forms—must be overcome if we would enter into a union with Christ. The reason why many find the Christian life so deplorably hard, why they are so fickle, so variable, is that they try to attach themselves to Christ without first detaching themselves from these cherished idols.

After the union with Christ has been formed, it can be preserved only by earnest prayer and untiring effort. We must resist, we must deny, we must conquer self. Through the grace of Christ, by courage, by faith, by watchfulness, we may gain the victory.⁴⁵

May 20

Everything at Stake

“If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned” (John 15:6).

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that those who abide in Christ might become the sons of God. Everything is at stake here. What will you do about it, my brethren and sisters? Are you going to let worldly ideas, worldly customs and practices come into your lives and characters? Are you going to study what this one or that one will say? Or are you looking to the One who so loved the world that He did not withhold from us His only begotten Son? God gave Christ to the world to reveal to men that humanity united with divinity could overcome the temptations that are in the world through lust. This union we must experience. We must be living branches of the True Vine, daily laying hold of our Redeemer. . . .

Unless you take hold by living faith of His divine power, you will miss that life that measures with the life of God. We cannot afford to miss that life. We cannot afford to live careless, indifferent, selfish lives; for such God cannot accept. . . .

What we need . . . is a faith that abides in Christ, that lays hold upon His power, that is obedient to Him, and that leads us to take up the cross of self-denial and self-sacrifice. This unites the soul to Christ, and makes us one with Him.

To every one of us the Lord holds out this privilege if we will cut away our own wrong habits and practices. There are many who think that they can retain their wrong habits, their perverted appetites and passions, and at the last get into a condition of self-denial. But the longer selfishness is practiced, the harder it is to break away from it. What the Lord wants now is men and women who have the missionary spirit, who understand why Christ gave His life, why He laid off His royal robe and kingly crown, and came to the world as a little child to be brought up in poverty.

The Lord has the power to forgive the sins of every soul in this congregation, if you will repent of your backslidings, if you will turn to the Lord, and will cut away from your lives wrong habits and dispositions and your hardness of heart. What you need is the humanity that was in Christ Jesus, that laid hold upon divinity. Take hold upon that divinity, and bring it into your life, and you will be a savor of life unto life.⁴⁶

Taking Him at His Word

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7).

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you” (John 15:7), are the words of Christ which, abiding in the heart of the believer, transform his character. They are not a dead letter, but they are spirit and life. They are motive power to all action. If they are lightly regarded, nominally received, without working in us, they are useless, and will only condemn us in the judgment. We shall grow no better under their influence, but shall continually become worse in character, more careless, more self-willed, more filled with self-esteem, puffed up in our own conceit; so that we are worse off than if we had no knowledge of them. Christ’s words are to a purpose, to lead men to will and to do. They are an impelling power, causing men to resolve and to act.⁴⁷

I wrote to [my twin sister afflicted with disease], saying, “Ask anything you will, that is within my power to obtain, to make you comfortable, and you shall have it.” She believed that I meant what I said. She wrote to me about a wheelchair of which she had heard, that she thought would be a great blessing to her. One had been selected for her, and she wrote with the greatest confidence that I would purchase it. How is it that she could believe in my word, and yet could not believe in the promises of Jesus? When I write to her, I mean to present the matter in this very light.

A sister came to me in Oakland and said, “Don’t you remember that you promised to give me ‘Vol. IV’ when it was revised and enlarged?” “Did I?” said I, “and did you really believe I meant to do it?” “Certainly,” she replied. “Why did you think so?” I asked, “Is it not strange that you should think I would do that, simply because I promised you?” She looked at me in astonishment. She had been complaining to me of her lack of faith in God. “Now,” I said, “how is it that you can trust in a promise of mine, but cannot trust your heavenly Father’s word? How is it that you can have faith in a poor, fallible mortal, and cannot rely upon the unchangeable God? I had forgotten my promise; but God never forgets. Why can’t you take Him at His word, as you take me at my word?” We honor God when we take Him at His word, and walk out by faith, believing that He means just what He says. . . . “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32).⁴⁸

Everbearing Fruit Plants

“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love” (John 15:8, 9).

Fruit bearing . . . is the condition of discipleship. What is the fruit that is to be borne? Purity of character, unselfish deeds, Christlike words. Those who do not bear this fruit, those whose lives do not reveal the tenderness of Christ are not accepted as representatives of God.

In order for us to bear the fruit that glorifies God, our hearts must be filled with the love of Christ. We must learn of Him His meekness and lowliness. Then we shall not strive for self-exaltation. Those who retain their own unchristlike peculiarities are not sanctified through oneness with the Saviour. Self is so prominent that Christ is not seen. When men see more clearly the completeness of Christ’s sacrifice and condescension, they will better understand what is comprehended by oneness with Him.

A Christian is one whose heart is controlled by the Holy Spirit. The love of God pervades his soul. He desires to live, not to get glory for himself, not to serve himself, but to serve and glorify the One who gave His life for him.⁴⁹

It is our lifework to be reaching forward to the perfection of Christian character, striving continually for conformity to the will of God. The efforts begun upon earth will continue through eternity. God’s standard of man is elevated to the highest meaning of the term, and if he acts up to his God-given manhood he will promote happiness in this life, which will lead to glory and an eternal reward in the life to come.

The members of the human family are entitled to the name of men and women only when they employ their talents, in every possible way, for the good of others. The life of Christ is before us as a pattern, and it is when ministering, like angels of mercy, to the wants of others that man is closely allied to God. It is the nature of Christianity to make happy families and happy society. . . .

Did Christ become weary in His efforts to save fallen man? Our work is to be continuous and persevering. We shall find work to do until the Master shall bid us lay our armor at His feet. God is a moral governor, and we must wait, submissive to His will, ready and willing to spring to our duty whenever work needs to be done.⁵⁰

Fullness of Joy in Shared Victory

“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John 15:10, 11).

[The Saviour] compares Himself and His work and experience of abiding with the Father with the experience and work to which He has ordained us, because He represents humanity and divinity combined. It is our privilege to lay hold of the divine nature and say, Lord, you promised it. We ask thee to give us a spirit of self-denial and self-sacrifice. Help us to understand what it means to abide in thee.

To abide in Christ means that you shall be a partaker of the divine nature. Humanity lays hold upon divinity, and you have divine power. But if you cling to old habits and practices of self-indulgence, and refuse to carry the burden of souls, you will lose your own soul. You will not value your own soul highly, and you will not carry on a straightforward work. It is the privilege of every believer to purify his soul, that he may have the life that measures with the life of God in the kingdom of glory. This is what we all desire—to live through the ages of eternity in the kingdom of glory. But we can never do it if we continue to follow our own habits and inclinations. Oh, that this burden might be rolled upon souls, and that they might realize that if they will be overcomers, they can help others to overcome. . . .

The work of overcoming is not a joyless work; no, indeed. It means communication with heaven. You can go to God in prayer; you can ask, and receive; you can believe, hanging your helpless soul on Christ. It means that humanity can work the will and ways of God. Humanity and divinity are combined for this very purpose. Oh, what a different world we should have if every professed Christian would come to Christ just as he is, practice self-denial, permit the fruitless branches to be cut away, and the good branches to be improved. Such an experience of constantly abiding in Christ would result in souls being brought to a knowledge of the truth. Let the petition come up before God, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do today? Let thy light shine upon me. Terrible trials are to come upon our world, and the world is preparing itself for this. We, too, must be prepared, that we may have the protection of our heavenly Father.⁵¹

Sweet Harmony Among Brethren

“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12).

Satan will come in among us, and sow discord if he can. How shall we resist him? By each cultivating love and forbearance in his own heart toward his brethren. If you see that one of your brethren is in fault, do not turn from him and speak against him; but see how much good you can do him by treating him tenderly. Instead of allowing selfish feelings to arise and seeking to preserve personal dignity, let self drop out of sight. Jesus with His long human arm encircles the fallen race and seeks to connect them with the throne of the Infinite. This is the work that you should be engaged in. Do not disappoint Jesus by your dissensions.

Even though you think you are right, you are not to urge your individual ideas to the front, so that they will cause discord. Do not take the position that you cannot err. All are liable to make mistakes; all need to anoint their eyes with the eye salve spoken of by the True Witness, that they may see themselves as they are in God’s sight.

Here are two brethren laboring together. Will these brethren, if the spirit of Christ reigns in their hearts, be found warring against each other? Will they cherish envy, evil surmisings, and hard feelings against each other? Impossible. Neither one will possess exalted views of himself while he undervalues his brother. Each will esteem the other better than himself. [John 13:34, 35 quoted.] The love here spoken of is not that sentimentalism, that low order of love, that attracts the affections from Christ and places them upon one another. The love here described is pure; it arises from having the affections centered upon Jesus. . . .

Brethren, it is your privilege to carry with you the credentials that you are Christ’s—love, joy, and peace. Will you seek earnestly to have this heavenly plant of love become rooted in your hearts, and then will you tenderly cherish it lest it wither and die? Let Christ appear. Do not cherish a spirit of independence which will lead you to feel that if your brethren do not agree with you they must be wrong. The opinions of your brethren are just as precious to them as yours are to you. Christ in you will unite you to Christ in them, and there will be a sweet spirit of union. . . .

When we have [Christ’s] spirit in our hearts, we shall be of one mind in Him. We shall not then seek to cover up the defects in our characters; but we shall strive earnestly to overcome them.⁵²

Not Just Servants, but Friends

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you” (John 15:13–15).

Perfect obedience to the law of God is the test by which it is known that our love is perfect toward Christ. The Father reveals His love to Christ by receiving and welcoming the friends of Christ as His friends. The Father is fully satisfied with the atonement that Christ has made. He suffered the penalty of the law in order that man might have an opportunity to exercise repentance towards God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. In behalf of sinners Christ has borne hardships, insults, calumny, abuse, an misrepresentation. He was refused by those He came to save, rejected by His own nation. The Lord of glory was put to a most shameful death, and God Himself was in Christ, suffering with His only-begotten Son, in order to reconcile the world unto Himself. All this was done in order that fallen man might have another chance by which to redeem himself. Christ imputes His righteousness to the repentant, believing soul, and he who receives Christ becomes the friend of God.⁵³

How did Christ manifest His love for poor mortals? By the sacrifice of His own glory, His own riches, and even His most precious life. Christ consented to a life of humiliation and great suffering. He submitted to the cruel mockings of an infuriated, murderous multitude, and to the most agonizing death upon the cross. . . . We give evidence of being the friends of Christ when we manifest implicit obedience to His will. It is no evidence to say, and do not; but in doing, in obeying, is the evidence. Who are obeying the commandment to love one another as Christ has loved them?⁵⁴

The earnest toil, the unselfish work, the patient, persevering effort, will be rewarded abundantly; Jesus will say: Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends, guests. The approval of the Master is not given because of the greatness of the work performed, because many things have been gained, but because of the fidelity in even a few things. It is not the great results we attain, but the motives from which we act, that weigh with God. He prizes goodness and faithfulness more than the greatness of the work accomplished.⁵⁵

The Ordination of Every Believer

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you” (John 15:16).

We are not the ones to make the first movement toward Christ; it was our Redeemer who made the first movement toward us. “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32). He touched your hearts by His grace, you responded and drew toward Jesus. Man could not make the first movement. Christ was lifted up on the cross. It was His love that brought Him to our world. . . .

There are not many ordained ministers; this makes it necessary for you to deny self, lift the cross, and carry the burdens of Christ. Have you tasted of the powers of the world to come? Have you been eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of God? Then if ministerial hands have not been laid upon you in the world, Christ has laid His hands upon you and said, “Ye are my witnesses; go trade on the talents I have given you. Ye are the light of the world. A city set upon a hill cannot be hid; let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” There will be an antagonism between the church and the world, but the church is to shine. Let yourselves become the consecrated living channels of light to the world, whatever may be the consequences to you financially.

Let those who truly love God step out from where there are large churches of Sabbathkeepers, and the cause they knew not be searched out. There is work to be done by every branch that has a vital union with the living Vine.⁵⁶

It is not because of our riches, our knowledge, our superiority of position, that Jesus loves us and blesses us, but because we believe in Him as our personal Saviour. Jesus loved us while we were yet sinners, but having chosen us He says He has ordained us to go and bring forth fruit. Has each one something to do? Certainly, every-one that is yoked up with Christ must bear His burden, work in His lines. Christians are not to be strengthless and indolent. No. “Ye are laborers together with God.” The life of Christ’s pardoning love in the soul is as a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. If the well of water is in the heart, then the entire life will reveal the fact, and the refreshing grace of God will be made manifest.⁵⁷

May 27

To Love Is to Deny Oneself

“These things I command you, that ye love one another” (John 15:17).

Those who are accounted by God as His children will reveal Christlike love for one another. They will live and work for one object—the proper representation of Christ to the world. By their love and unity they will show to the world that they bear the divine credentials. By the nobility of love and self-denial, they will show those around them that they are true followers of the Saviour.⁵⁸

Man is required to love God supremely, that is, with all his might, mind, and strength, and his neighbor as himself. This he cannot possibly do unless he shall deny himself. Said Christ: “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34).

Self-denial means to rule the spirit when passion is seeking for the mastery; to resist the temptation to censure and to speak fault-finding words; to have patience with the child that is dull and whose conduct is grievous and trying; to stand at the post of duty when others may fail; to lift responsibilities wherever and whenever you can, not for the purpose of applause, not for policy, but for the sake of the Master, who has given you a work to be done with unwavering fidelity; when you might praise yourself, to keep silent and let other lips praise you. Self-denial is to do good to others where inclination would lead you to serve and please yourself. Although your fellowmen may never appreciate your efforts or give you credit for them, yet you are to work on.

Search carefully and see whether the truth which you have accepted has become a firm principle with you. Do you take Christ with you when you leave the closet of prayer? Does your religion stand guard at the door of your lips? Is your heart drawn out in sympathy and love for others outside of your own family? Are you diligently seeking a clearer understanding of Scriptural truth, that you may let your light shine forth to others? These questions you may answer to your own souls.⁵⁹

Every converted soul has a work to do. We are to receive grace in order to freely give grace. We are to let the light shine forth from the bright and morning Star, to shed forth light in works of self-denial and self-sacrifice, following the example that Christ has given us in His own life and character.⁶⁰

May 28

Expect Opposition

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also” (John 15:18–20).

God has presented in His word sacred truths, and He expects us to accept them without regard to our own convenience, or good name, or worldly profit. Whenever a doctrine or duty is brought before us, the all-important question to be decided is, Is it enforced by the word of God? Does the Lord require this of us? If so, whatever may be the cross involved, we should unhesitatingly accept it.

If we love God and keep His commandments, we need not expect the world to be in sympathy with us, any more than it was with Christ. . . . Because the truth contradicts the doctrines of men and condemns their unrighteous practices, it excites the most bitter opposition. The majority, even of those who bear Christ's name, are unwilling to follow His example of self-denial and cross-bearing; and as they become more and more alienated from Him, they cannot distinguish between the heavenly and the earthly; their peace is disturbed by the fact that there is a people that serve God and renounce every sinful practice. Men who are trampling upon God's requirements feel a constant rebuke from the course of those who render obedience to Him; and this is why such enmity is manifested against all who are true to God. For this reason the Pharisees rejected Christ, and the same spirit still exists, and will continue to exist until the close of time. . . . The most bitter and cruel persecution always comes from those who have the form of religion without the spirit and power of godliness.⁶¹

He who has God for his friend and helper can afford to spend a long winter of chilling neglect, abuse, and persecution. By the grace which Christ imparts, he can maintain his faith and trust in God under the sorest trials. He recalls the Saviour's example, and he feels that he can endure affliction and persecution if he may thus gain simplicity of character, lowliness of heart, and an abiding trust in Jesus. The triumph of Christian faith is to suffer, and be strong; to submit, and thus conquer; to be killed all the day long, and yet to live; to bear the cross, and thus win the crown of immortal glory.⁶²

May 29

Present Truth Brings New Persecution

“If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also” (John 15:22, 23).

Many excuse themselves for keeping Sunday by saying, “My father and grandfather were good Christians, and they died keeping Sunday. They will be saved, and I am willing to run the risk of doing as they did. The whole world keeps Sunday; and I am as well off as the rest of the members of my church.” But will these excuses be accepted in the Judgment? No, no. Had their fathers had the light and the messages of warning which God has sent to His people in these last days, they would, if they were candid, God-fearing men, have obeyed the commandments of God. Our fathers are not accountable for the light they never received, or for the messages of warning they never heard; and shall their habits and customs be thought worthy of respect merely because they have been handed down from generation to generation? . . .

Special truths have been adapted to the conditions of the nations as they have existed. The present truth, which is a test to the people of this generation, was not a test to the people of generations far back. . . .

We are accountable only for the light that shines upon us. The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus are testing us. If we are faithful and obedient, God will delight in us, and bless us as His own chosen, peculiar people. When perfect faith and perfect love and obedience abound, working in the hearts of those who are Christ’s followers, they will have a powerful influence. Light will emanate from them, dispelling the darkness around them.⁶³

The friends of Christ’s truth will ever be persecuted by a time-serving generation. They will be termed enthusiasts and fanatics by the enemies of reform. The burning truths of God’s word, condemning sin, and admonishing to righteousness are not palatable to the wrong-doer. Every true follower of Christ should have the spirit of a martyr, being ready to sacrifice any and everything rather than forfeit the favor of God. . . .

To turn from [Christ] is to reject infinite truth, love and righteousness, and to close the door of the heart to all heavenly illumination, and to welcome darkness and despair. To accept Him is light, peace and joy.⁶⁴

May 30

History Repeats Itself

“If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause” (John 15:24, 25).

The life of Christ was the embodiment of purity; and for this very reason He was hated. His righteousness stood forth in such marked contrast with that of the Pharisees that He was a continual reproach to them.⁶⁵

As Christ was hated without cause, so will His people be hated because they are obedient to the commandments of God. If He who was pure, holy, and undefiled, who did good and only good in our world, was treated as a base criminal and condemned to death, His disciples must expect but similar treatment, however faultless may be their life and blameless their character. Human enactments, laws manufactured by satanic agencies under a plea of goodness and restriction of evil, will be exalted, while God’s holy commandments are despised and trampled underfoot. And all who prove their loyalty by obedience to the law of Jehovah must be prepared to be arrested, to be brought before councils that have not for their standard the high and holy law of God.

The same spirit that moved the priests and rulers had moved Cain to slay his brother. It is the apostasy from truth that works in the children of disobedience to silence the voice of those who are calling them to obedience. And today this spirit is manifested in the churches that are trampling upon the word of God, transgressing His holy law. . . .

The churches have been converted to the world, and they show what they would do in this age of the world if they dared. If Christ were in the world today, many would have no more desire for Him than had the Jewish nation at His first advent. They would do as did the Jews. Were it in their power, they would crucify Christ because He tells them the truth. Many are being educated up to this point. Rulers and teachers, who have caused souls to stumble over their perverted teachings—all persons who might have understood the prophecies, but who did not read and search to see if they were applicable to this time, and concerned their individual selves, will be taken in the snare, and suffer eternal loss. They will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.⁶⁶

May 31

The Power of Christ in Practice

“When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning” (John 15:26, 27).

Christ took humanity and bore the hatred of the world that He might show men and women that they could live without sin, that their words, their actions, their spirit might be sanctified to God. We can be perfect Christians if we will manifest this power in our lives. When the light of heaven rests upon us continually we shall represent Christ. It was the righteousness revealed in His life that distinguished Christ from the world and called forth its hatred.

We are nearing the close of this earth’s history. Let us ever remember that there is a heaven to win and a hell to shun. There are some among us who refuse to purify their souls by obedience to the truth, and they bring forward their sophistries to show that those who adhere strictly to a thus saith the Lord are altogether too particular. They seek to divert the mind from purity and truth and holiness and the development of Christian character; but such souls stand on Satan’s side of the question.

Shall those who refuse to be converted, who reject the right of entrance through the gates into the city, charge God with severity and harshness? The result of allowing one sinner to enter heaven would be a second rebellion, and God cannot permit another. All who enter the heavenly city must be sanctified through the grace of God. Their weaknesses must be brought into such relation to truth that truth shall be their strongest point of character. Only those who have kept the truth—kept it in practice—can enter through the gates into the city of God.

The words of Christ are spoken for His people in all ages—for us upon whom the ends of the world are come. The test that will come to us will be upon the commandments of God. Only as we become partakers of the divine nature shall we learn to overcome. . . .

Will you give your hearts unreservedly to God? He wants you. He stands ready to accept you, ready to forgive when you repent and turn from your sins. You may fail again and again, but again and again He will forgive if you truly repent, and He will bring you off more than conqueror at last through Him who has loved you and washed you in His own blood.⁶⁷

June 1

Welcome the Reproof

“It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:7, 8).

The Comforter is to come as a reprover, as One who is to lay open before us our defects of character, and at the same time to reveal to us the merit of Him who was one with the Father, giving hope to the hopeless. . . .

But many of you say, “I have prayed, I have tried, I have struggled, and I do not see that I advance one step.” Have you thought that you were earning something, that you were by your struggles and works paying the price of your redemption? This you never can do. Christ has paid the price of your redemption. There is only one thing that you can do, and that is to take the gift of God. You can come in all your need, and plead the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour; but you cannot come expecting that Christ will cover your wickedness, your daily indulgence in sin, with His robe of righteousness. The people of God are to be as branches grafted into the living Vine, to be partakers of the nature of the Vine. If you are a living branch of the true Vine, Jesus will prove you by trial, by affliction, that you may bring forth fruit more abundantly.

The reason that we have not more of the Spirit and power of God with us is that we feel too well satisfied with ourselves. There is a marked tendency among those who are converted to the truth, to make a certain measure of advancement, and then settle down into a state of stolidity, where no further progress is attained. They stand right where they are, and cease to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But the religion of Christ is of a character that demands constant advancement. The Lord does not design that we shall ever feel that we have reached to the full measure of the stature of Christ. Through all eternity we are to grow in the knowledge of Him who is the head of all things in the church. If we would draw upon His grace, we must feel our poverty. Our souls must be filled with an intense longing after God, until we realize that we shall perish unless Christ shall do the work for us.

As we come to feel our utter reliance upon Christ for salvation, are we to fold our hands, and say, “I have nothing to do; I am saved; Jesus has done it all”? No, we are to put forth every energy that we may become partakers of the divine nature.¹

The Holy Spirit Convinces

“When [the Comforter] is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged” (John 16:8–11).

It is through the mighty agency of the Holy Spirit that the government of Satan is to be subdued and subjected. It is the Holy Spirit that convinces of sin and expels it from the soul by the consent of the human agent. The mind is then brought under a new law, and that law is the royal law of liberty. Jesus came to break the shackles of sin-slavery from the soul; for sin can triumph only when the liberty of the soul is extinguished. Jesus reached to the very depth of human woe and misery, and His love attracts man to Himself. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit, He lifts the mind up from its degradation, and fastens it upon the eternal reality. Through the merits of Christ man may be able to exercise the noblest powers of his being, and expel sin from his soul. . . .

The Holy Spirit was to convince “of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged” (John 16:11). The unfallen worlds have watched the conflict and trial of the Son of God in behalf of humanity. They have seen the crooked working of him who was once highly exalted of God, but who was expelled from heaven. . . . In heaven he complained against the law of God, declaring it unnecessary.²

The Holy Spirit is constantly at work seeking to draw the attention of men to the great sacrifice made upon the cross of Calvary, to unfold to the world the love of God to man, and to open to the convicted soul the precious promises in the Scriptures. It is the Holy Spirit that brings to the darkened minds the bright beams of the Sun of righteousness. It is the Holy Spirit that makes men’s hearts burn within them with an awakened intelligence of the truths of eternity. It is the Holy Spirit that presents before the mind the moral standard of righteousness and convinces of sin. It is the Holy Spirit that produces godly sorrow which worketh repentance that needeth not to be repented of, and inspires faith in Him who alone can save from all sin. It is the Holy Spirit that works to transform character by withdrawing the affections of men from those things which are temporal and perishable, and fixing them upon the immortal inheritance, the eternal substance which is imperishable.³

How the Holy Spirit Guides

“When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come” (John 16:13).

All who come to the Bible with a teachable and prayerful spirit, to study its utterances as the word of God, will receive divine enlightenment. . . . It is sometimes the case that men of intellectual ability, improved by education and culture, fail to comprehend certain passages of Scripture, while others who are uneducated, whose understanding seems weak and whose minds are undisciplined, will grasp the meaning, finding strength and comfort in that which the former declare to be mysterious or pass by as unimportant. Why is this? . . . The latter class do not rely upon their own understanding. They go to the Source of light, the One who has inspired the Scriptures, and with humility of heart ask God for wisdom, and they receive it. There are mines of truth yet to be discovered by the earnest seeker. Christ represented the truth as treasure hid in a field. It does not lie right upon the surface; we must dig for it. But our success in finding it does not depend so much on our intellectual ability as on our humility of heart and the faith which will lay hold upon divine aid.

Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit we shall be continually liable to wrest the Scriptures or to misinterpret them. There is much reading of the Bible that is without profit and in many cases is a positive injury. When the word of God is opened without reverence and without prayer; when the thoughts and affections are not fixed upon God or in harmony with His will, the mind is clouded with doubt; and in the very study of the Bible, skepticism strengthens. The enemy takes control of the thoughts, and he suggests interpretations that are not correct.

Whenever men are not seeking, in word and deed, to be in harmony with God, then, however learned they may be, they are liable to err in their understanding of Scripture, and it is not safe to trust to their explanations. When we are truly seeking to do God’s will, the Holy Spirit takes the precepts of His word and makes them the principles of the life, writing them on the tablets of the soul. And it is only those who are following the light already given that can hope to receive the further illumination of the Spirit. . . . “If any man will *do* His will, he shall know of the doctrine” (John 7:17).⁴

The Father Loves You

“The time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God” (John 16:25–27).

The Father loves you as He loves His Son, because His Son has averted the sword of justice by offering Himself as a sacrifice. Christ purchased you at an infinite cost, and He wants you to show that you appreciate what has been done to place you on vantage ground. He says to the Father. “Here is a poor sinner I have given My life for him. He is saved by My grace. Receive him as your child.” Do you think the Father will refuse?⁵

The Father loves us, not because of the great propitiation; but He provided the propitiation because He loves us. Christ was the medium through which He could pour out His infinite love upon a fallen world. “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19). The Father suffered with the Son. In the agony of Gethsemane, the death of Calvary, the heart of Infinite Love paid the price of our redemption.⁶

The God of heaven loves us as He loves His Son. All the world is in rebellion against God; but those who struggle, who strive, who agonize to enter in at the strait gate, are beloved of God with peculiar tenderness, and they shall find the broad path; for “Thy commandment is exceeding broad” (Psalm 119:96).⁷

The Father gave all honor to His Son, seating Him at His right hand, far above all principalities and powers. He expressed His great joy and delight in receiving the Crucified One, and crowning Him with glory and honor. And all the favors He has shown to His Son in His acceptance of the great atonement, are shown to His people. Those who have united their interests in love with Christ are accepted in the Beloved. They suffer with Christ, and His glorification is of great interest to them, because they are accepted in Him. God loves them as He loves His Son. Christ, Emmanuel, stands between God and the believer. . . . His sacrifice is in every way satisfactory. . . . The Father embraced His Son, and in this included all who receive Him. “To them gave He power to become the sons of God” (John 1:12). They are His chosen ones, joint heirs with Christ in the great firm of heaven. They are to overcome even as He overcame.⁸

Fortified From on High

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Christ is our Leader. He presents before His soldiers the plan of the battle. He points out the imminent peril of the conflict, and enjoins everyone to count the cost. As He shows us the preparation that we must make for the battle, He assures us that we shall have divine assistance. In our human weakness, we shall be enabled to do the deeds of Omnipotence.

Christ takes His soldiers to an eminence, and shows them the vast confederacy arrayed against them. He reminds them that they are not warring against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. He reminds them that they are fighting for eternal life. The heavenly universe are marshaled for the conflict, with Christ, the Commander of the forces of heaven, at their head. Infirmities compass humanity, but in the strength that Christ gives, we may be more than conquerors.⁹

The forces of Satan are marshaled against us. He is a diligent foe, but in following the warning of Christ we shall find safety. “Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” There are foes to be resisted and overcome, but Jesus is by our side, ready to strengthen for every effort and brace for duty.¹⁰

You are not asked to fight alone. Christ and the heavenly angels are fighting with you. Look on the bright side. If the work that you are doing is hindered, be sure that it is not your fault, and then go forward, rejoicing in the Lord. Heaven is full of joy. It resounds with the praises of Him who made so wonderful a sacrifice for the redemption of the human race. Should not the church on earth be full of praise? Should not Christians publish throughout the world the joy of serving Christ?¹¹

Our victory as believers is obtained through the grace of Christ, which He can and will bestow upon all who will put their trust in Him. This is the good news with which Christ would have us comforted.¹²

Jesus says, . . . “The world shall not overcome you if you believe in Me. It is a world that I have conquered. Because I have overcome, if you believe in Me, you shall overcome.”¹³

Knowledge That Saves Eternally

“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, . . . This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:1, 3).

Do you want to know more of the character of God? then bear in mind that the Bible gives the revelation of Him in the character of Jesus Christ.¹⁴

The sum and substance of the whole matter of Christian grace and experience is comprised in believing on Christ—in knowing God and His Son whom He hath sent. But here is where many fail, for they lack faith in God. Instead of desiring to be brought into fellowship with Christ in His self-denial and humiliation, they are ever seeking for the supremacy of self. As long as they refuse to fall upon the Rock and be broken, they cannot appreciate the love or the character of God. We may be one with Christ; but we must be willing to yield our own way, our own will, and have the mind that was in Christ, that we may know what it is to have fellowship with Him in humiliation and suffering. . . . Oh, if we did but appreciate the love of God, how would our hearts be enlarged, our limited sympathies expanded, till they would break from the icy barriers of selfishness; and our comprehension would be deeper than it now is, for we should look beneath the surface.

It is because we do not know God, do not have faith in Christ, that we are not more deeply impressed with the humiliation He endured in our behalf, that His abasement does not lead every soul to the humbling of self, to the exalting of Jesus. The Lord calls upon you to humble yourselves under His mighty hand, that you may be partakers of His holiness. You are not to be above your Master, but as He was, so are you to be in the world. Oh, if you loved Him as He has loved you, you would not shrink from a knowledge of the dark chapters of the experience of the Son of God.

In order to be partakers with Christ in His sufferings, we must behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. When we contemplate the humiliation of Christ, beholding His self-denial and self-sacrifice, we are filled with amazement at the manifestation of divine love for guilty man.¹⁵

Obedience to God’s commands is the only evidence man can give that he possesses a genuine, saving knowledge of God.¹⁶

To Be Tenderly Kept as One

“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are” (John 17:9–11).

God is leading a people out from the world upon the exalted platform of eternal truth, the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. He will discipline and fit up His people. They will not be at variance, one believing one thing, and another having faith and views entirely opposite, each moving independently of the body. Through the diversity of the gifts and governments that He has placed in the church, they will all come to the unity of the faith. If one man takes his views of Bible truth without regard to the opinions of his brethren, and justifies his course, alleging that he has a right to his own peculiar views, and then presses them upon others, how can he be fulfilling the prayer of Christ? And if another and still another arises, each asserting his right to believe and talk what he pleases without reference to the faith of the body, where will be that harmony which existed between Christ and His Father, and which Christ prayed might exist among His brethren?

God is leading out a people and establishing them upon the one great platform of faith, the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus. He has given His people a straight chain of Bible truth, clear and connected. This truth is of heavenly origin and has been searched for as for hidden treasure. It has been dug out through careful searching of the Scriptures and through much prayer.¹⁷

God’s people have close, severe battles to fight; but these battles are not to be against their brethren. All desire to hurt and weaken and destroy the influence of even the weakest of God’s workers, is registered in the books of heaven as desire to weaken the influence of Jesus Christ. The warfare we are to undertake is to be waged against the confederacy of evil, which is arrayed against the people of God. But woe unto those who shall turn their implements of warfare against their own brethren. God reminds us that we are to fight in unison with the angels of heaven, and that more than angels are engaged in the warfare.¹⁸

Unpopular Truth Sanctifies

“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world” (John 17:15–18).

The burden of Jesus’ request was that those who believed on Him might be kept from the evil of the world, and sanctified through the truth. He does not leave us to vague surmising as to what the truth is, but adds, “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17). The word of God is the means by which our sanctification is to be accomplished. It is of the greatest importance, then, that we acquaint ourselves with the sacred instruction of the Bible. . . . We shall be inexcusable if, through our own negligence, we are ignorant of the claims of God’s word. God has given us His word, the revelation of His will, and has promised the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, to guide them into all truth; and every soul who honestly desires to do the will of God shall know of the doctrine.

The world is full of false teaching; and if we do not resolutely search the Scriptures for ourselves, we shall accept *its* errors for truth, adopt its customs, and deceive our own hearts. The doctrines and customs of the world are at variance with the truth of God. Those who seek to turn from the service of the world to the service of God will need divine help. They will have to set their faces like a flint toward Zion. They will feel the opposition of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and will have to go contrary to the spirit and influences of the world. Since the time when the Son of God breasted the haughty prejudices and unbelief of mankind, there has been no change in the attitude of the world toward the religion of Jesus. The servants of Christ must meet the same spirit of opposition and reproach. . . .

Truth was unpopular in Christ’s day. Truth is unpopular in our day. It has been unpopular ever since Satan first gave man a disrelish for it by presenting bewitching fables that lead to self-exaltation. . . . Those who love God with sincere hearts should the more earnestly desire the truth as it is in Jesus. They should search the Scriptures with humble hearts, intensely desiring to know what is truth; for Christ prayed that His disciples might be sanctified through the truth.¹⁹

Lifting the Cross Unifies

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:20, 21).

Take up the light which God has given you and follow it at any cost to yourselves. This is your only safety. You have a work to do to come into harmony, and may the Lord help you to do it even if self is crucified. Gather up the rays of light that have been slighted and rejected. Gather them up with meekness, with trembling, and with fear. The sin of ancient Israel was in disregarding the expressed will of God and following their own way according to the leadings of unsanctified hearts. Modern Israel are fast following in their footsteps, and the displeasure of the Lord is as surely resting upon them.

It is never difficult to do what we love to do, but to take a course directly against our inclinations is lifting a cross. Christ prayed that His disciples might be one as He was one with the Father. This unity is the credentials of Christ to the world that God sent Him. When self-will is renounced in reference to matters there will be a union of believers with Christ. This all should pray for and work for determinedly, thus answering as far as possible the prayer of Christ for unity in His church.²⁰

It is not additional evidence that we need, but the impression of the truth that we already understand made deep and thorough by a faithful impartation of it to others. Everyone is first to attend to his own individual case. Then he is to act in perfect unity with his brethren. The hearts of the believers are to be as the heart of Christ. Every pulse is to beat in harmony with the heart of Christ. We are to be one with Christ, and one with each other, that the world may believe that God has sent His Son into the world.²¹

Oneness, harmony, unity of spirit with the Saviour—these are the signs by which Christians may be distinguished. Thus they show to the world that Christ is the Son of the living God, and that He is able to give salvation, even eternal life, to all who believe on Him. . . .

When we are one with Christ, we shall be united with one another, and shall manifest steadfast loyalty to God, to His Word, and to our brethren. The true believer will have confidence in his brethren and sisters.²²

Glory in Harmony

“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one” (John 17:22).

The people of God, with various temperaments and organizations, are brought together in church capacity. The truth of God, received into the heart, will do its work of refining, elevating, and sanctifying the life, and overcoming the peculiar views and prejudices of each. All should labor to come as near to one another as possible. All who love God and keep His commandments in truth will have influence with unbelievers and will win souls to Christ, to swell the glad songs of triumph and victory. . . . Selfishness will be overcome, and overflowing love for Christ will be manifested in the burden they feel to save souls for whom He died.

We should feel an individual responsibility as members of the visible church and workers in the vineyard of the Lord. . . . As all the different members of the human system unite to form the body, and each performs its office in obedience to the intelligence that governs the whole, so the members of the church of Christ should be united in one symmetrical whole. If the world sees a perfect harmony existing in the church, it will be a powerful evidence to them in favor of the Christian religion. Dissensions, unhappy differences, and petty church trials dishonor our Redeemer. All these may be avoided, if self is surrendered to God.²³

The Lord would have us to be lights amid the moral darkness that prevails in the world. We should not be light and trifling, but have solidity of character. What faith must come in, what love one for another must exist! If we draw nigh to God, we shall draw nigh to one another. We cannot draw nigh to the same cross without coming into unity of spirit. Christ prayed that His disciples should be one as He and the Father are one. We should seek to be one in spirit and in understanding. We should seek to be one that God may be glorified in us as He was glorified in the Son, and God will love us as He loves His Son. But can God love us as He loves His Son when we quibble and find fault with the truth because it does not agree with our opinions, and for fear we shall understand something as our brother understands it, and so come into harmony with him? God designs that His children shall be one. If this unity did but exist, it would speak to the world of the power of God manifested in His children.²⁴

Made Perfect in One

“I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me” (John 17:23).

Church relationship is not a light matter. Every believer should be wholehearted in his attachment to the church of God. Its prosperity should be his first interest. Unless he feels under sacred obligations to make his connection with the people of God a blessing to the church rather than to himself, the church can do far better without him. But none need stay out because their talents are small or their opportunities limited. It is in the power of all to do something for the cause of God. They can illustrate in their lives and characters the teachings of Christ, being at peace with one another and moving in perfect harmony. They can, too, by a little self-denial, help to bear the financial burdens of the church. They should not feel at liberty to receive the benefits and share the privileges of the church relationship without doing this. . . .

Christ saw that unity and Christian fellowship were necessary to the success of His cause, therefore He enjoined upon His disciples to cultivate these qualities.²⁵

One who works in harmony with the counsel of God, and in unity with the brethren, will be more efficient to do good, than ten will be who do not realize the necessity of depending upon God, and of acting in harmony with the general plan of the work.²⁶

Think of the importance Christ places on unity. He prayed that the oneness existing between Him and His Father might exist among His followers, that the world might know that God had indeed sent His Son into the world to save sinners. How shall this prayer be answered? By every believer putting away evil thinking and evil speaking.

The Lord desires His servants to show His forbearance in dealing with one another. Do not speak or write one word of censure or recrimination, even though it may seem to you as if the censure were deserved. Refuse to listen to complaints. Close the heart against prejudice. Let no word of evil surmising escape your lips. God is dishonored by those who accuse their brethren. Let envy be quenched in the flow of love from the fountain of God’s love. Evil imaginings are not worth the time so often given to thinking of and repeating them.²⁷

Prepare to Behold His Glory

“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24).

Christ desires that we shall finally enter the heavenly city as conquerors. Through the grace that He constantly imparts to humanity, He is preparing a people to live with Him throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. This preparation everyone who chooses to follow Him may receive.²⁸

If heaven is gained by us at last, it will be only through the renunciation of self and the receiving of the mind of Christ. Pride and self-sufficiency must be crucified, and the vacuum supplied with the Spirit and power of God. Are we willing to pay the price required of us for eternal life? Are we ready to sit down and count the cost, and conclude that heaven is worth the sacrifice of dying to self, of having our will brought into perfect conformity with the will of God? Until we are willing, the transforming grace of God will not be manifested upon us. When we present our emptied nature to God, He will by His Holy Spirit supply the vacuum made by the renunciation of self, and give us of His fullness. The Lord would not have us perish. He would have us consecrate to His service all there is of us; for He desires to bless us more than we desire to be blessed. He would have us abide in Christ, receive His blessing, and diffuse it to others while we live, that we may enjoy a blessed eternity. Life is short, but eternity is endless.²⁹

The Lord is waiting to do great things for His children who trust in Him. Do we expect to dwell with Christ in the eternal world? Then we must dwell with Him here, that He may help us in every time of trial and temptation, and make us ready for His coming in the clouds of heaven. He will reward every man according to his works, and every secret thing will be brought into judgment. We shall find then that only those who have lived by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God will be saved. . . . We must search carefully throughout the Scriptures to see if we are indeed working the works of God. The beauty and grace of Christ must be woven into our characters. We cannot keep Christ so apart from our lives as we do, and yet be fitted for His companionship in heaven. He is to be the all in all of heaven, and must be our all in all upon earth.³⁰

The Love of Christ in Us

“O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:25, 26).

Do you, my brethren and sisters, realize that you are the light of the world? Do you, in your words and deportment at home, leave a bright track heavenward? What is it to be the light of the world? It is to have God for your guide, to have the companionship of holy angels, and to reflect to others the light that shines upon you from above. But if you fail to exercise Christian courtesy, forbearance, and love in your families, God and holy angels are grieved away; and instead of being the light of the world, you are bodies of darkness.

It is possible, through the grace of Christ, to have control over yourselves at all times. If a dear friend, one whose good opinion you greatly desired, should come into your home, you would not be found fretting and scolding; but you would control your words and actions, and would seek in every way to so conduct yourselves as to gain his respect and confidence. Shall we take more care in the presence of a comparative stranger than in the presence of those who are dear to us by the ties of nature; or in the presence of Jesus and heavenly angels? God forbid. . . .

A lady once lived in our family nine years, and during all this time we did not hear an impatient word or a light expression from her lips; and yet she was the most cheerful person I ever saw. Hers was not a life of darkness and gloom, nor of lightness and frivolity. In this respect our lives should be like hers. God would not have us live under a cloud, but as in the light of His countenance.

Some are naturally of a reticent disposition; a smile is seldom seen upon their faces, and they seem more like statues than human beings. Such should open their hearts to the Sun of righteousness, and gather precious rays of light from Jesus, that they may reflect them to others. God wants you, brethren and sisters, to have this light in your hearts, and then you will be channels of light wherever you are. Like the sunflower, which turns its face constantly toward the sun, you must look continually toward the Source of light, that you may catch every ray possible.³¹

Gethsemane

“They came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and [Jesus] saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; and saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour?” (Mark 14:32–37).

The Saviour desired to be alone with God, that He might wrestle with Him in prayer. The agony that pressed upon His soul was not for the physical suffering that He must endure. He was feeling the offensive character of the sin that He must bear. He must suffer the penalty of the broken law, and bear the Father’s wrath.

A little distance from His disciples, Christ fell on His face and prayed. “O my Father,” He cried, “if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39).

In the deepening gloom that surrounded Him, every stay seemed falling from Christ, and His soul reached out for human sympathy. At length, and pressed with an inexpressible weight of agony, He arose, and moved through the darkness to the place where He had left His three friends. But He found them sleeping. . . .

At this most important time—the time when Jesus had made special request for them to watch with Him—the disciples slept. Christ had taken them with Him that they might be a strength to Him, and that the events they should witness that night, and the instruction they should receive, might be indelibly imprinted on their memories. This was necessary in order that their faith might not fail, but be strengthened for the test just before them. But instead of watching with Christ, they fell asleep. Even the ardent Peter, who only a few hours before had declared that he would suffer and, if need be, die for his Lord, was asleep when Jesus needed his sympathy and prayers. . . .

The powers of darkness were encompassing the Son of God; for the destiny of a lost world hung in the balance.³²

An Appeal for Watchfulness

“Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak” (Mark 14:38).

The mind of man cannot conceive of the unutterable anguish that tortured the soul of our Redeemer. The holy Son of God had no sins or griefs of His own to bear: He was bearing the griefs of others. . . . Through divine sympathy He connects Himself with man, and as the representative of the race He submits to be treated as a transgressor. He looks into the abyss of woe opened for us by our sins, and proposes to bridge the gulf of man’s separation from God. . . .

His burden of guilt, because of man’s transgression of the Father’s law, was so great that human nature was inadequate to bear it. The sufferings of martyrs can bear no comparison with the agony of Christ. The divine presence was with them in their sufferings; but the Father’s face was hidden from His dear Son.³³

How cruel for the disciples to permit sleep to close their eyes, and slumber to chain their senses, while their divine Lord was enduring such inexpressible mental anguish! If they had remained watching they would not have lost their faith as they beheld the Son of God dying upon the cross. This important night watch should have been signalized by noble mental struggles and prayers, which would have brought them strength to witness the unspeakable agony of the Son of God. It would have prepared them, as they should behold His sufferings upon the cross, to understand something of the nature of the overpowering anguish which He endured in the Garden of Gethsemane. And they would have been better able to recall the words He had spoken to them in reference to His sufferings, death, and resurrection; and, amid the gloom of that terrible, trying hour, some rays of hope would have lighted up the darkness and sustained their faith.³⁴

[Many today] do not see the importance of self-knowledge and self-control. They do not watch and pray, lest they enter into temptation. If they would watch, they would become acquainted with their weak points, where they are most likely to be assailed by temptation. With watchfulness and prayer their weakest points can be so guarded as to become their strongest points, and they can encounter temptation without being overcome. Every follower of Christ should daily examine himself, that he may become perfectly acquainted with his own conduct. There is with nearly all a neglect of self-examination.³⁵

The Cup of Bitterness

“[Jesus] went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words” (Matthew 26:42–44).

While the load of the world’s sin was upon Christ, doubts rent His soul in regard to His oneness with His Father. In this hour of fearful trial He longed even for human sympathy and fellowship. A second time He rose from the earth and made His way to where His disciples tarried; but again He found them sleeping. They were not in a deep sleep. They had a partial sense of their Lord’s suffering and anguish. In tenderness Jesus stood for a moment bending over them, regarding them with mingled feelings of love and pity.

The disciples roused from their slumber to find their Master standing over them in a state of mental and physical anguish such as they never before had witnessed. They saw the grief and agony of His pale face, and the bloody sweat upon His brow; for “his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men” (Isaiah 52:14). The disciples were grieved that they had fallen asleep, so that they could not pray and sympathize with their suffering Lord. They were speechless with sorrow and surprise, but seemingly unable to rise above the stupor that weighed upon them.

Again the powers of darkness pressed upon Christ with irresistible force. Giving His disciples one look of the tenderest compassion, He left them, and bowed a third time in prayer. The divine Sufferer shuddered with amazement at this mysterious and terrible conflict. He poured out the burden of His soul with strong crying and tears. His soul was pressed with an agony that no human being could endure and live. Jesus willingly suffered all this for guilty man, although He knew that few would appreciate His love. . . .

The awful moment had come that was to decide the destiny of the world. The fate of humanity trembled in the balance. The Son of God might even now refuse to drink the bitter cup. He might wipe the bloody sweat from His brow, and leave men to perish in their iniquity. Will the Son of the infinite God drink the cup of humiliation and agony? Will the Innocent suffer the curse of sin, to save the guilty?³⁶

He Sweat Blood for Us

“And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:43, 44).

As Jesus bowed in prayer, in the agony of His spirit, He sweat great drops of blood. The horror of great darkness surrounded Him; for the sins of the world were upon Him. He was suffering in man’s stead, as a transgressor of the Father’s law. The light of God was receding from His vision, and He was passing into the hands of the powers of darkness. In the agony of His soul, He lay prostrate on the cold earth. Christ had taken the cup of suffering from guilty man, and proposed to drink it Himself, and in its place, give to man the cup of blessing. . . .

Now the history of the human race comes up before the world’s Redeemer. He sees the power of sin and the utter helplessness of man to save himself. The woes and lamentations of a lost world rise before Him, He beholds its impending doom, and His decision is made. He will save man at any cost to Himself. He accepts His baptism of blood, that through Him perishing millions may gain everlasting life. He has left the heavenly courts, where all is purity, happiness, and glory, to save the one lost sheep, the one world that has fallen by transgression, and He will not be turned from the mission He has chosen.

Having made the decision, He falls in a dying condition to the earth. Where now are His disciples, to place their hands tenderly beneath the head of their suffering Master, and bathe that brow, marred indeed more than the sons of men? Our Saviour trod the winepress alone, and of all the people there was none with Him. The angels who had done Christ’s will in heaven would fain comfort Him. But what can they do? Such sorrow, such agony, is beyond their power to alleviate. They have never felt the sins of a ruined world, and with astonishment they behold their beloved Master prostrated with grief.

Although the Father does not remove the cup from the trembling hand and pale lips of His Son, He sends an angel from His presence to strengthen the divine Sufferer. The angel raises the Son of God from the cold ground, and comforts Him with messages of love from His Father. He is strengthened. He has the assurance that He is gaining eternal joys for all who will accept redemption.³⁷

June 18

Strength From on High

“And [Jesus] cometh the third time, and saith unto [the three disciples], Sleep on now, and take your rest: It is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand” (Mark 14:41, 42).

The glorious vision of the angel [had] dazzled the eyes of the disciples. They remembered the mount of transfiguration, the glory that encircled Jesus in the Temple, and the voice of God issuing from the cloud. They saw the same glory here revealed, and had no further fear for their Master, since God had taken Him in charge, and an angel was present to protect Him from His foes. They were weary and heavy with sleep, and again they dropped into unconsciousness.

The Saviour arose and sought His disciples and, for the third time, found them fast asleep. His words, however, aroused them: “Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners” (Matthew 26:45).

Even while these words were upon His lips, the footsteps of the mob that was in search of Him were heard. Judas took the lead, and was closely followed by the high priest. Jesus turned to His disciples, as his enemies approached, and said, “Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me” (Matthew 26:46). The countenance of the Saviour wore an expression of calm dignity; no traces of His recent agony were visible as He stepped forth to meet His betrayer.³⁸

The fearful hour in Gethsemane is past. Our divine Saviour has accepted the cup to drain it to the dregs. In behalf of man He has conquered in the hour of temptation. Serenity and peace are now seen in the pale, blood-stained face.³⁹

The strength given to Christ in the hour of bodily suffering and mental anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane has been and will be given to those who suffer for His dear name’s sake. The same grace given to Jesus, the same comfort, the more than mortal steadfastness, will be given to every believing child of God who is brought into perplexity and suffering, and threatened with imprisonment and death, by Satan’s agents. Never has a soul that trusts in Christ been left to perish. The rack, the stake, the many inventions of cruelty, may kill the body, but they cannot touch the life that is hid with Christ in God.⁴⁰

June 19

Betrayal With a Kiss

“And while [Jesus] yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him” (Matthew 26:47–49).

Judas failed to have a place among the sanctified because he failed to learn of Christ the daily lessons that He would teach His followers, of meekness and lowliness of heart. He failed to learn the lessons of faith that the other disciples finally learned, and thus became heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.⁴¹

Judas was tempted and tried, but not rising above these temptations, he lost ground, and finally went so far as to betray his Lord. Christ permitted Judas to go with the other disciples on their evangelistic tours, but on these occasions, Judas often manifested a spirit of superiority. He sought to exercise authority over his brethren. This spirit, unchecked, opened the way for the enemy to work upon his heart and mind, until at length he went so far as to betray his Saviour with a treacherous kiss. There are today, among the professed people of God, some who are walking in the same path; and unless they are converted, they will one day be numbered with the open enemies of God’s work for this time.⁴²

“In the highest rank of the enemies of the gospel of Christ,” said Wesley, “are they who openly and explicitly ‘judge the law’ itself, and ‘speak evil of the law;’ who teach men to break (to dissolve, to loose, to untie the obligation of) not one only, whether of the least or of the greatest, but all the commandments at a stroke. . . . The most surprising of all the circumstances that attend this strong delusion, is that they who are given up to it, really believe that they honor Christ by overthrowing His law, and that they are magnifying His office while they are destroying His doctrine! Yea, they honor Him just as Judas did when he said, ‘Hail, Master, and kissed Him.’ And He may as justly say to every one of them, ‘Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?’ It is no other than betraying Him with a kiss, to talk of His blood, and take away His crown; to set light by any part of His law, under pretense of advancing His gospel. Nor indeed can anyone escape this charge, who preaches faith in any such a manner as either directly or indirectly tends to set aside any branch of obedience.”⁴³

Angels in Sympathy

“Jesus said unto [Judas], Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him. And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest’s, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:50–53).

Why, then, thought the disciples, does [Jesus] not save Himself and us? And in answer to their unspoken thought, He said, “But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” (Matthew 26:54).

Under God the angels are all-powerful. They are mighty, and they excel in strength. On one occasion, in obedience to the command of Christ, they slew in one night one hundred and eighty-five thousand men of the Assyrian army. They can, and will, soon visit the earth with judgments. In quick succession one angel after another will pour out vials of wrath upon the inhabitants of the earth. How easily could the angels, beholding the shameful scene of the trial of Christ, have testified to their indignation by consuming the adversaries of God! But they were not commanded to do this.⁴⁴

When the disciples saw that Jesus did not deliver Himself from His enemies, but permitted Himself to be taken and bound, they were offended that He should suffer this humiliation to Himself and them. They had just witnessed an exhibition of His power in prostrating to the ground those who came to take Him, and in healing the servant’s ear, which Peter had cut off, and they knew that if He chose He could deliver Himself from the murderous mob. They blamed Him for not doing so, and mortified and terror-stricken by His unaccountable conduct they forsook Him and fled. Christ had foreseen this desertion, and in the upper chamber had forewarned them of the course which they would take at this time, saying, “Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me” (John 16:32).⁴⁵

What sadness and sorrow with the angels of God! Many companies of holy angels, with each a tall commanding angel at their head, were sent to witness the scene.⁴⁶

False Witnesses Distort Christ’s Words

“And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. . . . The chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none. For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together” (Mark 14:53, 55–56).

Christ had said, concerning the temple of His body, that He could destroy it, and raise it again in three days. These words were understood by His hearers to refer to the Jewish Temple. Of all that Jesus had said, the priests could find nothing which they could use against Him save this. The Romans had engaged in rebuilding and embellishing the Temple. They took great pride in it as a work of science and art; and the priests counted upon their indignation when it was proven that Jesus, a humble man, had declared Himself able to build it in three days if it should be destroyed. On this ground, Romans and Jews, Pharisees and Sadducees, could meet; for all held the Temple in great veneration.

In addition to this they had bribed false witnesses to testify that Jesus was guilty of inciting rebellion and seeking to establish a separate government. This they hoped would further excite the apprehensions of the Romans and accomplish the desired object. But when these witnesses were called, their testimony was so vague and contradictory that it was worthless. Upon cross-questioning, they were led to falsify their own statements. It was becoming apparent to the people that the charges against Jesus could not be maintained. The life of the Saviour had been so faultless, and His doctrine so pure, that envy and malice could find little in either capable of being misrepresented.

Two witnesses were at last found whose evidence was not so contradictory as the others had been. One of them, a corrupt man who had sold his honor for a sum of money, spoke of Christ as on a level with himself. . . . In the figurative language of prophecy, Jesus had thus foretold His own death and resurrection, His conflict and victory; but His enemies had misconstrued His words to suit their own purposes. The words of Jesus were truth and verity; the evidence was false and malicious.⁴⁷

Christ's Identity Vindicated

“And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death” (Mark 14:60–64).

Christ knew that Caiaphas was unworthy to occupy the position he did. But knowing this, He responded to the high priest's appeal. He knew that He Himself was appointed to His office by God, and there and then He might have glorified Himself. He might have exercised a power that would have made His judges quail. But a body of flesh had been prepared for Him. Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself. The true High Priest stood before the false high priest to be criticized and condemned. . . .

Weighted with such great results, this was to Christ one of the most wonderful moments of His life. He realized that now all disguise must be swept away. The declaration that He was one with God had been made. He had openly proclaimed Himself the Son of God, the One for whom the Jews had so long looked.

“Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven” (Matthew 26:64). At that day Christ will be the Judge. Every secret thing will be set in the light of God's countenance. What a contrast there will then be between those who have refused Christ and those who have received Him as a personal Saviour. Sinners will then see their sins without a shadow to veil or soften their hideousness. So woeful will be the sight, that they will desire to be hidden under the mountains or in the depths of the ocean, if only they may escape the wrath of the Lamb. But those whose life is hid with Christ in God can say: “I believe in Him who was condemned at Pilate's bar, and given up to the priests and rulers to be crucified. Look not upon me, a sinner, but look upon my Advocate. There is nothing in me worthy of the love He manifested for me: but He gave His life for me. Behold me in Jesus. He became sin for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”⁴⁸

The Humbling of Peter

“When they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly” (Luke 22:55–62).

Peter had been ready to take up arms in defense of Christ, but to acknowledge the Lord when He was the object of scorn and derision was more than he had courage to do. . . . Peter had been warned of this temptation; but he did not realize his danger, and therefore had not prepared himself for the trial. He had been filled with self-confidence, and deemed that he was able to withstand any temptation, assuring the Lord that though all others should be offended, he would be ready to go with Him to prison and to death. When he took his stand with the revilers of Christ, he placed himself on the enemy's ground, and he fell. At his third denial of his Lord the cock crew, and Jesus turned His eyes upon Peter with a look of peculiar sadness, and the words that Christ had spoken to him came quickly to his mind. All through his life the memory of that look was with Peter. His sinful boasting, his Lord's warning, his denial of the Saviour, all came to him like a flash of lightning; and casting one pitiful look upon his suffering, insulted Lord, he hurried away from the sound of false accusation and reproach, rushed from the palace, plunged into the darkness, and weeping bitterly, hurried to Gethsemane. He began to see himself as he really was. Memory was alive, and his sins were pictured before him in all their heinous light. Peter threw himself on the spot where a few hours before, Jesus had prayed and wept in agony, and there the disciple prayed as he never before had prayed. With deep repentance and terrible remorse he pleaded for forgiveness, and he rose a converted man.⁴⁹

Angels Restrained

“The men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee? And many other things blasphemously spake they against him” (Luke 22:63–65).

[The angels] would have delivered Jesus, but the commanding angels forbade them, saying that it was a great ransom which was to be paid for man; but it would be complete and would cause the death of Him who had the power of death. Jesus knew that angels were witnessing the scene of His humiliation. The weakest angel could have caused that mocking throng to fall powerless and could have delivered Jesus. He knew that if He should desire it of His Father, angels would instantly release Him. But it was necessary that He should suffer the violence of wicked men, in order to carry out the plan of salvation.

Jesus stood meek and humble before the infuriated multitude, while they offered Him the vilest abuse. They spit in His face—that face from which they will one day desire to hide, which will give light to the city of God and shine brighter than the sun. Christ did not cast upon the offenders an angry look. They covered His head with an old garment, blindfolding Him, and then struck Him in the face and cried out, “Prophecy, who is it that smote Thee?” (Luke 22:64). There was commotion among the angels. They would have rescued Him instantly; but their commanding angels restrained them.⁵⁰

The Saviour directed no word or look of retaliation against the deluded souls around Him, who had cast off all restraint because they perceived that the priests and rulers sanctioned their acts.

Jesus realized that the hosts of Heaven were witnessing His humiliation, and that the least angel, if summoned to His aid, could have instantly dispersed that insulting throng, and delivered Him from their power. Jesus Himself could have stricken down the excited multitude like dead men, by a look or word of His divinity, or driven them frightened from His presence, as He had the defilers of the Temple. But it was in the plan of redemption that He should suffer the scorn and abuse of wicked men, and He consented to all this when He became the Redeemer of man. The angels of God faithfully recorded every insulting look, word, and act directed against their beloved Commander; and the base men who scorned and spat upon the calm, pale face of Christ, were one day to look upon it in its glory, shining brighter than the sun.⁵¹

The Result of Coveting

“When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor. Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself” (Matthew 27:1–5).

Judas did not carry out in his life the faith he professed. He cultivated a spirit of selfishness, which grew into covetousness and dishonesty, and led him to sell his Master for thirty pieces of silver. He did not realize what he was doing until it was too late to undo the fearful work. He mourned for the result of sin, but had no real sense of its grievous character.⁵²

The sad history of Judas is a lesson for all. Judas was blessed with wonderful opportunities. He was with Christ during the entire period of the Saviour’s ministry. Day by day for three years he listened to His instruction and witnessed His marvelous works. Had he been willing to renounce all selfishness, the Lord would have used him to advance His kingdom. But Judas loved gain. He was a speculator. He thought that he could manage the finances of the church, and so make money. Stronger and stronger grew his covetousness, till at last he sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver.

How many today are like Judas betraying their Lord! How many are sacrificing principle for the sake of worldly gain! Thus they crucify Christ afresh, and put Him to open shame.

In the smallest as well as the largest affairs of life the first question should be, “What is God’s will?” Christ calls upon His children to rid themselves of all selfishness, all covetousness, all impurity. “Come unto Me,” He says, “and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Yield yourselves to My training. Submit your will to My will, your way to My way. Let your life be one with My life. So shall you gain treasure that will endure unto life eternal.

True religion is not an experiment. It is an actual imitation of Christ. God keeps a personal account with every man, testing him by the practical results of his work. Soon will be heard the call, “Give an account of thy stewardship” (Luke 16:2).⁵³

Christ's Kingdom Has No Fighting

“Pilate . . . said unto [Jesus], Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence” (John 18:33–36).

Jesus . . . sought to convince Pilate that He was innocent of aspiring to kingly honors upon earth. Pilate had been confused by the disturbed and divided elements of the religious world, and his mind grasped eagerly at the words of Jesus declaring that He had come into the world to bear witness to the truth. This man, arraigned as a criminal, who claimed to have the truth, stirred his heart with a great longing to know what it was, and how it could be obtained. He inquired of Jesus, “What is truth?” But he did not wait for a reply; the tumult of the excited crowd was continually increasing; their impatient cries jarred upon his ears, and recalled him to his judicial position. He went out to the Jews, who stood beyond the door of the hall, and declared in an emphatic voice, “I find in him no fault at all” (John 18:38).

Those words, traced by the pen of inspiration, will forever stand as a proof to the world of the base perfidy and falsehood of the Jews in their charges against Jesus. Even the heathen magistrate pronounced Him innocent.⁵⁴

In matters concerning the kingdom of Christ no compulsion or forcing of conscience is permitted. No blood is to be shed, no force of arms employed, no prison is to be opened for the incarceration of one who does not choose the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Christ will accept only of the voluntary service of the heart which has been sanctified through the truth.⁵⁵

Christians need not contend for their rights. They stand under the protection of the banner of Christ. They are to acknowledge the supreme authority of the King of kings and Lord of lords. In matters of difficulty between them and their brethren, they are not to appeal to Caesar or to Pilate. An account is kept of all these matters; and in His own good time, Christ will avenge His own elect. God will deal with the one who defrauds his brother and the cause of God. “Vengeance is mine,” He says; “I will repay” (Romans 12:19).⁵⁶

From Pilate to Herod

“[The chief priests and the multitude] were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time” (Luke 23:5–7).

When [Pilate] heard that Jesus was a Galilean and was under the jurisdiction of Herod, he embraced the opportunity to spare himself from further difficulty, and refused to decide the case, sending Him to Herod, who was then in Jerusalem.

Jesus was faint and weary from loss of sleep and food, and the ill-treatment He had received; yet His suffering condition awakened no pity in the hearts of His persecutors. He was dragged away to the judgment hall of Herod amid the hooting and insults of the merciless mob. Besides escaping responsibility in regard to the trial of Jesus, Pilate thought this would be a good opportunity to heal an old quarrel between himself and Herod. He thought that this act on his part would be regarded by Herod as an acknowledgment of his superior authority, and would thus bring about a reconciliation. In this he was not wrong, for the two magistrates made friends over the trial of the Saviour.

When Herod had first heard of Jesus and the mighty works wrought by Him, he was terror-stricken, and said, “It is John whom I beheaded; he is risen from the dead . . .” (Mark 6:16). [Herod] had long desired to see [Jesus], and witness His marvelous power. He was pleased that He was brought to him a prisoner, for he made no doubt that he could force Him to work a miracle as a condition of saving His life. Herod’s conscience was far less sensitive than when he had trembled with horror at the request of Herodias for the head of John the Baptist. For a time he had felt the keen stings of remorse for the terrible act he had committed to gratify the revenge of a cruel woman; but his moral perceptions had become more and more degraded by his licentious life, till his sins appeared but trifles in his eyes. The men who are capable of the worst crimes are those who have once been convicted by the Spirit of truth and have turned away from the light into the darkness of iniquity. Herod had very nearly become a disciple of John; but at the very point of decision, he had fallen into the snare of Satan and put to death one whom he knew to be a true prophet.⁵⁷

June 28

No Miracles Just for Show

“When Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him” (Luke 23:8–10).

As the Saviour was brought before Herod, the rabble surged and pressed about, crying out against the prisoner, some charging Him with one crime and some with another. Herod commanded silence and directed that Jesus be unbound, for he wished to interrogate Him. He looked with curiosity, mingled with an impulse of pity, upon the pale, sad face of the Saviour, which was marked with deep wisdom and purity, but showed extreme weariness and suffering. Herod, as well as Pilate, knew from his acquaintance with the character of the Jews, that malice and envy had caused them to condemn this innocent man.

Herod urged Jesus to save His life by working a miracle that would give evidence of His divine power. But the Saviour had no such work to do. He had taken upon Himself the nature of man, and was not to perform a miracle to gratify the curiosity of wicked men, nor to save Himself one jot of the pain and humiliation that man would suffer under similar circumstances. Herod urged Him to prove that He was not an impostor by demonstrating His power before the crowd. He summoned for the purpose maimed, crippled, and deformed persons and, in an authoritative manner, commanded Jesus to heal these subjects in his presence, urging that if He had really worked such remarkable cures as were reported of Him, He still had power to do like wonders, and could now turn it to His own profit by procuring His release.

But Jesus stood calmly before the haughty ruler as one who neither saw nor heard. Herod repeatedly urged his proposition upon Jesus, and reiterated the fact that he had the power to release or to condemn Him. He even dared to boast of the punishment he had inflicted upon the prophet John for presuming to reprove him. To all this Jesus made no answer either by word or look. Herod was irritated by the profound silence of the prisoner, which indicated an utter indifference to the royal personage before whom He had been summoned. Open rebuke would have been more palatable to the vain and pompous ruler than to be thus silently ignored.⁵⁸

June 29

A Royal Robe Given in Sarcasm

“Herod with his men of war set [Jesus] at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate” (Luke 23:11).

Jesus had no light to give one who had gone directly contrary to the knowledge he had received from the greatest of prophets.... The silence of Jesus could no longer be borne by Herod; his face grew dark with passion, and he angrily threatened Jesus; but the captive still remained unmoved. . . .

Some cried out that He claimed to be the Son of God, the King of Israel. Herod, hearing this, said, in derision, A king, is He? Then crown Him, and put upon Him a royal robe, and worship your king. . . .

A crown was now plaited from a vine bearing sharp thorns, and this was placed upon the sacred brow of Jesus; and an old tattered purple robe, once the garment of a king, was placed upon His noble form, while Herod and the Jewish priests encouraged the insults and cruelty of the mob. Jesus was then placed upon a large block, which was derisively called a throne, an old reed was placed in His hand as a scepter and, amid satanic laughter, curses, and jeers, the rude throng bowed to Him mockingly as to a king. Occasionally some murderous hand snatched the reed that had been placed in His hand, and struck Him on the head with it, forcing the thorns into His temples, and causing the blood to flow down His face and beard. . . . But He who could command the heavenly hosts, and in an instant call to His aid legions of holy angels, one of whom could have immediately overpowered that cruel mob—He who could have stricken down His tormentors by the flashing forth of His divine majesty—submitted to the coarsest insult and outrage with dignified composure. As the acts of His torturers degraded them below humanity, into the likeness of Satan, so did the meekness and patience of Jesus exalt Him above the level of humanity.

When Herod saw that Jesus submitted passively to all the indignity that was heaped upon Him, preserving an unparalleled serenity through it all, he was moved by a sudden fear that after all this might not be a common man. . . . [Some who came to mock Jesus] looked into the sufferer’s face and saw expressed there a look so like a king that they turned back, ashamed of their own audacity. Herod was ill at ease and, hardened as he was, dared not ratify the condemnation of the Jews; and he therefore sent Jesus back to Pilate.⁵⁹

No Fault in Him

“Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. I will therefore chastise him, and release him” (Luke 23:13–16).

The Saviour, tottering with weariness, pale and wounded, wearing a robe of mockery and a crown of thorns, was mercilessly hurried back to the court of the Roman governor. Pilate was very much irritated; for he had congratulated himself on being rid of a fearful responsibility when he referred the accusers of Jesus to Herod. He now impatiently inquired of the Jews what they would have him do. He reminded them that he had already examined the prisoner and found no blame in Him; that His accusers had failed to sustain a single charge against Him. . . . Said Pilate, “I will therefore chastise him and release him” (Luke 23:16).

Here Pilate exposed his weakness. He had declared that Jesus was innocent of the crimes of which He was accused, yet he was willing to make a partial sacrifice of justice and principle in order to compromise with an unfeeling mob; he was willing to suffer an innocent man to be scourged, that their inhuman wrath might be appeased. But the fact that he proposed to make terms with them placed Pilate at a disadvantage with the ungovernable crowd, who now presumed upon his indecision, and clamored the more for the life of the prisoner. Pilate turned to the people, and represented to them that the priests and elders had not substantiated in any degree the charges brought against Jesus. He hoped by this means to raise their sympathy for Him, so they would be willing to release Him. Meanwhile Jesus had fallen through exhaustion upon the marble pavement. Just then a messenger pressed through the crowd, and placed in Pilate’s hand a letter from his wife. . . . God had sent this warning to her, that, through her, Pilate might be prevented from committing the terrible crime of delivering up to death the divine Son of God. Pilate turned pale when he read the message; but the priests and rulers had occupied the interval in further inflaming minds of the people, till they were wrought up to a state of insane fury.⁶⁰

Christ or Barabbas?

“[Pilate said,] ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber” (John 18:39, 40).

We are still in a world where Jesus, the Son of God, was rejected and crucified, where the guilt of despising Christ and preferring a robber rather than the spotless Lamb of God still rests. Unless we individually repent toward God because of transgression of His law, and exercise faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, whom the world has rejected, we shall lie under the full condemnation that the action of choosing Barabbas instead of Christ merited. The whole world stands charged today with the deliberate rejection and murder of the Son of God. The word bears record that Jews and Gentiles, kings, governors, ministers, priests, and people—all classes and sects who reveal the same spirit of envy, hatred, prejudice, and unbelief manifested by those who put to death the Son of God—would act the same part, were the opportunity granted, as did the Jews and people of the time of Christ. They would be partakers of the same spirit that demanded the death of the Son of God.¹

Jesus could have been at peace with the world only by leaving the transgressors of the law unreprieved, unrebuked. This He could not do; for He was to take away the sins of the world. Those who are faithful sentinels will be charged by the world as being the disturbers of its peace, they will be charged with stirring up strife and with creating divisions. But they will only be bearing the reproach that fell on Christ. Christ denounced unrighteousness, and His very presence was a rebuke to sin. The atmosphere that surrounded His soul was so pure, so elevated, that it placed the hypocritical rabbis, priests, and rulers in their true position, and revealed them in their true character as claiming sanctity, and at the same time misrepresenting God and His truth. In the rich loveliness of the character of Christ, zeal for God was always apparent. . . . He hated one thing only, and that was sin. But the world loved sin and hated righteousness, and this was the cause of the hostility of the world to Jesus. If Christ had given license to men to exercise their evil passions, they would have hailed this great miracle-worker with shouts of applause; but when He reproved sin, made open war upon selfishness, oppression, hypocrisy, pride, covetousness, and lust, they said, Away with this fellow, and give us Barabbas.²

Pressure Will Come as It Did to Pilate

“Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him” (John 19:1).

Pilate was dumb with surprise and disappointment; but by appealing to the people and yielding his own judgment, he had compromised his dignity, and lost control of the crowd. The priests saw that though he was convinced of the innocence of Jesus, he could be intimidated by them, and they determined to carry their point.³

We shall yet find that the same spirit of opposition to God and His people that existed in ages past exists in this day of boasted light and privilege. Satan is engaged in doing his own work. His angels will conspire with evil men today, and the combined energies of apostasy will gather together their forces to tear down that which they once built up, and to destroy the influence of those who are champions of the truth.⁴

If we love God and keep His commandments, we need not expect the world to be in sympathy with us, any more than it was with Christ. Says John, “The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not” (1 John 3:1). And in all ages the defenders of the faith have realized the truth of the words of Paul, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). Because the truth contradicts the doctrines of men and condemns their unrighteous practices, it excites the most bitter opposition. The majority, even of those who bear Christ’s name, are unwilling to follow His example of self-denial and cross-bearing; and as they become more and more alienated from Him, they cannot distinguish between the heavenly and the earthly; their peace is disturbed by the fact that there is a people that serve God and renounce every sinful practice. Men who are trampling upon God’s requirements feel a constant rebuke from the course of those who render obedience to Him; and this is why such enmity is manifested against all who are true to God. For this reason the Pharisees rejected Christ, and the same spirit still exists, and will continue to exist until the close of time. . . .

Such is the treatment which the servants of Christ receive because they teach truths that are not in harmony with the doctrines of a world-loving church. . . . The church authorities, like the chief priests and scribes of the Jews, have brought them to Pilate to pronounce sentence against them and have caused them to be thrust into prison. But all this is only a small matter in comparison with what is to be.⁵

Innocence Worthy of Crucifixion?

“Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man! When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him” (John 19:5, 6).

Christ was vehemently accused by men holding the highest offices in the church, men whose fathers He had delivered from Egyptian bondage. The people chosen by God to be the light of the world stood under the black banner of Satan, and reviled and oppressed their long-expected Messiah. Thus they brought their ruin upon themselves. Their contemptuous speeches reacted on them. What darkness this night’s work brought upon the chief actors in the scene! Nevermore did the memory of it fade from their minds.⁶

By the sacrifice Christ was about to make, all doubts would be forever settled, and the human race would be saved if they would return to their allegiance. Christ alone could restore honor to God’s government. The cross of Calvary would be looked upon by the unfallen worlds, by the heavenly universe, by satanic agencies, by the fallen race, and every mouth would be stopped. In making His infinite sacrifice Christ would exalt and honor the law. He would make known the exalted character of God’s government, which could not in any way be changed to meet man in his sinful condition.

Who is able to describe the last scenes of Christ’s life on earth, His trial in the judgment hall, His crucifixion? Who witnessed these scenes? The heavenly universe, God the Father, Satan and his angels. Wonderful events took place in the betrayal of Christ. At His mock trial, His accusers found nothing by which He could be proved guilty. Three times Pilate declared, “I find in Him no fault at all” (John 18:38). Nevertheless he ordered Him to be scourged, and then delivered Him up to suffer the most cruel death that could be devised. . . . The enmity of the apostate against the Commander of all heaven must be seen. It must be shown that Satan’s mercy is cruelty. What a battle was this, between Christ and Satan! It was waged up to the very time of the resurrection, yea, up to the time of the ascension. Then it was transferred to Christ’s followers, and today Satan wars against them.⁷

Swept Away by Ambition

“Saith Pilate unto [Jesus], Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin. And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha” (John 19:10–13).

[Pilate] had been looked upon with some suspicion by the government; and he knew that a report of unfaithfulness on his part would be likely to cost him his position. He knew that if the Jews became his enemies he could hope for no mercy at their hands; for he had before him an example of the perseverance with which they sought to destroy one whom they hated without reason.

The implied threat in the declaration of the priests, regarding his allegiance to Caesar, intimidated Pilate, so that he yielded to the demands of the mob, and delivered Jesus up to the crucifixion rather than risk losing his position. But the very thing he dreaded came upon him afterward in spite of his precautions. His honors were stripped from him; he was cast down from his high office; and, stung by remorse and wounded pride, he committed suicide not long after the crucifixion. . . .

Only a short time before, the governor had declared to his prisoner that he had power to release or to condemn Him; but he now thought that he could not save Him, and also his own position and honor; and he preferred to sacrifice an innocent life rather than his own worldly power. Had he acted promptly and firmly at the first, carrying out his convictions of right, his will would not have been overborne by the mob; they would not have presumed to dictate to him. His wavering and indecision proved his irredeemable ruin. How many, like Pilate, sacrifice principle and integrity in order to shun disagreeable consequences. Conscience and duty point one way, and self-interest points another; and the current, setting strongly in the wrong direction, sweeps away into the thick darkness of guilt him who compromises with evil.⁸

A Heathen Ruler Preferred

“[Pilate] saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:14, 15).

What was Christ’s grief to see the Jews fixing their own destiny beyond redemption! He alone could comprehend the significance of their rejection, betrayal, and condemnation of the Son of God. His last hope for the Jewish nation was gone. Nothing could avert her doom. By the representatives of the nation God was denied as their ruler. By worlds unfallen, by the whole heavenly universe, the blasphemous utterance was heard, “We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:15). The God of heaven heard their choice. He had given them opportunity to repent, and they would not. Forty years afterward Jerusalem was destroyed, and the Roman power ruled over the people. Then they had no deliverer. They had no king but Caesar. Henceforth the Jewish nation, as a nation, was as a branch severed from the vine—a dead, fruitless branch, to be gathered up and burned—from land to land throughout the world, from century to century, dead—dead in trespasses and sins—without a Saviour!⁹

With Caiaphas the Jewish high priesthood ended. This proud, overbearing, wicked man proved his unworthiness ever to have worn the garments of the high priest. He had neither capacity, nor authority from heaven, for doing the work. He had not one ray of light from heaven to show him what the work of the priest was, or for what the office had been instituted. Such ministration could make nothing perfect, for in itself it was utterly corrupt. . . .

Virtually Caiaphas was no high priest. He wore the priestly robes, but he had no vital connection with God. He was uncircumcised in heart. With the other priests he instructed the people to choose Barabbas instead of Christ. They cried out for the crucifixion of Christ and, as representatives of the Jewish nation, placed themselves under the Roman jurisdiction, which they despised, by saying, “We have no king but Caesar.” When they said this, they unchurched themselves.

It is righteousness that exalts a nation. A disregard for the law of God will be the ruin of the religious world in the last days of this earth’s history. Everything is becoming unsettled, but God’s Word is changeless and sure.¹⁰

July 6

Follow the Crowd or Bear the Cross?

“After that they had mocked [Jesus], they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross” (Matthew 27:31, 32).

From loss of blood and excessive weariness and pain, [the Saviour] fell fainting to the ground. As He lay beneath the heavy burden of the cross, how the heart of His mother longed to place a supporting hand beneath His wounded head, and bathe that brow that had once been pillowed upon her bosom. But, alas! that mournful privilege was denied her.

When Jesus revived, the cross was again placed upon His shoulders, and He was forced forward. He staggered on for a few steps, bearing His heavy load, then fell as one lifeless to the ground. The priests and rulers felt no compassion for their suffering victim; but they saw that it was impossible for Him to carry the instrument of torture farther. They were puzzled to find anyone who would humiliate himself to bear the cross to the place of execution.

While they were considering what to do, Simon, a Cyrenian, coming from an opposite direction, met the crowd, was seized at the instigation of the priests, and compelled to carry the cross of Christ. The sons of Simon were disciples of Jesus, but he himself had never been connected with Him. This occasion was a profitable one for him. The cross he was forced to bear became the means of his conversion. His sympathies were deeply stirred in favor of Jesus; and the events of Calvary, and the words uttered by the Saviour caused him to acknowledge that He was the Son of God. Simon ever after felt grateful to God for the providence which placed him in a position to receive evidence for himself that Jesus was the world's Redeemer.

A great multitude followed the Saviour to Calvary; many were mocking and deriding, but some were weeping and recounting His praise. Those whom He had healed of various infirmities, and those whom He had raised from the dead, declared His marvellous works with earnest voice, and demanded to know what Jesus had done that He should be treated as a malefactor. Only a few days before, they had attended Him with joyful hosannas and the waving of palm branches, as He rode triumphantly to Jerusalem. But many who had then shouted His praise, because it was popular to do so, now swelled the cry of “Crucify him! Crucify him!”¹¹

July 7

Jesus Meekly Submitted

“They crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst” (John 19:18).

The preparations were made, and Jesus was laid upon the cross. The hammer and the nails were brought. The hearts of the disciples fainted within them. The mother of Jesus was bowed with agony almost beyond endurance. Before the Saviour was nailed to the cross, the disciples bore her from the scene, that she might not hear the crashing of the spikes as they were driven through the bone and muscle of His tender hands and feet. Jesus murmured not, but groaned in agony. His face was pale, and large drops of sweat stood upon His brow. Satan exulted in the suffering through which the Son of God was passing, yet feared that his efforts to thwart the plan of salvation had been in vain, that his kingdom was lost. . . .

After Jesus had been nailed to the cross, it was raised and with great force thrust into the place which had been prepared for it in the ground, tearing the flesh and causing the most intense suffering. To make the death of Jesus as shameful as possible, two thieves were crucified with Him, one on each side. The thieves were taken by force, and after much resistance on their part, their arms were thrust back and nailed to their crosses. But Jesus meekly submitted. He needed no one to force His arms back upon the cross. While the thieves were cursing their executioners, the Saviour in agony prayed for His enemies, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). It was not merely agony of body which Christ endured; the sins of the whole world were upon Him.

As Jesus hung upon the cross, some who passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads as if bowing to a king, and said to Him, “Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross” (Matthew 27:40). Satan used the same words to Christ in the wilderness—“If Thou be the Son of God” (Luke 4:3). The chief priests, elders, and scribes mockingly said, “He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him” (Matthew 27:42). The angels who hovered over the scene of Christ's crucifixion were moved to indignation as the rulers derided Him and said, “If He be the Son of God, let Him deliver Himself.” They wished there to come to the rescue of Jesus and deliver Him, but they were not suffered to do so. The object of His mission was not yet accomplished.¹²

Golgotha

“They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. And they crucified him” (Matthew 27:34, 35).

The mission of Christ’s earthly life was now nearly accomplished. His tongue was parched, and He said, “I thirst” (John 19:28). They saturated a sponge with vinegar and gall and offered it Him to drink; and when He had tasted it, He refused it. And now the Lord of life and glory was dying, a ransom for the race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father’s wrath upon Him as man’s substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God. Death is not to be regarded as an angel of mercy. Nature recoils from the thought of dissolution, which is the consequence of sin.

But it was not the dread of death which caused the inexpressible agony of Jesus. To believe this would be to place Him beneath the martyrs in courage and endurance; for many of those who have died for their faith, yielded to torture and death, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer for Christ’s sake. Christ was the prince of sufferers; but it was not bodily anguish that filled Him with horror and despair; it was a sense of the malignity of sin, a knowledge that man had become so familiar with sin that he did not realize its enormity, that it was so deeply rooted in the human heart as to be difficult to eradicate.

As man’s substitute and surety, the iniquity of men was laid upon Christ; He was counted a transgressor that He might redeem them from the curse of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam of every age was pressing upon His heart; and the wrath of God, and the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour, in this hour of supreme anguish, pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. Every pang endured by the Son of God upon the cross, the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands, and feet, the convulsions of agony which racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father’s face from Him, speak to man, saying, It is for love of thee that the Son of God consents to have these heinous crimes laid upon Him; for thee He spoils the domain of death and opens the gates of Paradise and immortal life.¹³

One Discerned His Saviour

“One of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:39–43).

Jesus did not promise the penitent thief that he should go with Him, upon the day of their crucifixion, to Paradise; for He Himself did not ascend to His Father until three days afterward. See John 20:17. But He declared unto him, “I say unto thee *today*”—meaning to impress the fact upon his mind, that at *that time*, while enduring ignominy and persecution, He had the power to save sinners. He was man’s Advocate with the Father, having the same power as when He healed the sick and raised the dead to life; it was His divine right to promise *that day* to the repentant, believing malefactor, “Thou shalt be with me in Paradise.”

The criminal upon the cross, notwithstanding his physical suffering, felt in his soul the peace and comfort of acceptance with God. The Saviour, lifted upon the cross, enduring pain and mockery, rejected by the priests and elders, is sought by a guilty, dying soul with a faith discerning the world’s Redeemer in Him who is crucified like a malefactor. For such an object did the Son of God leave heaven, to save lost and perishing sinners. While the priests and rulers, in their self-righteous scorn, fail to see His divine character, He reveals Himself to the penitent thief as the sinner’s Friend and Saviour. He thus teaches that the vilest sinner may find pardon and salvation through the merits of the blood of Christ.

The Spirit of God illuminated the mind of this criminal, who took hold of Christ by faith. . . . While the leading Jews deny Him, and even the disciples doubt His divinity, the poor thief, upon the brink of eternity, at the close of his probation, calls Jesus his Lord! Many were ready to call Him Lord when He wrought miracles, and also after He had risen from the grave; but none called Him Lord as He hung dying upon the cross, save the penitent thief, who was saved at the eleventh hour.¹⁴

July 10

The Crushing Weight That Kills

“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:45, 46).

It was not bodily suffering which so quickly ended the life of Christ upon the cross. It was the crushing weight of the sins of the world, and a sense of His Father’s wrath. . . .

Inanimate nature groans in sympathy with her bleeding, dying Author. The earth trembles. The sun refuses to behold the scene. The heavens gather blackness. Angels have witnessed the scene of suffering until they can look no longer, and hide their faces from the horrid sight. Christ is dying! He is in despair! His Father’s approving smile is removed, and angels are not permitted to lighten the gloom of the terrible hour. They can only behold in amazement their loved Commander, the Majesty of heaven, suffering the penalty of man’s transgression of the Father’s law.

Even doubts assailed the dying Son of God. He could not see through the portals of the tomb. Bright hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the tomb a conqueror and His Father’s acceptance of His sacrifice. The sin of the world, with all its terribleness, was felt to the utmost by the Son of God. The displeasure of the Father for sin, and its penalty, which is death, were all that He could realize through this amazing darkness. He was tempted to fear that sin was so offensive in the sight of His Father that He could not be reconciled to His Son. The fierce temptation that His own Father had forever left Him caused that piercing cry: . . . “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (Mark 15:34).

Christ felt much as sinners will feel when the vials of God’s wrath shall be poured out upon them. Black despair, like the pall of death, will gather about their guilty souls, and then they will realize to the fullest extent the sinfulness of sin. Salvation . . . might be theirs, if they would accept of it willingly, gladly; but none are compelled to yield obedience to the law of God. If they refuse the heavenly benefit and choose the pleasures and deceitfulness of sin, they have their choice, and at the end receive their wages, which is the wrath of God and eternal death. They will be forever separated from the presence of Jesus, whose sacrifice they had despised. They will have lost a life of happiness and sacrificed eternal glory for the pleasures of sin for a season.¹⁵

July 11

The Cross Blazing With Glory

“[God] hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The cross of Christ will be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity. In Christ glorified they will behold Christ crucified. Never will it be forgotten that He whose power created and upheld the unnumbered worlds through the vast realms of space, the Beloved of God, the Majesty of heaven, He whom cherub and shining seraph delighted to adore—humbled Himself to uplift fallen man; that He bore the guilt and shame of sin, and the hiding of His Father’s face, till the woes of a lost world broke His heart and crushed out His life on Calvary’s cross. That the Maker of all worlds, the Arbiter of all destinies, should lay aside His glory and humiliate Himself from love to man will ever excite the wonder and adoration of the universe. As the nations of the saved look upon their Redeemer and behold the eternal glory of the Father shining in His countenance; as they behold His throne, which is from everlasting to everlasting, and know that His kingdom is to have no end, they break forth in rapturous song: “Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by His own most precious blood!”

The mystery of the cross explains all other mysteries. In the light that streams from Calvary the attributes of God which had filled us with fear and awe appear beautiful and attractive. Mercy, tenderness, and parental love are seen to blend with holiness, justice, and power. While we behold the majesty of His throne, high and lifted up, we see His character in its gracious manifestations, and comprehend, as never before, the significance of that endearing title, “Our Father.”

It will be seen that He who is infinite in wisdom could devise no plan for our salvation except the sacrifice of His Son. The compensation for this sacrifice is the joy of peopling the earth with ransomed beings, holy, happy, and immortal. The result of the Saviour’s conflict with the powers of darkness is joy to the redeemed, redounding to the glory of God throughout eternity. And such is the value of the soul that the Father is satisfied with the price paid; and Christ Himself, beholding the fruits of His great sacrifice, is satisfied.¹⁶

[Christ] saw the cross, the cruel, ignominious cross, with all its attending horrors, blazing with glory.¹⁷

July 12

The Life-Giver Yields Up His Life

“The sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost” (Luke 23:45, 46).

Faith and hope trembled in the expiring agonies of Christ because God had removed the assurance He had heretofore given His beloved Son of His approbation and acceptance. The Redeemer of the world then relied upon the evidences which had hitherto strengthened Him, that His Father accepted His labors and was pleased with His work. In His dying agony, as He yields up His precious life, He has by faith alone to trust in Him whom it has ever been His joy to obey. He is not cheered with clear, bright rays of hope on the right hand nor on the left. All is enshrouded in oppressive gloom. Amid the awful darkness which is felt by sympathizing nature, the Redeemer drains the mysterious cup even to its dregs. . . .

Nature sympathized with the suffering of its Author. The heaving earth, the rent rocks, proclaimed that it was the Son of God who died. There was a mighty earthquake. The veil of the Temple was rent in twain. Terror seized the executioners and spectators as they beheld the sun veiled in darkness, and felt the earth shake beneath them, and saw and heard the rending of the rocks. The mocking and jeering of the chief priests and elders were hushed as Christ commended His spirit into the hands of His Father. The astonished throng began to withdraw and grope their way in the darkness to the city. They smote upon their breasts as they went and in terror, speaking scarcely above a whisper, said among themselves: “It is an innocent person that has been murdered. What if, indeed, He is, as He asserted, the Son of God?”

Jesus did not yield up His life till He had accomplished the work which He came to do, and exclaimed with His departing breath: “It is finished” (John 19:30). Satan was then defeated. He knew that his kingdom was lost. Angels rejoiced as the words were uttered: “It is finished.” The great plan of redemption, which was dependent on the death of Christ, had been thus far carried out. And there was joy in heaven that the sons of Adam could, through a life of obedience, be finally exalted to the throne of God. Oh, what love! What amazing love! that brought the Son of God to earth to be made sin for us, that we might be reconciled to God, and elevated to a life with Him in His mansions in glory.¹⁸

July 13

Cleansing Blood and Living Water

“The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water” (John 19:31–34).

Pilate was as unwilling as [the leading Jews] were that the spectacle of Jesus upon the cross should remain a moment longer than was necessary. The consent of the governor having been obtained, the legs of the two that were crucified with Jesus were broken to hasten their death; but Jesus was already dead, and they broke not His legs. The rude soldiers, who had witnessed the looks and words of Jesus upon His way to Calvary and while dying upon the cross, were softened by what they had witnessed, and were restrained from marring Him by breaking His limbs. Thus was prophecy fulfilled, which declared that a bone of Him should not be broken; and the law of the passover, requiring the sacrifice to be perfect and whole, was also fulfilled in the offering of the Lamb of God. “They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the passover they shall keep it” (Numbers 9:12).

A soldier, at the suggestion of the priests who wished to make the death of Jesus sure, thrust his spear into the Saviour’s side, inflicting a wound which would have caused instant death if He had not already been dead. From the wide incision made by the spear there flowed two copious and distinct streams, one of blood, the other of water. . . . After the resurrection, the priests and rulers caused the report to be circulated that Jesus did not die upon the cross, that He merely fainted and was afterward resuscitated. Another lying report affirmed that it was not a real body of flesh and bone but the likeness of a body that was laid in the tomb. But the testimony of John concerning the pierced side of the Saviour, and the blood and water that flowed from the wound, refutes these falsehoods.¹⁹

The blood was to wash away the sins of those who should believe in His name, and the water was to represent that living water which is obtained from Jesus to give life to the believer.²⁰

July 14

An Honorable Burial

"[Joseph of Arimathea] went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid. And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment" (Luke 23:52-56).

The women were astonished to see Joseph and Nicodemus, both honored and wealthy councilors, as anxious and interested as themselves for the proper disposal of the body of Jesus.

Neither of these men had openly attached himself to the Saviour while He was living, although both believed on Him. They knew that if they declared their faith they would be excluded from the Sanhedrin council, on account of the prejudice of the priests and elders toward Jesus. This would have cut them off from all power to aid or protect Him by using their influence in the council. Several times they had shown the fallacy of the grounds of His condemnation, and protested against His arrest, and the council had broken up without accomplishing that for which it had been called together; for it was impossible to procure the condemnation of Jesus without the unanimous consent of the Sanhedrin. The object of the priests had finally been obtained by calling a secret council, to which Joseph and Nicodemus were not summoned.

The two councilors now came boldly forth to the aid of the disciples. The help of these rich and honored men was greatly needed at that time. They could do for the slain Saviour what it was impossible for the poorer disciples to do; and their influential positions protected them, in a great measure, from censure and remonstrance. While the acknowledged disciples of Christ were too thoroughly disheartened and intimidated to show themselves openly to be His followers, these men came boldly to the front and acted their noble part.

Gently and reverently they removed with their own hands the body of Jesus from the instrument of torture, their sympathetic tears falling fast as they looked upon His bruised and lacerated form, which they carefully bathed and cleansed from the stain of blood. Joseph owned a new tomb, hewn from stone, which he was reserving for himself; it was near Calvary, and he now prepared this sepulcher for Jesus.²¹

July 15

None Can Limit the Life-Giver

"Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch" (Matthew 27:62-66).

The discipline of the Roman army was very severe. A sentinel found sleeping at his post was punishable with death. The Jews realized the advantage of having such a guard about the tomb of Jesus. They placed a seal upon the stone that closed the sepulcher, that it might not be disturbed without the fact being known, and took every precaution against the disciples practicing any deception in regard to the body of Jesus. But all their plans and precautions only served to make the triumph of the resurrection more complete, and to more fully establish its truth.

How must God and His holy angels have looked upon all those preparations to guard the body of the world's Redeemer! How weak and foolish must those efforts have seemed! The words of the psalmist picture this scene: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (Psalm 2:1-4). Roman guards and Roman arms were powerless to confine the Lord of life within the narrow enclosure of the sepulcher. Christ had declared that He had power to lay down His life and to take it up again. The hour of His victory was near. . . .

A long line of inspired prophecy pointed to the coming of Christ to our world, and minutely described the manner of His reception. Had the Saviour appeared at an earlier period in the world's history, the advantages gained to Christians would not have been so great, as their faith would not have been developed and strengthened by dwelling upon the prophecies which stretched into the far future.²²

Christ the First Fruits

“In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay” (Matthew 28:1–6).

One of the angels laid hold of the great stone and rolled it away from the door of the sepulcher and seated himself upon it. The other entered the tomb and unbound the napkin from the head of Jesus. Then the angel from heaven, with a voice that caused the earth to quake, cried out, “Thou Son of God, Thy Father calls Thee! Come forth.” Death could hold dominion over Him no longer. Jesus arose from the dead, a triumphant conqueror. In solemn awe the angelic host gazed upon the scene. And as Jesus came forth from the sepulcher, those shining angels prostrated themselves to the earth in worship, and hailed Him with songs of victory and triumph.

Satan’s angels had been compelled to flee before the bright, penetrating light of the heavenly angels, and they bitterly complained to their king that their prey had been violently taken from them, and that He whom they so much hated had risen from the dead. Satan and his hosts had exulted that their power over fallen man had caused the Lord of life to be laid in the grave, but short was their hellish triumph. For as Jesus walked forth from His prison house a majestic conqueror, Satan knew that after a season he must die, and his kingdom pass unto Him whose right it was. He lamented and raged that notwithstanding all his efforts, Jesus had not been overcome, but had opened a way of salvation for man, and whosoever would might walk in it and be saved.²³

In this scene of the resurrection of the Son of God is given a lively image of the glory that will be revealed at the general resurrection of the just at the second appearing of Christ in the clouds of heaven. Then the dead that are in their graves shall hear His voice and come forth to life; and not only the earth, but the heavens themselves, shall be shaken.²⁴

A Lie Easily Refuted

“Some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor’s ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day” (Matthew 28:11–15).

As the host of heavenly angels departed from the sepulcher and the light and glory passed away, the Roman guard ventured to raise their heads and look about them. They were filled with amazement as they saw that the great stone had been rolled from the door of the sepulcher and that the body of Jesus was gone. They hastened to the city to make known to the priests and elders what they had seen. As those murderers listened to the marvelous report, paleness sat upon every face. Horror seized them at the thought of what they had done. If the report was correct, they were lost. For a time they sat in silence, looking upon one another’s faces, not knowing what to do or what to say. To accept the report would be to condemn themselves. They went aside to consult as to what should be done. They reasoned that if the report brought by the guard should be circulated among the people, those who put Christ to death would be slain as His murderers. It was decided to hire the soldiers to keep the matter secret. The priests and elders offered them a large sum of money, saying, “Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole Him away while we slept” (Matthew 28:13). And when the guard inquired what would be done with them for sleeping at their post, the Jewish officers promised to persuade the governor and secure their safety. For the sake of money, the Roman guard sold their honor, and agreed to follow the counsel of the priests and elders.²⁵

The lying report was spread far and near. But there were witnesses to Christ’s resurrection whom the priests could not silence. Certain of the dead who came forth with Christ appeared to many and declared that He had risen. And Christ Himself remained with His disciples for forty days after He rose from the dead, and before His ascension [He] gave them their commission, bidding them go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.²⁶

Entrusted With Responsibility

“The same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained” (John 20:19–23).

[The disciples] were to teach and to preach in Christ’s name. The instruction given them had in it the vital, spiritual breath that is in Christ. . . . The breathing of Christ upon His disciples was the breath of true spiritual life. The disciples were to interpret this as imbuing them with the attributes of their Saviour, that in purity, faith, and obedience, they might exalt the law, and make it honorable. God’s law is the expression of His character. By obedience to its requirements we meet God’s standard of character. Thus the disciples were to witness for Christ.

The impartation of the Spirit was the impartation of the very life of Christ, which was to qualify the disciples for their mission. . . . The lesson here given to the disciples means that wise men, truly taught of God, possessing the inward working of the Holy Spirit, are to act as representative men, samples of the whole body of believers. These are to show themselves capable of preserving due order in the church; and the Holy Spirit will convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. But the remission of sins is to be understood as the prerogative of God alone. The warnings in the seventh chapter of Matthew forbid men to pronounce judgment on their fellowmen. God has not given His servants power to cast down or to destroy. The apostles were unable to remove the guilt from any soul. They were to give the message from God: It is written—the Lord has said—thus and thus in regard to lying, Sabbath-breaking, bearing false witness, stealing, idolatry.²⁷

Those . . . who hold responsible positions should have the support and confidence of their brethren. They may have faults in common with other people, and may err in their decisions; but notwithstanding this, the church of Christ on earth has given them an authority that cannot be lightly esteemed.²⁸

Directing the Doubters to Christ

“[The disciple Thomas declared,] Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again [Jesus’] disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:25–29).

Many who have a weak and wavering faith, reason that if they had the evidence which Thomas had from his companions they would not doubt as he did. They do not realize that they have not only that evidence, but additional testimony piled up about them on every side. Many who, like Thomas, wait for all cause of doubt to be removed, may never realize their desire as he did, but gradually become entrenched in their unbelief, until they cannot perceive the weight of evidence in favor of Jesus and, like the skeptical Jews, what little light they have will go out in the darkness which closes around their minds. To reject the plain and conclusive evidences of divine truth hardens the heart and blinds the understanding. The precious light, being neglected, fades utterly from the mind that is unwilling to receive it.

Jesus, in His treatment of Thomas, gave His followers a lesson regarding the manner in which they should treat those who have doubts upon religious truth, and who make those doubts prominent. He did not overwhelm Thomas with words of reproach, nor did He enter into a controversy with him; but, with marked condescension and tenderness, He revealed Himself unto the doubting one. Thomas had taken a most unreasonable position, in dictating the only conditions of his faith; but Jesus, by His generous love and consideration, broke down all the barriers he had raised. Persistent controversy will seldom weaken unbelief, but rather put it upon self-defense, where it will find new support and excuse. Jesus, revealed in His love and mercy as the crucified Saviour, will bring from many once unwilling lips the acknowledgment of Thomas, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28).²⁹

The Repentant Restored

“Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me” (John 21:15–19).

It was after Peter had been led to self-renunciation and entire reliance upon divine power, that he received his call to act as an undershepherd. Christ had said to Peter, before his denial of Him, “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32). These words were significant of the wide and effectual work which this apostle was to do in the future for those who should come to the faith. For this work, Peter’s own experience of sin and suffering and repentance had prepared him. Not until he had learned his weakness, could he know the believer’s need of dependence on Christ. Amid the storm of temptation he had come to understand that man can walk safely only as in utter self-distrust he relies upon the Saviour.

At the last meeting of Christ with His disciples by the sea, Peter, tested by the thrice-repeated question, “Lovest thou me?” (John 21:15–17) had been restored to his place among the Twelve. His work had been appointed him: he was to feed the Lord’s flock. Now, converted and accepted, he was not only to seek to save those without the fold, but was to be a shepherd of the sheep.

Christ mentioned to Peter only one condition of service, “Lovest thou me?” This is the essential qualification. Though Peter might possess every other, yet without the love of Christ he could not be a faithful shepherd over the flock of God. . . . The love of Christ is not a fitful feeling, but a living principle, which is to be made manifest as an abiding power in the heart.³⁰

Power Through His Presence

“Jesus . . . spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:18–20).

The follower of Jesus will place his will on the side of his Master’s will. He will have a consciousness of the nearness of God’s presence. Doubts will vanish before the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, as the shadows fly before the morning. The true Christian identifies his interest with the interest of Christ, wears the yoke of his Master, lifts His burden, bears His reproach; but no murmur escapes his lips. No, he rejoices that he is counted worthy to suffer for His sake who suffered for him. You may expect complaint, but you will hear only the language of thanksgiving from Christ’s burden-bearers. They do not bear the load alone; for He whom their soul loveth, walks with them, and the heaviest weight is borne by His loving and mighty heart.³¹

We are to realize that the divine Presence is constantly by our side. . . . He hears every unkind word, every harsh, cutting expression. Could we see Him standing by our side, would we speak such words? Words that create heart-burnings and disunion should never escape our lips. Let us guard carefully every word and act, walking in all lowliness of mind, cherishing a spirit of meekness and kindness. . . . Every thought, every word, is recorded in the books of heaven. Guard well your thoughts and words, that in the judgment you may not be ashamed to meet your record.³²

If we live in Christ’s presence, there will be no contention.³³

[Christ] has assured His followers that to those who love and fear Him He will give power to continue the work that He began. He went about doing good, teaching the ignorant and healing the sick. His work did not stop with an exhibition of His power over disease. He made each work of healing an occasion of implanting in the heart the divine principles of His love and benevolence. Thus His followers are to work. Christ is no longer in this world in person, but He has commissioned us to carry forward the medical missionary work that He began; and in this work we are to do our very best.³⁴

No Limit to the Great Commission

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

There is no limit to the missionary work to be done in fulfilling this commission, and yet because of a lack of faith on the part of God’s people, the work has often come almost to a standstill. The lack of any record of work accomplished in some lands testifies to the fact that many of those who have claimed to believe the truth have not revealed their faith by their works. If God’s people had possessed the true missionary spirit, the lands lying in darkness would ere this have been enlightened by their self-sacrificing labors. . . .

There are many large cities still unworked. In every church in our land, believers should engage in earnest seasons of prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that they may be directed to the best places to plant the seeds of truth. . . . Angels of heaven are waiting for the cooperation of human instrumentalities in the work of bringing this precious truth before the notice of the world. Will not our churches arouse and seek the Lord in their homes, and then take up whatever line of work they see needs to be done? The Lord Jesus knows the needs of His children, and He will qualify them to do the work He appoints them to do. His professing people need to study the Word, study how they can best introduce the truth in places where it has not yet been carried.

God’s word plainly declares that He has given to every man his work. Each should study carefully and prayerfully to know what that work is. All heaven is interested in the work of saving souls, and the angels of God will go before every worker who will take up the work of giving the knowledge of His word to the world.

Christ is to be our example in all things. The record we have of His labors for men is to teach us our duty toward our fellow beings. . . . Angels of God will go with us, Christ will be our chief Teacher, and right ways will be opened before us. . . .

God calls upon His people now to consecrate all their powers to His service. He would have every household become a home church. When those who profess to believe His truth become truly converted, they will have words to speak to all; and their zeal for His cause will make them Christlike in purpose and action: true zeal is always tempered with meekness and lowliness of heart. . . . [God] bids us look to One and depend upon One who understands our needs, and is able to supply them from His abundant fullness.³⁵

Christ’s Final Message on Earth

“When [the apostles] therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight” (Acts 1:6–9).

The last message that Christ gave to His disciples before He was parted from them and taken up into heaven was a message to carry the gospel to all the world, and was accompanied by the promise of the Holy Spirit. . . .

Those who are laborers together with God are representatives of Christ to our world and will have compassion for the lost and will travail in soul for the redemption of men. Unless the church awakes and attends to her post of duty, God will charge the loss of souls to her account.³⁶

Just as long as the church are satisfied with small things, they are disqualified to receive the great things of God. But why do we not hunger and thirst after the gift of the Holy Spirit, since it is the means whereby the heart may be kept pure? The Lord designs that divine power shall cooperate with human effort. It is all-essential for the Christian to understand the meaning of the promise of the Holy Spirit just prior to the coming of our Lord Jesus the second time. Talk of it, pray for it, preach concerning it; for the Lord is more willing to give the Holy Spirit than parents are to give good gifts to their children.³⁷

The Lord has a special work to do for us individually. As we see the wickedness of the world brought to light in the courts of justice and published in the daily papers, let us draw near to God, and by living faith lay hold of His promises, that the grace of Christ may be manifest in us. We may have an influence, a powerful influence, in the world. If the convicting power of God is with us, we shall be enabled to lead souls that are in sin to conversion. . . .

We shall be tested and tried; we may be called to spend wakeful nights; but let such times be spent in earnest prayer to God, that He may give understanding, and quicken the mind to discern the privileges that are ours.³⁸

A Friend in Heaven, a Comforter Here

“While [the apostles] looked stedfastly toward heaven as [Jesus] went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:10, 11).

A cloud of holy angels had escorted Jesus into the heavens, and the disciples returned with joy. Why were they so joyful? Not because Jesus had left them, but because of the promise to come again. Just a short time before He had told them that in His Father’s house were many mansions, and that He would go to prepare a place for them, and if He went, He would come again and receive them unto Himself, that where He was, there they might be also. This promise, renewed by the angels, gave great joy to the disciples.

We expect the same. Does it fill our hearts with hope and joy? If our friends go on a long journey, their promise of return gives us great joy. But here the Friend of all friends promises to come again. Are we pleased at His coming? We are to do just as the disciples did, meet together and be of one mind.

He said if He went away He would send the Comforter, and this Comforter “shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26). And when the Holy Spirit should come upon them they would testify of Him. Human beings were to become partakers of the divine nature. But it is impossible to connect with heaven and communicate light to others while you are careless in words and actions. Truth has its work to do upon the heart and life. It sanctifies the receiver. . . .

As we look to the cross erected on Calvary, love takes possession of the soul. It brings the will of man into subjection to God. “If ye love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). . . . When Christ was upon earth, the people flocked to Him and were comforted in His presence. After He ascended, He fulfilled His promise. He sends the Comforter to be with every believing, obedient child, wherever he may be.

We ought to be the most happy people in the world, because He is all in all to us. He has told us He would be a counselor, guide, strength, support and a tender, sympathizing friend. He is everything we need, the first, last, and best in everything.³⁹

The Upper Room Experience

“[The apostles] went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren” (Acts 1:13, 14).

Would it not be well for you to seek the Lord as the disciples sought Him before the day of Pentecost? After Christ’s ascension, His disciples—men of varied talents and capabilities—assembled in an upper chamber to pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit. In this room “all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication” (Acts 1:14). They made thorough work of repentance by confessing their own sins. Upon them was laid no burden to confess one another’s sins. Settling all differences and alienations, they were of one accord, and prayed with unity of purpose for ten days.⁴⁰

These ten days were days of deep heart searching. The disciples put away all difference that had existed among them, and drew close together in Christian fellowship. As they prayed, they realized what a privilege they had had in being permitted to associate so closely with Christ. Sadness filled their hearts as they thought of how many times they had grieved His heart of love by their failure to understand the lessons that for their good He had been trying to teach them.⁴¹

Oh, how we need the divine Presence! For the baptism of the Holy Spirit every worker should be breathing out his prayers to God. Companies should be gathered together to call upon God for special help, for heavenly wisdom, that the people of God may know how to plan and devise and execute the work. Especially should men pray that the Lord will choose His agents, and baptize His missionaries with the Holy Spirit. For ten days the disciples prayed before the Pentecostal blessing came. It needed all that time to bring them to an understanding of what it meant to offer effectual prayer, drawing nearer and nearer to God, confessing their sins, humbling their hearts before God, and by faith beholding Jesus, and becoming changed into His image. When the blessing did come, it filled all the place where they were assembled; and endowed with power, they went forth to do effectual work for the Master. We should pray as earnestly for the descent of the Holy Spirit as the disciples prayed on the day of Pentecost.⁴²

July 26

Empowered for Service

“When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1–4).

There is no limit to the usefulness of the one who, putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God. What was the result of the outpouring of the Spirit upon the day of Pentecost? The glad tidings of a risen Saviour were carried to the utmost bounds of the inhabited world. The hearts of the disciples were surcharged with the benevolence so full, so deep, so far-reaching, that it impelled them to go to the ends of the earth, testifying, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14). As they proclaimed the truth as it is in Jesus, hearts yielded to the power of the message. The church beheld converts flocking to her from all directions. Backsliders were reconverted. Sinners united with Christians in seeking the Pearl of great price. Those who had been the bitterest opponents of the gospel became its champions. The prophecy was fulfilled, that the weak shall be “as David,” and the house of David “as the angel of the Lord” (Zechariah 12:8). Every Christian saw in his brother the divine similitude of love and benevolence. One interest prevailed. One subject of emulation swallowed up all others. The only ambition of the believers was to reveal the likeness of Christ’s character and to labor for the enlargement of His kingdom.

Notice that it was after the disciples had come into perfect unity, when they were no longer striving for the highest place, that the Spirit was poured out. They were of one accord. All differences had been put away. . . . The spirit of Him who died that sinners might live animated the entire congregation of believers.

Christ declared that the divine influence of the Spirit was to be with His followers to the end of time. But the promise is not appreciated as it should be. . . . My brethren and sisters, plead for the Holy Spirit. God stands back of every promise He has made.⁴³

July 27

A True Gift and Its Counterfeit

“There were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?” (Acts 2:5–8).

Diversity of languages would have been a great hindrance to the proclamation of the gospel; God therefore in a miraculous manner supplied the deficiency of the apostles. The Holy Spirit did for them that which they could not have accomplished for themselves in a lifetime. They could now proclaim the truths of the gospel abroad, speaking with accuracy the languages of those for whom they were laboring. This miraculous gift was a strong evidence to the world that their commission bore the signet of Heaven. From this time forth the language of the disciples was pure, simple, and accurate, whether they spoke in their native tongue or in a foreign language. . . .

The priests . . . declared that [the unlettered men of Galilee] were drunken from partaking largely of the new wine prepared for the feast. Some of the most ignorant of the people present seized upon this suggestion as the truth, but the more intelligent knew it to be false; and those who understood the different languages testified to the accuracy with which these languages were used.⁴⁴

Some . . . persons have exercises which they call gifts and say that the Lord has placed them in the church. They have an unmeaning gibberish which they call the unknown tongue, which is unknown not only by man but by the Lord and all heaven. Such gifts are manufactured by men and women, aided by the great deceiver. . . . Fanaticism and noise have been considered special evidences of faith. Some are not satisfied with a meeting unless they have a powerful and happy time. They work for this and get up an excitement of feeling. But the influence of such meetings is not beneficial. When the happy flight of feeling is gone, they sink lower than before the meeting because their happiness did not come from the right source. The most profitable meetings for spiritual advancement are those which are characterized with solemnity and deep searching of heart; each seeking to know himself, and earnestly, and in deep humility, seeking to learn of Christ.⁴⁵

One Name for Salvation

“There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Mohammedanism has its converts in many lands and its advocates deny the divinity of Christ. Shall this faith be propagated, and the advocates of truth fail to manifest intense zeal to overthrow the error, and teach men of the preexistence of the only Saviour of the world? Oh, how we need men who will search and believe the word of God, who will present Jesus to the world in His divine and human nature, declaring with power and in demonstration of the Spirit, that “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Oh, how we need believers who will now present Christ in life and character, who will hold Him up before the world as the brightness of the Father’s glory, proclaiming that God is love!

The dying world is before you, and you can find work to do anywhere in its borders; but what are you doing for the salvation of those for whom Christ has died? God in His providence has been preparing the way for the coming of the living agent to all lands, that men may hear the good news of salvation. All things are now ready, and the angels wait for the cooperation of those who believe the truth for these last days, that they may go forth and work with the followers of Christ in drawing souls to God.

All heaven is interested in man’s salvation, and the work may be done speedily, the kingdom of God may come, and the earth be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea. The great desire of the heavenly intelligences is that the character of God, so long misrepresented and misinterpreted, may be rightly represented before those who have been deceived by the devices of the enemy. Satan has imputed to God his own attributes, and is it not now time that the name of Christ should be great among the heathen? . . .

When souls are first converted to the truth, they should be instructed as to what Christ expects from them in living, whole-hearted service—that He invites them to be laborers in His moral vineyard. However trembling may be their efforts, however imperfect their work, they should be patiently and lovingly borne with; for if they are meek and lowly in heart, the Lord can turn what appears to be defeat, into signal victory.⁴⁶

What Have We Experienced of Christ?

“[The Jewish high priest and his colleagues] commanded [the apostles] not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:18–20).

The whole world is opening to the gospel. Ethiopia is stretching out her hands unto God. From Japan and China and India, from the still-darkened lands of our own continent, from every quarter of this world of ours, comes the cry of sin-stricken hearts for a knowledge of the God of love. Millions upon millions have never so much as heard of God or of His love revealed in Christ. It is their right to receive this knowledge. They have an equal claim with us in the Saviour’s mercy. And it rests with us who have received the knowledge, with our children to whom we may impart it, to answer their cry. To every household and every school, to every parent, teacher, and child upon whom has shone the light of the gospel, comes at this crisis the question put to Esther the queen at that momentous crisis in Israel’s history, “Who knoweth whether *thou* art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14).

Those who think of the result of hastening or hindering the gospel think of it in relation to themselves and to the world. Few think of its relation to God. Few give thought to the suffering that sin has caused our Creator. All heaven suffered in Christ’s agony; but that suffering did not begin or end with His manifestation in humanity. The cross is a revelation to our dull senses of the pain that, from its very inception, sin has brought to the heart of God.⁴⁷

Everyone may be able, through his own experience, to “set his seal to this, that God is true” (John 3:33, A.R.V). He can bear witness to that which he himself has seen and heard and felt of the power of Christ. He can testify:

“I needed help, and I found it in Jesus. Every want was supplied, the hunger of my soul was satisfied; the Bible is to me the revelation of Christ. I believe in Jesus because He is to me a divine Saviour. I believe the Bible because I have found it to be the voice of God to my soul.”⁴⁸

If God’s witnesses . . . should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. God will be glorified.⁴⁹

Great Grace Upon the Believers

“The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:32, 33).

Unselfish liberality threw the early church into a transport of joy; for the believers knew that their efforts were helping to send the gospel message to those in darkness. Their benevolence testified that they had not received the grace of God in vain. What could produce such liberality but the sanctification of the Spirit? In the eyes of believers and unbelievers it was a miracle of grace.⁵⁰

What the Lord did for His people in that time it is just as essential, and more so, that He do for His people today. All that the apostles did, every church member today is to do. And we are to work with as much more fervor, to be accompanied by the Holy Spirit in as much greater measure, as the increase of wickedness demands a more decided call to repentance.

Everyone on whom is shining the light of present truth is to be stirred with compassion for those who are in darkness. From all believers light is to be reflected in clear, distinct rays. A work similar to that which the Lord did through His delegated messengers after the day of Pentecost He is waiting to do today. At this time, when the end of all things is at hand, should not the zeal of the church exceed even that of the early church? Zeal for the glory of God moved the disciples to bear witness to the truth with mighty power. Should not this zeal fire our hearts with a longing to tell the story of redeeming love, of Christ and Him crucified? Should not the power of God be even more mightily revealed today than in the time of the apostles?⁵¹

Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, thousands were converted in a day. The word of the Spirit, newly edged with power, and bathed in the lightnings of heaven, cut its way through unbelief. The hearts of the disciples were surcharged with a benevolence so full, so deep, so far-reaching that it impelled them to go to the ends of the earth, testifying [of Christ]. . . . They were filled with an intense longing to add to the church such as should be saved. They called on believers to arouse and do their part, that all nations might hear the truth and the earth be filled with the glory of the Lord.⁵²

God Regards Only Genuine Liberality

“As many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles’ feet” (Acts 4:34–37).

This liberality on the part of the believers was the result of the outpouring of the Spirit. The converts to the gospel were made “of one heart and of one soul” (Acts 4:32). One common interest controlled them—the success of the mission entrusted to them; covetousness had no place in their lives. Their love for their brethren and the cause they had espoused was far greater than their love of money and possessions, and their works testified that they accounted the souls of men of far greater value than earthly wealth.

Thus it will ever be when the Spirit of God takes possession of the life. Those whose hearts are filled with the love of Christ will follow the example of Him who for our sake became poor, that through His poverty we might be made rich. Money, time, influence—all the gifts they have received from God’s hand—they will value only as a means of advancing the work of the gospel. Thus it was in the early church; and when in the church of today it is seen that by the power of the Spirit the members have taken their affections from the things of the world, and that they are willing to make sacrifices in order that their fellowmen may hear the gospel, the truths proclaimed will have a powerful influence upon the hearers. . . . Deep conviction had rested upon all present, and under the direct influence of the Spirit of God, Ananias and Sapphira had made a pledge to give to the Lord the proceeds from the sale of certain lands. . . .

They deliberately decided to sell their property and pretend to give all the proceeds into the general fund, but really to keep a large share for themselves. Thus they would secure their living, which they intended to estimate as much higher than it really was, from the common store, while at the same time they would gain the high esteem of their brethren.

But God hates hypocrisy and falsehood. Ananias and Sapphira practiced fraud in their dealing with God; they lied to the Holy Spirit; and their sin was visited with swift and terrible judgment.⁵³

A Monarch Whose Empire Is the Universe

“The high priest asked [the apostles], saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:27–29).

Because the truth contradicts the doctrines of men and condemns their unrighteous practices, it excites the most bitter opposition. The majority, even of those who bear Christ’s name, are unwilling to follow His example of self-denial and cross-bearing; and as they become more and more alienated from Him, they cannot distinguish between the heavenly and the earthly; their peace is disturbed by the fact that there is a people that serve God and renounce every sinful practice.¹

The Lord requires us to obey the voice of duty, when there are other voices all around us urging us to pursue an opposite course. It requires earnest attention from us to distinguish the voice which speaks from God. We must resist and conquer inclination, and obey the voice of conscience without parleying or compromise, lest its promptings cease and will and impulse control. The word of the Lord comes to us all who have not resisted His Spirit by determining not to hear and obey. This voice is heard in warnings, in counsels, in reproof. It is the Lord’s message of light to His people. If we wait for louder calls or better opportunities, the light may be withdrawn, and we left in darkness.

By once neglecting to comply with the call of God’s Spirit and His word, when obedience involves a cross, many have lost much—how much they will never know till the books are opened at the final day. The pleadings of the Spirit, neglected today because pleasure or inclination leads in an opposite direction, may be powerless to convince, or even impress, tomorrow. To improve the opportunities of the present, with prompt and willing hearts, is the only way to grow in grace and the knowledge of the truth. We should ever cherish a sense that, individually, we are standing before the Lord of hosts; no word, no act, no thought, even, should be indulged, to offend the eye of the Eternal One. We shall then have no fear of man or of earthly power, because a Monarch, whose empire is the universe, who holds in His hands our individual destinies for time and eternity, is taking cognizance of all our work.²

Holy Boldness

“Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space; and said unto them, . . . Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:34, 35, 38–42).

The learning and high position of this eminent rabbi [Gamaliel] gave weight to his words. The priests could not deny the reasonableness of his views. They very reluctantly released their prisoners, after beating them with rods, and charging them again and again to preach no more in the name of Jesus or their lives would pay the penalty of their boldness. But punishments and threats were alike unheeded.³

Jesus is as willing to impart courage and grace to His followers today as He was to the disciples of the early church. None should rashly invite an opportunity to battle with the principalities and powers of darkness. When God bids them engage in the conflict it will be time enough; He will then give the weak and hesitating boldness and utterance beyond their hope or expectation.

The same scorn and hatred that was manifested against Christ may be seen now to exist against those whom He has evidently chosen to be His coworkers. Those whose spirits rise up against the doctrines of truth make hard work for the servants of Christ. But God will make their wrath to praise Him; they accomplish His purpose by stirring up minds to investigate the truth. God may allow men to follow their own wicked inclinations for a time, in opposing Him; but when He sees it is for His glory, and the good of His people, He will arrest the scorers, expose their presumptive course, and give triumph to His truth.⁴

We talk without reserve of our temporal affairs, and why should we be so reluctant to speak of our eternal interests? Would that all hearts might be inspired with holy boldness. Would that we all might lift up Jesus before the people with courage.⁵

The First Christian Martyr

“Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. Then there arose certain of the synagogue, . . . disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council” (Acts 6:8–12).

Stephen . . . saw the resistance that met his words, and knew that he was giving his last testimony. When he connected Christ with the prophecies and spoke as he did of the Temple, the priest, pretending to be horror-stricken, rent his robe. To Stephen this act was a signal that his voice would soon be silenced forever. Although in the midst of his sermon, he abruptly concluded it. Suddenly breaking away from the train of history that he was following, he turned upon his infuriated judges, and said: “Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it” (Acts 7:51–53).

At this, the priests and rulers were beside themselves with anger. More like wild beasts of prey than human beings, they rushed upon Stephen, gnashing their teeth. The prisoner read his fate in the cruel faces about him, but he did not waver. The fear of death was gone. The enraged priests and the excited mob had no terror for him. The scene before him faded from his vision. To him the gates of heaven were ajar, and looking in, he saw the glory of the courts of God, and Christ, as if just risen from His throne, standing ready to sustain His servant. . . .

The martyrdom of Stephen made a deep impression upon all who witnessed it. It was a sore trial to the church, but resulted in the conversion of Saul, who could not efface from his memory the faith, constancy, and glorification of the martyr. The signet of God upon Stephen’s face, and his words, which reached the very souls of those who heard them, remained in the minds of the beholders, and testified to the truth of that which he had proclaimed.⁶

The Conversion of Saul

“As [Saul] journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:3–6).

The marvelous light that illuminated the darkness of Saul was the work of the Lord; but there was also a work that was to be done for him by the disciples of Christ. . . . Jesus sends the inquiring Jew to His church, to obtain from them a knowledge of his duty. Christ performed the work of revelation and conviction; and now the penitent was in a condition to learn of those whom God had ordained to teach His truth. Thus Jesus gave sanction to the authority of His organized church, and placed Saul in connection with His representatives on earth. The light of heavenly illumination deprived Saul of sight; but Jesus, the great Healer, did not at once restore it. All blessings flow from Christ, but He had now established a church as His representative on earth, and to it belonged the work of directing the repentant sinner in the way of life. The very men whom Saul had purposed to destroy were to be his instructors in the religion he had despised and persecuted.

The faith of Saul was severely tested during the three days of fasting and prayer at the house of Judas, in Damascus. He was totally blind, and in utter darkness of mind as to what was required of him. He had been directed to go to Damascus, where it would be told him what he was to do. In his uncertainty and distress he cried earnestly to God. . . .

Christ here gives an example of His manner of working for the salvation of men. He might have done all this work directly for Saul; but this was not in accordance with His plan. His blessings were to come through the agencies which He had ordained. Saul had something to do in confession to those whose destruction he had meditated; and God had a responsible work for the men to do whom He had authorized to act in His stead.

Saul becomes a learner of the disciples. In the light of the law he sees himself a sinner. He sees that Jesus, whom in his ignorance he had considered an impostor, is the author and foundation of the religion of God’s people.⁷

Three Years in Solitary Prayer

“[Saul, later known as Paul, declared,] When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother” (Galatians 1:15–19).

Paul demonstrated to all who heard him that his change of faith was not from impulse nor fanaticism, but was brought about by overwhelming evidence. As he labored in the synagogues, his faith grew stronger; his zeal in maintaining that Jesus was the Son of God increased, in the face of the fierce opposition of the Jews. He could not remain long in Damascus, for after the Jews had recovered from their surprise at his wonderful conversion and subsequent labors, they turned resolutely from the overwhelming evidence thus brought to bear in favor of the doctrine of Christ. Their astonishment at the conversion of Paul was changed into an intense hatred of him. . . .

Paul’s life was in peril, and he received a commission from God to leave Damascus for a time. He went into Arabia; and there, in comparative solitude, he had ample opportunity for communion with God, and for contemplation. He wished to be alone with God, to search his own heart, to deepen his repentance, and to prepare himself by prayer and study to engage in a work which appeared to him too great and too important for him to undertake. He was an apostle, not chosen of men, but chosen of God. . . .

While in Arabia he did not communicate with the apostles; he sought God earnestly with all his heart, determining not to rest till he knew for a certainty that his repentance was accepted, and his great sin pardoned. He would not give up the conflict until he had the assurance that Jesus would be with him in his coming ministry. He was ever to carry about with him in the body the marks of Christ’s glory, in his eyes, which had been blinded by the heavenly light, and he desired also to bear with him constantly the assurance of Christ’s sustaining grace. Paul came in close connection with Heaven, and Jesus communed with him.⁸

Prompt to Action

“The angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority . . . sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. . . . Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus” (Acts 8:26–29, 35).

The eunuch . . . prayed fervently for light and knowledge, and God heard his prayer, and sent His angel to Philip, bidding him go to Gaza for the purpose of preaching Christ to a single soul that hungered and thirsted for the truth.

The eunuch had heard at Jerusalem various conflicting reports in regard to Jesus of Nazareth. His mind was troubled upon the subject. He had a copy of the Scriptures with him, and was diligently studying the prophecies in reference to the Messiah, when Philip met him. They were strangers; but the mind of Philip was impressed that this was the man who needed his help. Philip, walking by the side of the chariot, inquired of the eunuch if he understood the prophecies he was reading. He answered that he needed instruction, and invited Philip to take a seat beside him.

The scripture he was studying was Isaiah 53:7. Philip understood the desire of his heart, and preached unto him Jesus Christ revealed in prophecy, and his mission to the earth to save sinners. He showed him the steps necessary to take in conversion—repentance toward God because of transgression of the Father’s law, faith in Christ as the Saviour of men, and baptism in the likeness of His death. The eunuch’s heart was all ready to receive the light and truth, and he accepted with gladness the gospel preached by Philip. . . .

In this instance we have an illustration of the care of God for His children. He called Philip from his successful ministry in Samaria, to cross the desert and go to Gaza to labor for a single inquiring soul. The promptness with which the eunuch accepted the gospel and acted upon its belief should be a lesson to us. God designs that we should be prompt in accepting and confessing Christ, prompt in obeying Him, and in answering the call of duty. The eunuch was a man of good repute, and occupied a high and responsible position. Through his conversion the gospel was carried to Ethiopia, and many there accepted Christ.⁹

A Blessed Message

“When the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words [of exhortation] might be preached to them the next sabbath. Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God” (Acts 13:42–44).

Let two or more start out together in evangelistic work. They may not receive any particular encouragement from those at the head of the work that they will be given financial support; nevertheless let them go forward, praying, singing, teaching, living the truth. They may take up the work of canvassing, and in this way introduce the truth into many families. As they move forward in their work they gain a blessed experience. They are humbled by a sense of their helplessness, but the Lord goes before them, and among the wealthy and the poor they find favor and help. Even the poverty of these devoted missionaries is a means of finding access to the people. As they pass on their way they are helped in many ways by those to whom they bring spiritual food. They bear the message God gives them, and their efforts are crowned with success. Many will be brought to a knowledge of the truth who, but for these humble teachers, would never have been won to Christ. . . .

Our people have received great light, yet much of the ministerial force has been spent on the churches, teaching those who should be teachers; enlightening those who should be “the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14); watering those from whom should flow rivers of living water; enriching those who might be mines of precious truth; repeating the gospel invitation to those who . . . should be giving the message of heaven to those who have not heard; feeding those who should be in the highways and byways giving the call: “Come; for all things are now ready” (Luke 14:17).

Those for whom the fetters of sin have been broken, who have sought the Lord with brokenness of heart and have obtained answer to their yearning request for righteousness, are never cold and spiritless. Their hearts are filled with unselfish love for sinners. They put away from them all worldly ambition, all self-seeking. Contact with the deep things of God makes them more and more like their Saviour. They exult in His triumphs; they are filled with His joy.¹⁰

An Expansive, Challenging Work

“There came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:19–22).

The Lord says, “Enlarge your borders.” The power of the gospel is expansive. Men are to be devoted soul-savers, and should have something to show for their labors. If the workers fail to produce fruit, something may be wrong with the tree. The cost of working the vineyard must be made as little as possible, because there is a large territory to be worked. As men are employed in different places they should always be looked after to see what is the result of their labor. If the tree bears no fruit, it may be because it needs to be transplanted. If after proper labor it still has no fruit to bear, let it be removed; let the laborer be dismissed as an unprofitable servant in the work of soul saving, and encouraged to go into some business, by which he can earn means to act his part in sustaining laborers which can work successfully—persons with tact and wisdom, who, in the fear of God, will win souls to Christ. . . .

God has His appointed agencies for the enlargement of our circle of influence, and for the increasing of the number of workers who will be missionaries indeed—laborers for the saving of the souls of their fellowmen. . . .

How did Paul and Barnabas labor? They visited every place where they could get an entrance, and they had success in the saving of souls to Jesus Christ. After a large territory was worked, they visited the churches which they had planted, and then returned to Antioch, the place from which they had been recommended by prayer and council for the work.

In the same way the work is to be carried now. Let those preparing to be laborers study Acts 14. Let them become familiar with this whole chapter, for those who will become laborers together with God in these last days will realize similar experiences as those recorded in verse nineteen.¹¹

No Blood to Be Eaten

“It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well” (Acts 15:28, 29).

The Israelites were permitted the use of animal food, but under careful restrictions which tended to lessen the evil results. The use of swine’s flesh was prohibited, as also of other animals and of birds and fish whose flesh was pronounced unclean. Of the meats permitted, the eating of the fat and the blood was strictly forbidden.

Only such animals could be used for food as were in good condition. No creature that was torn, that had died of itself, or from which the blood had not been carefully drained, could be used as food.

By departing from the plan divinely appointed for their diet, the Israelites suffered great loss. They desired a flesh diet, and they reaped its results. They did not reach God’s ideal of character or fulfill His purpose. The Lord “gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul” (Psalm 106:15). They valued the earthly above the spiritual, and the sacred preeminence which was His purpose for them they did not attain.¹²

Feeding on flesh the juices and fluids of what we eat passes into the circulation of our blood, and as we are composed of what we eat, we become animalized. Thus a feverish condition is created because the animals are diseased and by partaking of their flesh we plant the seeds of disease in our own tissue and blood.¹³

The process of fitting animals for market produces in them disease; and fitted in as healthful manner as they can be, they become heated and diseased by driving before they reach the market. The fluids and flesh of these diseased animals are received directly into the blood, and pass into the circulation of the human body, becoming fluids and flesh of the same. Thus humors are introduced into the system. And if the person already has impure blood, it is greatly aggravated by the eating of the flesh of these animals. The liability to take disease is increased tenfold by meat eating. The intellectual, the moral, and the physical powers are depreciated by the habitual use of flesh meats. Meat eating deranges the system, beclouds the intellect, and blunts the moral sensibilities. We say to you, dear brother and sister, your safest course is to let meat alone.¹⁴

The Macedonian Cries of Today

“A vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them” (Acts 16:9, 10).

It is heart missionaries that are needed. Spasmodic efforts will do little good. We must arrest the attention. We must be deeply in earnest.

By aggressive warfare, in the midst of opposition, peril, loss, and human suffering, the work of soulsaving is to be carried forward. At a certain battle, when one of the regiments of the attacking force was being beaten back by the hordes of the enemy, the ensign in front stood his ground as the troops retreated. The captain shouted to him to bring back the colors, but the reply of the ensign was: “Bring the men up to the colors!” This is the work that devolves upon every faithful standard-bearer—to bring the men up to the colors. The Lord calls for wholeheartedness. We all know that the sin of many professing Christians is that they lack the courage and energy to bring themselves and those connected with them up to the standard.

From all countries the Macedonian cry is sounding: “Come over, . . . and help us.” God has opened fields before us, and if human agencies would but cooperate with divine agencies, many, many souls would be won to the truth. But the Lord’s professing people have been sleeping over their allotted work, and in many places it remains comparatively untouched. God has sent message after message to arouse our people to do something, and to do it now. But to the call, “Whom shall I send?” there have been few to respond, “Here am I; send me” (Isaiah 6:8).

When the reproach of indolence and slothfulness shall have been wiped away from the church, the Spirit of the Lord will be graciously manifested. Divine power will be revealed. The church will see the providential working of the Lord of hosts. The light of truth will shine forth in clear, strong rays, and, as in the time of the apostles, many souls will turn from error to truth. . . .

Heavenly angels have long been waiting for human agents—the members of the church—to cooperate with them in the great work to be done. They are waiting for you.¹⁵

August 11

A Time of Tentmaking

“Paul . . . found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers” (Acts 18:2, 3).

During the long period of his ministry in Ephesus, where for three years he carried forward an aggressive evangelistic effort throughout that region, Paul again worked at his trade. In Ephesus, as in Corinth, the apostle was cheered by the presence of Aquila and Priscilla, who had accompanied him on his return to Asia at the close of his second missionary journey.

There were some who objected to Paul's toiling with his hands, declaring that it was inconsistent with the work of a gospel minister. Why should Paul, a minister of the highest rank, thus connect mechanical work with the preaching of the word? Was not the laborer worthy of his hire? Why should he spend in making tents time that to all appearance could be put to better account?

But Paul did not regard as lost the time thus spent. As he worked with Aquila, he kept in touch with the Great Teacher, losing no opportunity of witnessing for the Saviour, and of helping those who needed help. . . . Paul sometimes worked night and day, not only for his own support, but that he might assist his fellow laborers. He shared his earnings with Luke, and he helped Timothy. He even suffered hunger at times, that he might relieve the necessities of others. His was an unselfish life. . . .

Paul knew that those who neglect physical work soon become enfeebled. He desired to teach young ministers that by working with their hands, by bringing into exercise their muscles and sinews, they would become strong to endure the toils and privations that awaited them in the gospel field. . . .

Not all who feel that they have been called to preach should be encouraged to throw themselves and their families at once upon the church for continuous financial support. There is danger that some of limited experience may be spoiled by flattery, and by unwise encouragement to expect full support independent of any serious effort on their part. The means dedicated to the extension of the work of God should not be consumed by men who desire to preach only that they may receive support and thus gratify a selfish ambition for an easy life.¹⁶

August 12

Giving Is Better Than Receiving

“[Paul said,] Now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:32–35).

There is a time coming when commandment keepers can neither buy nor sell. Make haste to dig out your buried talents. If God has entrusted you with money, show yourselves faithful to your trust; unwrap your napkin, and send your talents to the exchangers, that when Christ shall come, He may receive His own with interest. In the last extremity, before this work shall close, thousands will be cheerfully laid upon the altar. Men and women will feel it a blessed privilege to share in the work of preparing souls to stand in the great day of God, and they will give hundreds as readily as dollars are given now. If the love of Christ were burning in the hearts of His professed people, we would see the same spirit manifested today. Did they but realize how near is the end of all work for the salvation of souls, they would sacrifice their possessions as freely as did the members of the early church. They would work for the advancement of God's cause as earnestly as worldly men labor to acquire riches. Tact and skill would be exercised, and earnest and unselfish labor put forth to acquire means, not to hoard, but to pour into the treasury of the Lord.

What if some become poor in investing their means in the work? Christ for your sakes became poor; but you are securing for yourselves eternal riches, a treasure in heaven that faileth not. Your means is far safer there than if deposited in the bank, or invested in houses and lands. It is laid up in bags that wax not old. No thief can approach it, no fire consume it.

Some have selfishly retained their means during their life-time, trusting to make up for their neglect by remembering the cause in their wills; but not one-half the means thus bestowed in legacies ever comes to the objects specified. . . . Do not leave your stewardship to another. . . . Those who believe this solemn truth should possess such a spirit of self-sacrifice as will rebuke the worldly ambition of the money worshiper.¹⁷

A Summary of Paul's Ministry

"[Paul summarized:] Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:24–28).

Those who are engaged in the work of saving souls are coworkers with Christ. His was a work of disinterested benevolence, of constant self-sacrifice. Those who have had so great a sacrifice made for them that they might become partakers of His heavenly grace should in their turn sacrifice and deny self to aid in the great work of bringing others to the knowledge of the truth. Self-interest should be laid aside; selfish desires and self-comfort should not now stand in the way of God's work in saving souls. God's ministers are laboring in Christ's stead; they are His ambassadors. They are not to study their ease, comfort, pleasure, desires, or convenience. They must suffer for Christ, be crucified with Him, and rejoice that they can in every sense of the word know the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ.¹⁸

The cause of God is in great need of earnest men, men who abound in zeal, hope, faith, and courage. . . . We have too many sensitive ministers who are feeble in experience, deficient in the Christian graces, lacking in consecration, and are easily discouraged; who are earnest to gratify their own wills and are persevering in their efforts to accomplish their own selfish purposes. Such men will not fill the demands for this time. We need men in these last days who are ever awake. Minutemen are wanted who are sincere in their love for the truth and willing to labor at a sacrifice if they can advance the cause of God and save precious souls. Men are wanted in this work who will not murmur or complain at hardships or trials, knowing that this is a part of the legacy that Jesus has left them. They should be willing to go without the camp and suffer reproach and bear burdens as good soldiers of Christ. They will bear the cross of Christ without complaint, without murmuring or fretfulness, and will be patient in tribulation.¹⁹

A Short Rest Before Imprisonment

"[Paul's company] came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him" (Acts 21:8).

[At Caesarea] Paul tarried. . . . These few peaceful, happy days were the last days of perfect freedom which he was for a long time to enjoy. Before he should enter upon the stormy scenes that awaited him at Jerusalem, the Lord graciously refreshed his spirit with this season of rest and happy communion.

Philip the evangelist was bound to Paul by ties of the deepest sympathy. A man of clear discernment and sterling integrity, Philip had been the first to break away from the bondage of Jewish prejudice, and thus had helped prepare the way for the apostle's work. It was Philip who preached the gospel to the Samaritans; it was Philip who had the courage to baptize the Ethiopian eunuch. For a time the history of these two workers had been closely intertwined. It was the violent persecution of Saul the Pharisee that had scattered the church at Jerusalem, and destroyed the effectiveness of the organization of the seven deacons. The flight from Jerusalem had led Philip to change his manner of labor, and resulted in his pursuing the same calling to which Paul gave his life. Precious hours were these that Paul and Philip spent in each other's society; thrilling were the memories that they recalled of the days when the light which had shone upon the face of Stephen upturned to Heaven as he suffered martyrdom, flashed in its glory upon Saul the persecutor, bringing him, a helpless suppliant, to the feet of Jesus.

Soon after the apostle's arrival at Caesarea, the prophet Agabus came down from Judea. He had been warned by the Holy Spirit, of the fate which awaited Paul, and in the symbolic manner of the ancient prophets he loosened the apostle's girdle, and with it bound his own hands and feet, saying, "So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles" (Acts 21:11). The companions of Paul had been aware that his visit to Jerusalem would be attended with great peril; but they had not foreseen the full extent of the danger. Now apprehension had become certainty; and to the perils to be encountered from the Jews were added the horrors of a Roman imprisonment. They earnestly entreated Paul to stay where he was, and permit them to go to Jerusalem to deliver the contributions from the Gentile churches.²⁰

Following God's Voice

"Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done" (Acts 21:13, 14).

The apostle was deeply moved by the entreaties of his beloved brethren. To human judgment he had sufficient reason to relinquish his plan as unwise. But he felt that he was moving in obedience to the will of God, and he could not be deterred by the voice of friends, or even the warning of the prophet. He would not swerve from the path of duty to the right hand nor to the left. He must follow Christ, if need be, to prison and to death. His tears fell not for himself, but in sympathy with his brethren, upon whom his determination had brought so great sorrow. . . .

Paul and his company set out for Jerusalem, their hearts deeply shadowed by the presentiment of coming evil. . . . Never had he trod the streets of Jerusalem with so sad a heart as now. He knew that he would find few friends and many enemies. In the crowds around him were thousands whom the very mention of his name would excite to madness. He was in the city which had been the murderer of the prophets, which had rejected and slain the Son of God, and over which now hung the threatenings of divine wrath. Remembering how bitter had been his own prejudice against the followers of Christ, he felt the deepest pity for his deluded countrymen. And yet how little hope could he feel that he would be able to benefit them! The same blind wrath which had once burned in his own heart was now with untold power kindling the hearts of a whole nation against him.

And he could not count upon the sympathy and support of even his own brethren in the faith. The unconverted Jews who had so closely followed upon his track had not been slow to circulate the most unfavorable reports at Jerusalem, both personally and by letter, concerning him and his work, and some, even of the apostles and elders, had received these reports as truth, making no attempt to contradict them, and manifesting no desire to harmonize with him. Yet in the midst of discouragements, the apostle was not in despair. He trusted that the Voice which had spoken to his own heart would yet speak to the hearts of his countrymen, and that the Master whom his fellow disciples loved and served would yet unite their hearts with his in the one work of the gospel.²¹

A Perilous Concession

"[The brethren at Jerusalem suggested to Paul,] We have four men which have a vow on them; them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law" (Acts 21:23, 24).

The Spirit of God did not prompt this advice [of James and the elders of the church]. It was the fruit of cowardice. . . . The disciples themselves yet cherished a regard for the ceremonial law, and were too willing to make concessions, hoping by so doing to gain the confidence of their countrymen, remove their prejudice, and win them to faith in Christ as the world's Redeemer. Paul's great object in visiting Jerusalem was to conciliate the church of Palestine. So long as they continued to cherish prejudice against him, they were constantly working to counteract his influence. He felt that if he could by any lawful concession on his part win them to the truth, he would remove a very great obstacle to the success of the gospel in other places. But he was not authorized of God to concede so much as they had asked. This concession was not in harmony with his teachings, nor with the firm integrity of his character. . . .

When we consider Paul's great desire to be in harmony with his brethren, his tenderness of spirit toward the weak in faith, his reverence for the apostles who had been with Christ, and for James, the brother of the Lord, and his purpose to become all things to all men as far as he could do this and not sacrifice principle—when we consider all this, it is less surprising that he was constrained to deviate from his firm, decided course of action. But instead of accomplishing the desired object, these efforts for conciliation only precipitated the crisis, . . . deprived the church of one of its strongest pillars, and brought sorrow to Christian hearts in every land. . . .

It was considered by the Jews a pious act for a wealthy man to defray the necessary expenses and thus assist his poorer brethren to complete their vow. This, Paul had consented to do for the four Christian Nazarites. The apostle himself was poor, working with his own hands for his daily bread, yet he willingly incurred this expense, and accompanied the Nazarites. . . . Those who had counseled Paul to perform this act of concession had not fully considered the great peril to which he would be exposed.²²

Paul Before the Council

“The Jews which were of Asia, when they saw [Paul] in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut. And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar” (Acts 21:27–31).

The apostle now stood in the presence of that council of which he himself had been a member—that council by which Stephen had been condemned. The memory of that scene, and of his own efforts to secure the condemnation of the servant of Christ, came vividly before his mind. As he looked upon those who were to be his judges, he recognized many who had been his associates in the school of Gamaliel, and who had also united with him in persecuting the disciples of Jesus. They were now as eager to put Paul to death as they had been to destroy Stephen.

The apostle’s bearing was calm and firm. The peace of Christ, ruling in his heart, was expressed upon his countenance. But his look of conscious innocence offended his accusers, and when he fearlessly addressed them, “Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day” (Acts 23:1), their hatred was kindled afresh, and the high priest ordered him to be smitten upon the mouth. At this inhuman command, Paul exclaimed, “God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?” (Acts 23:3). These words were not an outburst of passion. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, Paul uttered a prophetic denunciation similar to that which Christ had uttered in rebuking the hypocrisy of the Jews. The judgment pronounced by the apostle was terribly fulfilled when the iniquitous and hypocritical high priest was murdered by assassins in the Jewish war. But the bystanders regarded the words of Paul as profane, and exclaimed with horror, “Revilest thou God’s high priest?” Paul answered, with his usual courtesy, “I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people” (Acts 23:5).²³

A Comforter in Prison

“The chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle. And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome” (Acts 23:10, 11).

Evening found Paul still in the Roman barrack, the rude soldiery his sole companions, their brutal jests and revolting blasphemy the only sounds that fell upon his ear. He was not now nerved up by the presence of his enemies, nor was he supported by the sympathy of his friends. The future seemed enveloped in darkness. He feared that his course might not have been pleasing to God. Could it be that he had made a mistake after all in this visit to Jerusalem? Had his great desire to be in union with his brethren led to this disastrous result? . . .

The cause of his God had been reproached, his national religion brought into disrepute. And now he was in prison, and his enemies, in their desperate malice, would resort to any means to put him to death. Could it be that his work for the churches was closed, and that ravening wolves were to enter in, not sparing the flock? The cause of Christ was near his heart, and with deep anxiety he contemplated the perils of the scattered churches, exposed to the persecutions of just such men as he had encountered in the Sanhedrin council. In distress and discouragement he wept and prayed. The Lord was not unmindful of His servant. He had guarded him from the murderous throng in the Temple courts, He had been with him before the Sanhedrim council, He was with him in the fortress, and was pleased to reveal Himself to His faithful witness. As on trying occasions several times before, Paul was now comforted and encouraged by a vision in the night season. Such a visitation had been granted him . . . when he was contemplating leaving the city for a more safe and prosperous field. And now the Lord stood by him and said, “Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome” (Acts 23:4). Paul had long looked forward to a visit to Rome; he greatly desired to witness for Christ there, but had felt that his purposes were frustrated by the enmity of the Jews. He little thought even now, that it would be as a prisoner of the Lord that he would go to Rome.²⁴

God Interposes for Paul

“And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy” (Acts 23:12, 13).

Here was such a fast as the Lord through Isaiah had condemned many years before—a fast “for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness” (Isaiah 58:4). The Jews thus sought to give to their diabolical plan the sanction of religion. Having fortified themselves by their dreadful oath, they came to the chief priests and members of the Sanhedrin, and made known their purpose. It was proposed to request that Paul be again brought before the court as if for a further investigation of his case, and that the assassins would lie in wait and murder him while on his way from the fortress. Such was the horrible crime masked under a show of religious zeal. Instead of rebuking the Satanic scheme, the priests and rulers eagerly acceded to it. Paul had spoken the truth when he compared Ananias to a whited sepulcher.

The next day the plot would have been carried into effect, had not God by His providence interposed to save the life of His servant. When Peter had been made a prisoner and condemned to death, the brethren had offered earnest prayer to God day and night for his deliverance. But no such interest was manifested in behalf of him who was looked upon as an apostate from Moses, a teacher of dangerous doctrines. It was not to the elders whose counsel had brought him into this dangerous position, but to the watchful sympathy of a relative, that Paul owed his escape from a violent death.

A nephew of the apostle, to whom he was strongly attached, heard of the murderous conspiracy, and without delay reported the matter to his uncle. Paul immediately called for one of the centurions, and requested him to take the young man to the commandant, saying that he had important information to give him. The youth was accordingly brought in before Claudius Lysias, who received him kindly. . . . [In response to the youth the commandant soon] “called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; and provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor” (Acts 23:23, 24). Lysias gladly improved this opportunity to get Paul off his hands.²⁵

Asylum for Awhile

“When Felix heard these things [the initial case of the Jews vs. Paul], having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter. And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him” (Acts 24:22, 23).

The case of Paul was not the first in which a servant of God had found among the heathen an asylum from the malice of the professed people of Jehovah. . . . It is impossible for the worldly and pleasure-loving to rightly value the messages of warning and reproof which God sends to correct the errors of His people. They cannot distinguish between the earnestness and zeal of the faithful servant, and the trifling, superficial spirit of him who is unfaithful. One declares that the sword is coming; the other puts far off the evil day. One faithfully reproves sin; the other excuses and palliates it. As the professed people of God depart from Him and lose the simplicity of the faith, the words of His messengers seem to them unnecessarily harsh and severe. They cherish prejudice and unbelief, and finally place themselves fully on Satan’s side. His suggestions seem pleasant and palatable; they are controlled, in spirit and opinion, by the arch-deceiver, and having permitted him to direct their thoughts, they soon permit him to direct their actions.

Christ presented before the assembly at Nazareth a fearful truth when He declared that with backsliding Israel there was no safety for the faithful messenger of God. They would not know his worth, or appreciate his labors. . . .

The Saviour’s words of reproof to the men of Nazareth apply in the case of Paul, not only to the unbelieving Jews, but to his own brethren in the faith. Had the leaders in the church fully surrendered their feelings of bitterness toward the apostle, and accepted him as one specially called of God to bear the gospel to the Gentiles, the Lord would have spared him to them to still labor for the salvation of souls. He who sees the end from the beginning, and who understands the hearts of all, saw what would be the result of the envy and jealousy cherished toward Paul. God had not in His providence ordained that Paul’s labors should so soon end; but He did not work a miracle to counteract the train of circumstances to which their own course gave rise.²⁶

Paul Takes the Chance to Witness

“When Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee” (Acts 24:25, 26).

Paul, as a prisoner of the Lord, had an opportunity to present the truths of the gospel to some souls whom he could not otherwise have approached. A cruel and licentious Roman governor and a profligate Jewish princess were to be his sole audience. They were now waiting to listen to truths which they had never listened to before, which they might never hear again, and which, if rejected, would prove a swift witness against them in the day of God.

Paul considered this God-given opportunity, and he improved it faithfully. He knew that the man and woman before him had the power to put him to death, or to preserve his life; yet he did not address them with praise or flattery. . . .

The apostle felt that whoever might listen to his words, the gospel had a claim upon them. . . . He knew that he must meet every hearer before the tribunal of Heaven, and must there render an account, not only for all that he had said and done, but for the motive and spirit of his words and deeds.

So violent and cruel had been the course of Felix, that few had ever before dared even to intimate to him that his character and conduct were not faultless. But Paul had no such fears. With perfect respect for the position of his hearers, he plainly declared his faith in Christ, and the reasons for that faith, and was thus led to speak particularly of those virtues essential to Christian character, but of which the haughty pair before him were so strikingly destitute.

He presented before his hearers the character of God—His righteousness, justice, and equity—and the nature and obligation of His law. He clearly showed man’s duty to live a life of sobriety and temperance, keeping the passions under the control of reason, in conformity to God’s law, and preserving the physical and mental powers in a healthful condition. A day of judgment would surely come. . . . Wealth, position, or honorary titles would be powerless to elevate man in the favor of God, or to ransom him from the slavery of sin. . . . Paul then endeavored to direct the minds of his hearers to the one great Sacrifice for sin. . . .

Felix trembled, but did not repent.²⁷

Opportunities Not to Be Slighted

“[Felix] hoped . . . that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix’ room: and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound” (Acts 24:26, 27).

For two years no further action was taken against Paul, yet he remained a prisoner. Felix visited him several times and listened attentively to his words. But the real motive for this apparent friendliness was a desire for gain, and he intimated that by the payment of a large sum of money Paul might secure his release. The apostle, however, was of too noble a nature to free himself by a bribe. He was not guilty of any crime, and he would not stoop to commit a wrong in order to gain freedom. Furthermore, he was himself too poor to pay such a ransom, had he been disposed to do so, and he would not, in his own behalf, appeal to the sympathy and generosity of his converts. He also felt that he was in the hands of God, and he would not interfere with the divine purposes. . . .

Felix was finally summoned to Rome because of gross wrongs committed against the Jews. Before leaving Caesarea in answer to this summons, he thought to “show the Jews a pleasure” by allowing Paul to remain in prison. But Felix was not successful in his attempt to regain the confidence of the Jews. He was removed from office in disgrace. . . .

A ray of light from heaven had been permitted to shine upon Felix, when Paul reasoned with him concerning righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come. That was his heaven-sent opportunity to see and to forsake his sins. But he said to the messenger of God, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee” (Acts 24:26). He had slighted his last offer of mercy. Never was he to receive another call from God.²⁸

You have the strength that is mighty to cling to, which will be to you a stronghold and fortress in the day of trouble, affliction, and peril. But will that better time and that more favorable opportunity ever come to those who would say to the Spirit of God, as did Felix, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee? Is the opportunity ever to come when we can leave sin any more easily than at the present moment? Is the time coming when we can take hold of the truth any more easily than now?²⁹

The Discernment of Festus

“When Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem. Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, and desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him” (Acts 25:1–3).

[Festus] took his seat at the tribunal to hear the case. The Jews, on this occasion being without a lawyer, preferred their charges themselves. The trial was a scene of passionate, unreasoning clamor on the part of the accusers, while Paul with perfect calmness and candor clearly showed the falsity of their statements.

The Jews repeated their charges of heresy, treason, and sacrilege, but could bring no witnesses to sustain them. They endeavored to intimidate Festus as they had once intimidated Pilate by their pretended zeal for the honor of Caesar. But Festus had too thorough an understanding of the Roman law to be deceived by their clamor. He saw that the real question in dispute related wholly to Jewish doctrines, and that, rightly understood, there was nothing in the charges against Paul, could they be proved, that would render him worthy of death, or even imprisonment. Yet he saw clearly the storm of rage that would be created if Paul were not to be condemned or delivered into their hands.

He looked with disgust upon the scene before him—the Jewish priests and rulers, with scowling faces and gleaming eyes, forgetting the dignity of their office, eagerly reiterating their accusations, in tones that grew louder and louder until the tribunal rang with their cries of rage. Heartily desiring to end it all, he turned to Paul, who stood calm and self-possessed before his adversaries, and asked if he was willing to go to Jerusalem under his protection, to be tried by the Sanhedrin.

This would virtually transfer the matter from Roman to Jewish jurisdiction. Paul knew that he could not look for justice from that people who were by their crimes bringing down upon themselves the wrath of God. Like the prophet Elijah, he would be safer among the heathen than with those who had rejected the light from Heaven, and hardened their hearts against the truth. When his life had been imperiled by the wrath of his enemies, it was heathen magistrates that had been his deliverers. Gallio, Lysias, and even Felix, had not hesitated to proclaim his innocence, while every Jewish tribunal had condemned him, without proving his guilt.³⁰

Paul’s Experience to Be Repeated

“Then said Paul, . . . if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar. Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go” (Acts 25:10–12).

Paul was weary of strife, weary of the fierce reiteration of charges, again and again refuted, and as often renewed. His active spirit could ill endure the repeated delays and wearing suspense of his trial and imprisonment. How repulsive to him had been the daily contact with the coarse, idle, unprincipled soldiery, the frequent sounds of contention, and the rumors of strife and bloodshed between Jew and Gentile. He had nothing more to hope for from Jewish priests or rulers; but as a Roman citizen he had one special privilege, he could appeal to Caesar, and for a time, at least, his enemies would be kept at bay. . . .

Once more the hatred born of Jewish bigotry and self-righteousness had driven the servant of God to turn for protection to a heathen ruler. . . . It is the same spirit that the people of God in this age have yet to meet. In the great crisis through which they are soon to pass, they will become better acquainted with the experience of Paul. Among the professed followers of Christ, there is the same pride, formalism, vainglory, selfishness, and oppression, that existed in the Jewish nation. Before the warfare shall be ended and the victory won, we as a people are to experience trials similar to those of Paul. We shall encounter the same hardness of heart, the same cruel determination, the same unyielding hatred.

Men professing to be representatives of Christ will take a course similar to that taken by priests and rulers in their treatment of Paul. All who would fearlessly serve God according to the dictates of their own conscience, will need moral courage, firmness, and a knowledge of God and His word, to stand. . . .

God would have His people prepared for the soon-coming crisis. Prepared or unprepared, we must all meet it. Only those whose characters are thoroughly disciplined to meet the divine standard will be able to stand firm in that testing time. But when enemies shall be on every side, watching them for evil, the God of Heaven will be watching His precious jewels for good.³¹

A Striking Contrast

“After certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus. And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul’s cause unto the king . . . Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him. And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus’ commandment Paul was brought forth” (Acts 25:13, 14, 22, 23).

Paul was not now to defend himself before a new tribunal, but merely to gratify the curiosity of a private audience; to furnish an hour’s entertainment for the procurator’s distinguished guests, and for an invited company representing the wealth and nobility of Caesarea. The chief officers of the army were to be present, and also the leading citizens of the town, and Festus determined to make it an occasion of the most imposing display, in honor of his visitors.

In all the pomp and splendor of royalty, Agrippa and Bernice went to the audience room, attended by a train of followers in the costly apparel of Eastern display. Proudly the haughty ruler with his beautiful sister swept through the assembly, and seated himself by the procurator’s side. At his command, Paul, still manacled as a prisoner, was led in, and the king gazed with cold curiosity upon him, now bowed and pale from sickness, long imprisonment, and continual anxiety.

What a contrast was there presented! Agrippa and Bernice were destitute of the traits of character which God esteems. They were transgressors of His law, corrupt in heart and in life. God and angels abhorred their course of sin. But because they possessed, in a limited degree, power and position, they were the favorites of the world. That aged prisoner, standing chained to his soldier guard, presented nothing imposing or attractive in his dress or appearance, that the world should pay him homage. Yet this man, apparently without friends or wealth or position, had an escort that worldlings could not see. Angels of heaven were his attendants. Had the glory of one of those shining messengers flashed forth, the pomp and pride of royalty would have paled before it; king and courtiers would have been stricken to the earth, as were the Roman guards at the sepulcher of Christ. All heaven was interested in this one man, now held a prisoner for his faith in the Son of God.³²

A Powerful Testimony

“Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews” (Acts 26:1, 2).

The whole company had listened spellbound to Paul’s account of his wonderful experiences.³³

For a time [Agrippa] forgot the dignity of his position, lost sight of his surroundings and, conscious only of the truths which he had heard, seeing only the humble prisoner standing as God’s ambassador, he answered involuntarily, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28). . . .

All who heard him were convinced that Paul was no common prisoner. One who could speak as he had spoken, and present the arguments that he had presented, who was so filled with the exaltation of an inspiring faith, so enriched by the grace of Christ, so calm in the consciousness of peace with God and man; one who could wish that all those princely and distinguished people might have the same hope and confidence and faith that sustained him, but who, without the least desire for revenge, could pray that they might be spared the conflicts, sorrows, and afflictions which he had experienced—such a man could not be an impostor.

Festus, Agrippa, and Bernice were the criminals who should in justice have worn the fetters placed upon the apostle. All were guilty of grievous crimes. These offenders had that day heard the offer of salvation through the name of Christ. One, at least, had been almost persuaded to accept of grace and pardon. . . .

Now that the case had been referred to [Caesar’s] tribunal, it was beyond the jurisdiction of Festus or Agrippa. Yet, two years afterward, the result of that day’s proceedings saved the life so precious to the cause of God. Festus, finding that his own judgment of the case, on grounds of Roman justice, was sustained from a Jewish standpoint by the protector of the Temple, sent a letter to the emperor, stating that no legal charge could be found against the prisoner. And Nero, cruel and unscrupulous as he was, dared not put to death a man whom Lysias, Felix, Festus, and Agrippa pronounced guiltless, and whom even the Sanhedrin could not condemn.³⁴

The Kindness of Aristarchus

“When it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus’ band. And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us” (Acts 26:32; 27:1, 2).

Adramyttium was situated upon the west coast of the province of Asia; therefore the travelers could perform but a part of their journey in a ship bound for that city. But in some of the larger ports at which the vessel touched, they would be likely to find a ship in which they could embark for Rome.

In the first century of the Christian era, traveling by sea as well as by land was attended with far greater difficulty than at the present time. The arts of ship-building and navigation were not then matured as now. Mariners directed their course by the sun and stars; and when these did not appear, and there were indications of storm, they were fearful of trusting their vessels to the open sea.

The season of safe navigation was already far advanced, before the apostle’s ship left Caesarea, and the time was fast approaching when travel by sea would be closed for the year. Every day’s delay increased the peril of the voyage. But the journey which would be difficult and dangerous to the ordinary traveler, would be doubly trying to the apostle as a prisoner. Roman soldiers were held responsible with their own lives for the security of their prisoners, and this had led to the custom of chaining prisoners by the right wrist to the left wrist of soldiers, who relieved each other in turn. Thus not only could the apostle have no movement free, but he was placed in close and constant connection with men of the most uncongenial and absolutely repulsive character; men who were not only uneducated and unrefined, but who, from the demoralizing influence of their surroundings, had become brutal and degraded. This custom, however, was less rigidly observed on shipboard than when prisoners were ashore. One circumstance greatly lightened the hardships of his lot. He was permitted to enjoy the companionship of his brethren, Luke and Aristarchus. In his letter to the Colossians, he speaks of the latter as his “fellow-prisoner” (Colossians 4:10). But it was as an act of choice, because of his affection for Paul, that Aristarchus shared his bondage, and ministered to him in his afflictions.³⁵

Aboard the Storm-Tossed Vessel

“When neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away” (Acts 27:20).

A gloomy apathy settled upon those three hundred souls, as for fourteen days they drifted, helpless and hopeless, under a sunless and starless heaven. They had no means of cooking; no fire could be lighted, the utensils had been washed overboard, and most of the provisions were water-soaked and spoiled. In fact while their good ship was wrestling with the tempest, and the waves talked with death, no one desired food.

In the midst of that terrible scene, the apostle retained his calmness and courage. Notwithstanding he was physically the greatest sufferer of them all, he had words of hope for the darkest hour, a helping hand in every emergency. In this time of trial, he grasped by faith the arm of infinite power, his heart was stayed upon God, and amid the surrounding gloom his courage and nobility of soul shone forth with the brightest luster. While all around were looking only for swift destruction, this man of God, in the serenity of a blameless conscience, was pouring forth his earnest supplications in their behalf.

Paul had no fears for himself; he felt assured that he would not be swallowed up by the hungry waters. God would preserve his life, that he might witness for the truth at Rome. But his human heart yearned with pity for the poor souls around him. Sinful and degraded as they were, they were unprepared to die, and he earnestly pleaded with God to spare their lives. It was revealed to him that his prayer was granted. When there was a lull in the tempest, so that his voice could be heard, he stood forth on the deck and said: “Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar; and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island” (Acts 27:21–26). At these words hope revived.³⁶

Peril Among the Black, Heaving Billows

“As the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, . . . as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 27:30, 31).

Amid the sound of the storm, the sailors distinguished the roar of breakers, and reported that they were near some land. . . . They were now threatened by a new danger, of having their ship driven upon some rock-bound coast. They immediately cast out four anchors, which was the only thing that could be done. All through the remaining hours of that night they waited, knowing that any moment might be their last. The leak was constantly increasing, and the ship might sink at any time, even if the anchors held.

At last through rain and tempest the gray light fell upon their haggard and ghastly faces. The outlines of the stormy coast could be dimly seen, but not a single familiar landmark was visible. The selfish heathen sailors determined to abandon the ship and crew, and save themselves in the boat which they had with so much difficulty hoisted on board. Pretending that they could do something more to secure the safety of the ship, they unloosed the boat, and began to lower it into the sea. Had they succeeded, they would have been dashed in pieces upon the rocks, while all on board would have perished from their inability to handle the sinking vessel.

At this moment, Paul perceived the base design, and averted the danger. With his usual prompt energy and courage he said to the centurion and soldiers, “Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 27:31). The apostle’s faith in God did not waver; he had no doubt concerning his own preservation, but the promise of safety to the crew had been conditional upon their performance of duty. The soldiers, on hearing Paul’s words, immediately cut off the ropes of the boat, letting her fall off into the sea.

The most critical hour was still before them, when the skill, courage, and presence of mind of all on board would be tested. Again the apostle spoke words of encouragement, and entreated all, both sailors and passengers, to take some food. . . .

That worn, drenched, discouraged throng of two hundred and seventy-six souls, who but for Paul would have become despairing and desperate, now took fresh courage, and joined with the apostle in their first meal for fourteen days.³⁷

Shipwreck!

“Falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves” (Acts 27:41).

Paul and the other prisoners were now threatened by a fate more terrible than shipwreck. The soldiers saw that in this crisis it would be impossible for them to keep charge of their prisoners. Every man would have all that he could do to save himself. Yet if any of the prisoners were missing, the lives of those who had them in charge would be forfeited. Hence the soldiers desired to put all the prisoners to death. The Roman law sanctioned this cruel policy, and the proposal would have been executed at once, but for him to whom soldiers and prisoners alike owed their preservation. Julius the centurion knew that Paul had been instrumental in saving the lives of all on board, and he felt that it would be the basest ingratitude to allow him to be put to death; and more, he felt convinced that the Lord was with Paul, and he feared to do him harm. He therefore gave orders to spare the lives of the prisoners, and directed that all who could swim should cast themselves into the sea and get to land. The rest seized hold of planks and other fragments of the wreck, and were carried landward by the waves. . . .

The shipwrecked crew were kindly received by the barbarous people of Melita. A rain having come on, the whole company were drenched and shivering, and the islanders kindled an immense fire of brushwood, and welcomed them all to its grateful warmth. Paul was among the most active in collecting fuel. As he was placing a bundle of sticks upon the fire, a viper that had been suddenly revived from its torpor by the heat, darted from the fagots and fastened upon his hand. The bystanders were horror-struck, and seeing by his chain that Paul was a prisoner, they said to one another, “No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live” (Acts 28:4). But Paul shook off the creature into the fire, and suffered no harm. Knowing its venomous nature, they watched him closely for some time, expecting every moment to see him fall down, writhing in terrible agony. But as no unpleasant results followed, they changed their minds and, like the people of Lystra, said that he was a god. By this circumstance Paul gained a strong influence over the islanders, and he sought faithfully to employ it in leading them to accept the truths of the gospel.³⁸

Ministry at Melita

“In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed: Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary” (Acts 28:7–10).

For three months the ship’s company remained at Melita. During this time Paul and his fellow laborers improved every opportunity to preach the gospel. The Lord wrought through them in a remarkable manner, and for Paul’s sake the entire company were treated with great kindness; all their wants were supplied, and upon leaving they were liberally provided with everything needful for their voyage.³⁹

Do the work that is nearest you. Do it, even though it may be amid perils and hardships in the missionary field; but do not, I beg of you, complain of hardships and self-sacrifices. . . . We should not labor with the expectation of receiving our reward in this life, but with our eyes fixed steadfastly upon the prize at the end of the race. Men and women are wanted now who are as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men and women who will work without having their way smoothed and every obstacle removed.⁴⁰

If all who know the truth will take hold of this work as opportunities are presented, day by day doing little acts of love in the neighborhood where they live, Christ will be manifest to their neighbors. The gospel will be revealed as a living power and not as cunningly devised fables or idle speculations. It will be revealed as a reality, not the result of imagination or enthusiasm. This will be of more consequence than sermons or professions or creeds.⁴¹

Keep Christ, the Great Physician, constantly before those to whom disease of body and soul has brought discouragement. Point them to the One who can heal both physical and spiritual disease. Tell them of the One who is touched with the feeling of their infirmities. Encourage them to place themselves in the care of Him who gave His life to make it possible for them to have life eternal. Talk of His love; tell of His power to save. . . . Often the relief of their physical needs is the only avenue by which they can be approached.⁴²

Arrival at Rome

“After three months we departed in a ship. . . . When the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us . . . whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage” (Acts 28:11, 15).

With a heavy heart . . . Paul went forward to his long-expected visit to the world’s metropolis. How different the circumstances from what he had anticipated! How was he, fettered and stigmatized as a criminal, to proclaim the gospel? His hopes of winning many souls to the truth at Rome, seemed destined to be disappointed. . . .

The gray-haired old man, chained with a group of hardened-looking criminals, receives many a glance of scorn, and is made the subject of many a rude, mocking jest. Not one of all he meets bestows upon him a look of pity or sympathy. He meekly wears his chain, and silently, slowly pursues his way.

Suddenly a cry of joy is heard, and a man springs out from the passing throng and falls upon the prisoner’s neck, embracing him with tears and rejoicing, as a son would welcome a long-absent father. Again and again is the scene repeated. With eyes made keen by loving expectation, many discern in the chained captive the one who spoke to them the words of life. . . .

The whole company is brought to a standstill, as warm-hearted disciples eagerly flock around their father in the gospel. The soldiers are impatient of delay, yet they have not the heart to interrupt this happy meeting; for they too have learned to respect and esteem their prisoner. In that worn, pain-stricken face, the disciples see the image of Christ reflected. They assure Paul that they have not forgotten him or ceased to love him; that they are indebted to him for the joyful hope which animates their lives, and gives them peace toward God. In the ardor of their love they would bear him upon their shoulders the whole way to the city, could they but have the privilege.

Few realize the significance of those words of Luke, that when Paul saw his brethren, “he thanked God, and took courage” (Acts 28:15). The apostle praised God aloud in the midst of that weeping, sympathizing throng, who were not ashamed of his bonds. The cloud of sadness that had rested upon his spirit had been swept away. He felt that his labors had not been in vain. Although his Christian life had been a succession of trials, sufferings, and disappointments, he felt in that hour abundantly repaid.¹

Witnessing to the Jews in Rome

“Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him” (Acts 28:30, 31).

At Rome the charge of the centurion Julius ended. Here he delivered up his prisoners to the captain of the emperor's guard. The good account which he gave of Paul, however, together with the letter of Festus, the procurator of Judea, caused the apostle to be favorably regarded by the chief captain, and instead of being thrown into prison, he was permitted to live in his own hired house. The trial of having constantly to be chained to a soldier was continued; but he was at liberty to receive his friends, and to labor for the advancement of the cause of Christ.

The Jews who had been banished from Rome some years previous had been tacitly permitted to return, so that large numbers were now to be found there. To these, first of all, Paul determined to present the facts concerning himself and his work, before his enemies should have opportunity to embitter them against him. Three days after his arrival at Rome, therefore, he called together their leading men, and in a simple, direct manner stated the reasons why he had come to Rome as a prisoner. . . .

He said nothing of the abuse which he had suffered at the hands of the Jews, or of their repeated plots to assassinate him. His words were marked with caution and kindness. He was not seeking to win personal attention or sympathy, but to defend the truth and to maintain the honor of the gospel.

In reply, his hearers stated that they had received no charges against him by letters public or private, and that none of the Jews who had come to Rome had accused him of any crime. They also expressed a strong desire to hear for themselves the reasons of his faith in Christ. . . .

[Paul] related his own experience, and presented arguments from the Old Testament scriptures with simplicity, sincerity, and power. Upon some minds, at least, his words made an impression which would never be effaced.²

Paul's words had not been in vain. Some fully accepted Jesus as the world's Redeemer and, despite the opposition of their former brethren, became earnest advocates of the truth.³

The Christian's Legacy

“As concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against” (Acts 28:22).

Some of Paul's hearers eagerly received the truth, but others stubbornly refused to be convinced. The testimony of the Scriptures was presented before them by one who was their equal in learning and their superior in mental power, and who had the special illumination of the Holy Spirit. They could not refute his arguments, but refused to accept his conclusions. . . .

The more conclusive the arguments presented, the more determined were the Jews in their opposition. . . . The people of God living near the close of time should learn a lesson from this experience of Paul's. We should not be disheartened because those who have no love for truth refuse to be convinced by the clearest evidence. We need not flatter ourselves that the formal and world-loving churches of this age are more ready to receive the teachings of God's word than were those of ages past. . . . The most bitter opposers of truth today are found among those who profess to be its defenders.

God has made His people the depositaries of His law. They must uphold the claims of that downtrodden law against the opposition of ministers of the gospel, against men of learning, position, and authority. The evidence of its binding claims cannot be overthrown; yet its enemies will come again and again to the battle, urging the same arguments, every time refuted, and as often renewed.

Paul was led and taught by the Holy Spirit; but, notwithstanding this, those who were not thus taught were filled with jealousy and malice when they saw him advocating truths which they had not sanctioned. They were determined that he should move no faster than they. Had they, like the noble Bereans, searched the Scriptures with a humble, teachable spirit, they would have learned the truth as Paul preached it; but they studied only to find something to sustain themselves and condemn him.

The truth always involves a cross. Those who will not believe, oppose and deride those who do believe. The fact that its presentation creates a storm of opposition is no evidence against the truth. The prophets and apostles imperiled their lives because they would conscientiously obey God. And our Saviour declares that “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). This is the Christian's legacy.⁴

Delivered Only by a Miracle

“Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance” (Psalm 32:7).

Paul had little reason to hope for justice from the Caesar to whom he had appealed. Nero was more debased in morals, more frivolous in character, and at the same time capable of more atrocious cruelty, than any ruler who had preceded him. The reins of government could not have been entrusted to a more inhuman despot. The first year of his reign had been marked by the poisoning of his young step-brother, who was the rightful heir to the throne. He had steadily descended from one depth of vice and crime to another, until he had murdered his own mother, and then his wife. There was no atrocity which he would not perpetrate, no vile act to which he would not stoop. In every noble mind he inspired abhorrence and contempt.

The details of iniquity practiced in the court of this prodigy of vice are too degrading, too horrible, for description. His abandoned wickedness created disgust and loathing, even in many who were forced to share his crimes. They were in constant fear as to what enormities he would suggest next. Yet even such crimes as Nero’s did not shake the allegiance of his subjects. He was acknowledged as the absolute ruler of the whole civilized world. And more than this, he was made the recipient of divine honors, and worshiped as a god.

From the standpoint of human judgment, Paul’s condemnation before such a judge was certain. But the apostle felt that he had nothing to fear, so long as he preserved his loyalty and his love to God. His life was not in the hands of Nero, and if his work was not yet done, the Roman emperor would be powerless to destroy him. He who had hitherto been his protector could shield him still from the malice of the Jews, and from the power of Caesar.

And God did shield his servant. At Paul’s examination the charges against him were not sustained and, contrary to the general expectation—with a regard for justice wholly at variance with his character—Nero declared the prisoner guiltless. Paul’s fetters were struck off, and he was again a free man.⁵

This last precious interval of freedom was earnestly improved in laboring among the churches.⁶

The Power of God Unto Salvation

“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:16, 17).

Religion does not consist in rites and ceremonies, creeds and theories. If it did, the natural man could understand it by investigation, as he understands worldly things. . . . Religion is a practical, saving energy, a principle wholly from God, a personal experience of God’s renewing power upon the soul.⁷

The righteousness of Christ is revealed from faith to faith; that is, from your present faith to an increased understanding of the faith which works by love and purifies the soul. Those who endure trial for the truth’s sake, who make sacrifices to help those in need, do so because of the presence of the love of God in the soul. When men and women give themselves unreservedly to the exercise of unselfish works, it is because the grace of Christ is in the heart, molding the life to His example. . . .

When Christ imparts to any the blessings of His grace, He lays the recipients under special obligation to place their capabilities and powers at the service of God. They are called so to relate themselves to the work of the Master, that they will reveal in all their actions that they are converted. In their reverence and homage for the character of Christ, they will reproduce that character in their own, thus testifying to the attributes of the Father. . . .

We have reason for great thankfulness that we have the perfect example of the life of Christ. As He did, so day by day we are to obey the word of the Lord. Let us cultivate a grateful spirit. Let us make sure work for eternity. The humility and benevolence of Christ’s life revealed in ours is the testimony we give to the world that we are His disciples. Through a life of obedience and self-sacrifice we are to reveal the love of God for fallen man.

Those who would have the life that measures with the life of God must be workers in this life. They must watch unto prayer. They must not fail nor be discouraged. By faith they must work out their own salvation. By faith and complete submission to the will of God, they must become partakers of God’s love and doers of His will.⁸

Seek Not the Praise of Men, but of God

“He is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Romans 2:29).

[The Jews] measured their holiness by the number and multitude of their ceremonies, while their hearts were filled with hypocrisy, pride, and avarice. While they professed to be the only righteous nation on the earth, the curse of God was upon them for their iniquities.

They had received unsanctified and confused interpretations of the law given them by Moses; they had added tradition to tradition; they had restricted freedom of thought and action, until the commandments, ordinances, and services of God were lost in a ceaseless round of meaningless rites and ceremonies. . . .

Jesus began the work of reformation by bringing Himself into close sympathy with humanity. He was a Jew, and He designed to leave a perfect pattern of one who was a Jew inwardly. While He showed the greatest reverence for the law of God, and taught obedience to its precepts, He rebuked the Pharisees for their pretentious piety, and endeavored to free the people from the senseless exactions that bound them.⁹

The truth of God has never been popular with the world. The natural heart is ever averse to the truth. . . . We must renounce the love of the world, and pride of heart, and everything which tends to idolatry, in order to be followers of the Man of Calvary. Those who obey the truth will never be loved and honored by the world. From the lips of the divine Teacher, as He walked in humility among the children of men, were heard the words: Whosoever will be My disciple, let him take up his *cross*, and follow Me. Yes, follow our Exemplar. Was He seeking for praise and honor of men? Oh, no! Shall we then seek for honor or praise from worldlings?

Those who have no love for God will not love the children of God. Listen to the words of heavenly instruction: “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you” (Luke 6:26).¹⁰

[But] oh how precious to the soul is one word of commendation that comes from the Redeemer’s lips! We may not understand all now, but the day is coming when we shall be more than satisfied, when we shall see as we are seen, and realize that trial has wrought out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.¹¹

Power for Obedience

“Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law” (Romans 3:31).

The gospel is the good news of grace, or favor, by which man may be released from the condemnation of sin, and enabled to render acceptable obedience to the law. The gospel points to the moral code as a rule of life. That law, by its demands for undeviating obedience, is continually pointing the sinner to the gospel for pardon and peace. . . .

Christ foresaw that men would not only break the commandments of God themselves, but would teach others to break them. Some are not content with doing this by example; they defend sin, and pervert the word of God to justify the transgressor. Such persons will have no part with the people of God. But the greatest guilt rests upon the professed watchmen, who do not hesitate to speak evil of the law, and even to make those who are ignorant of the Bible believe that they are fallen from grace if they keep it. “All we have to do,” say they, “is to believe in Christ, come to Christ.”

While we point the sinner to Jesus as the one who can take away sin, we must explain to him what sin is, and show him that he can be saved from his sins, but not in them. He must be made to realize that “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). Paul made the inquiry, many years after the death of Christ, “Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known . . . lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” (Romans 7:7). Thus Paul exalts the moral law. When this law is practically carried out in everyday life, it is found indeed to be the wisdom of God. It serves to detect sin. It discovers the defects in the moral character, and shows sin to be exceeding sinful, revealing it in all hideousness. Through obedience to its requirements, Christian character is perfected.

God’s law is a copy of His mind and will. The sins forbidden there could never find a place in heaven. It was love that prompted God to express His will in the ten precepts of the decalogue. Afterward He showed His love for man by sending prophets and teachers to explain and illustrate His holy law.

God has given man a complete rule of life in His law. Obeyed, man shall live by it, through the merits of Christ. Transgressed, it has power to condemn. The law sends men to Christ, and Christ points them back to the law.¹²

An Experience Gained

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Romans 5:1-5).

True laborers, coworkers with God, have a sense of the sacredness of the work and the severe conflicts they must meet in order to carry it forward successfully. They will not faint and despond in view of the labor, arduous though it may be. . . . We are without excuse if we fail to avail ourselves of the ample provisions made for us that we may be wanting in nothing. The shrinking from hardships, the complaints while suffering under tribulation, make the servants of God weak and inefficient in bearing responsibilities and burdens. . . .

All those who unshrinkingly stand in the forefront of the battle, must feel the especial warfare of Satan against them. As they realize his attacks, they will flee to the stronghold; for they feel their need of special strength from God. They labor in His strength; therefore every victory they gain does not exalt them, but leads them in faith to lean more securely upon the Mighty One. Deep and fervent gratitude to God is awakened in their hearts, and a joyfulness in tribulation, which they experience while pressed by the enemy. An experience is being gained by these willing servants. A character is being formed which will do honor to the cause of God.

It is a season of solemn privilege and sacred trust to the servants of God. If these trusts are faithfully kept, great will be the reward of the faithful servant when the Master shall say, “Give an account of thy stewardship” (Luke 16:2). The earnest toil endured, the unselfish work of patient, persevering effort, will be rewarded abundantly; while Jesus will say, Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends, guests. The approval of the Master was not given because of the greatness of the work performed, because of having gained many things, but the fidelity in even a few things. It is not because of the great results that the reward is given; but the motives weigh with God. Goodness and faithfulness God prizes more than the greatness of the work accomplished.¹³

Whom Are We Serving?

“If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Romans 6:5, 6).

True liberty and independence are found in the service of God. His service will place upon you no restriction that will not increase your happiness. In complying with His requirements, you will find a peace, contentment, and enjoyment that you can never have in the path of wild license and sin. Then study well the nature of the liberty you desire. Is it the liberty of the sons of God, to be free in Christ Jesus? or do you call the selfish indulgence of base passions freedom? Such liberty carries with it the heaviest remorse; it is the cruelest bondage.

True independence of mind is not stubbornness. It leads the youth to form their opinions on the word of God, irrespective of what others may say or do.¹⁴

The mind must be stored with pure principles. Truth must be graven on the tablets of the soul. The memory must be filled with the precious truths of the Word. Then, like beautiful gems, these truths will flash out in the life.

The value that God places on the work of His hands, the love He has for His children, is revealed by the gift He made to redeem men. Adam fell under the dominion of Satan. He brought sin into the world, and death by sin. God gave His only begotten Son to save man. This He did that He might be just, and yet the justifier of all who accept Christ. Man sold himself to Satan, but Jesus bought back the race, redeeming men and women from the slavery of a cruel tyrant.

At an infinite cost to heaven we have been given a second probation. Then should not God be in all our thoughts? Should not His will control our actions?

You are not your own. Jesus has purchased you with His blood. Do not bury your talents in the earth. Use them for Him. In whatever business you may be engaged, bring Jesus into it. If you find that you are losing your love for your Saviour, give up your business, and say, “Here am I, Saviour; what wouldest Thou have me to do?” He will receive you graciously, and love you freely. He will abundantly pardon; for He is merciful and long-suffering, not willing that any should perish. He is a loving Redeemer.¹⁵

Strength to Resist the Serpent

“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness” (Romans 6:16–18).

When man sinned his nature became evil, and he was in harmony, and not at variance, with Satan. . . . But when Satan heard that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head, he knew that though he had succeeded in depraving human nature, and assimilating it to his own, yet by some mysterious process God would restore to man his lost power, and enable him to resist and overcome his conqueror.

It is the grace that Christ implants in the soul that creates the enmity against Satan. Without this grace, man would continue the captive of Satan, a servant ever ready to do his bidding. The new principle in the soul creates conflict where hitherto had been peace. The power which Christ imparts, enables man to resist the tyrant and usurper. Whenever a man is seen to abhor sin instead of loving it, when he resists and conquers those passions that have held sway within, there is seen the operation of a principle wholly from above. The Holy Spirit must be constantly imparted to man, or he has no disposition to contend against the powers of darkness. . . .

He who is under the control of Satan submits willingly to the dominion of evil. But where he has received the grace of Christ, he will see the repulsive character of sin, and in strength from above, will resist the serpent. . . .

Whatever diverts our affections from God or destroys our confidence in Him, thereby becomes an idol. God calls for the whole heart. No reserve must be made. Said our Saviour, “He that is not with me is against me” (Luke 11:23). We cannot safely disregard one injunction of God’s word, to compromise with the enemies of Christ and the truth. . . .

[Christ] has ever required His people to keep themselves free from every unholy influence. In His infinite love He has provided the unsearchable riches of His grace, that they may be enabled to maintain the warfare against the hosts of sin. Through that grace they may render obedience to every command, and receive the fulfillment of every promise.¹⁶

Walking After the Spirit

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1–4).

The first four commandments of the law grow out of our relation to God, and demand the loving loyalty of our whole hearts. The last six grow out of our relation to our fellowman, and require us to regard his interests as our own. The keeping of these commandments comprises the whole duty of man, and presents the conditions of eternal life. Now the question is, Will man comply with the requirements? Will he love God supremely and his neighbor as himself? There is no possible way for man to do this in his own strength. The divine power of Christ must be added to the effort of humanity.¹⁷

Satan declared that it was impossible for the sons and daughters of Adam to keep the law of God, and thus charged upon God a lack of wisdom and love. If they could not keep the law, then there was fault with the Lawgiver. Men who are under the control of Satan repeat these accusations against God, in asserting that men cannot keep the law of God. Jesus humbled Himself, clothing His divinity with humanity, in order that He might stand as the head and representative of the human family, and by both precept and example condemn sin in the flesh, and give the lie to Satan’s charges. He was subjected to the fiercest temptations that human nature can know, yet He sinned not; for sin is the transgression of the law. By faith He laid hold upon divinity, even as humanity may lay hold upon infinite power through Him.¹⁸

As Christ lived the law in humanity, so we may do if we will take hold of the Strong for strength. But we are not to place the responsibility of our duty upon others, and wait for them to tell us what to do. . . . Those who decide to do nothing in any line that will displease God, will know, after presenting their case before Him, just what course to pursue. And they will receive not only wisdom, but strength. Power for obedience, for service, will be imparted to them, as Christ has promised.¹⁹

A Clean Mind, a Happy Heart

“They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Romans 8:5, 6).

None can glorify God in their body, as He requires, while they are living in transgression of the law of God. If the body violates the seventh commandment, it is through the dictation of the mind. If the mind is impure, the body will naturally engage in impure acts. Purity cannot exist in the soul of one who yields his body to impure acts. If the body is serving lust, the mind cannot maintain consecration to God. To preserve a sanctified mind, the body must be preserved in sanctification and honor. The mind will then serve the law of God, and yield willing obedience to all its claims. Then, with the apostle, such can yield their members as instruments of righteousness unto God. “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (Romans 6:12). The freedom which the apostle describes as the privilege of Christ’s followers will never be experienced by those who delight to trample under foot the law of God. . . .

The Lord made man upright; but he has fallen, and become degraded, because he refuses to yield obedience to the sacred claims which the law of God has upon him. All the passions of man, if properly controlled and rightly directed, will contribute to his physical and moral health, and insure to him a great amount of happiness. The adulterer, the fornicator, and the incontinent, do not enjoy life. There can be no true enjoyment for the transgressor of God’s law. The Lord knew this, therefore He restricts man. He directs, commands, and He positively forbids.

But many are so far deceived by the devil that they think that they themselves can excel the great God in providing ways and means for human happiness. They charge their unhappiness to the prohibitions contained in the law of the ten commandments; and if they can in any way feel released from the claims of the law of God, they will be free and happy indeed. . . .

When men and women acknowledge the claims of the law of God, and plant their feet upon this platform of eternal truth, they will stand where the Lord can give them moral power to let their light so shine before men that they may see their good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven.²⁰

Be Transformed

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1, 2).

Christ demands all. If He required less, His sacrifice was too dear, too great to make to bring us up to such a level. Our holy faith cries out, Separation. We should not be conformed to the world, or to dead, heartless professors. “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2). This is a self-denying way. And when you think that the way is too strait, that there is too much self-denial in this narrow path; when you say, How hard to give up all, ask yourselves the question, What did Christ give up for me? This question puts anything that we may call self-denial in the shade. Behold Him in the garden, sweating great drops of blood. A solitary angel is sent from heaven to strengthen the Son of God. Follow Him on His way to the judgment hall, while He is derided, mocked, and insulted by that infuriated mob. Behold Him clothed in that old purple kingly robe. Hear the coarse jest and cruel mocking. See them place upon that noble brow the crown of thorns, and then smite Him with a reed, causing the thorns to penetrate His temples, and the blood to flow from that holy brow. Hear that murderous throng eagerly crying for the blood of the Son of God. He is delivered into their hands, and they lead the noble sufferer away, pale, weak, and fainting, to His crucifixion. He is stretched upon the wooden cross, and the nails are driven through His tender hands and feet. Behold Him hanging upon the cross those dreadful hours of agony until the angels veil their faces from the horrid scene, and the sun hides its light, refusing to behold. Think of these things, and then ask, Is the way too strait? No, no.

In a divided, halfhearted life, you will find doubt and darkness. You cannot enjoy the consolations of religion, neither the peace which the world gives. Do not sit down in Satan’s easy chair of do-little, but arise, and aim at the elevated standard which it is your privilege to attain. It is a blessed privilege to give up all for Christ. Look not at the lives of others and imitate them and rise no higher. You have only one true, unerring Pattern. It is safe to follow Jesus only. . . . Form a character for heaven.²¹

Preferring One Another

“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Romans 12:10).

We stand before God under condemnation unless we fulfill the Saviour’s purpose for us, holding fast to Him, and allowing Him to send through our religious experience a warm current of unselfish love. When we do this, our spiritual strength will show that we are living in close connection with the Life-giver. We shall impart grace for the grace that we receive.

A thoroughgoing Christian draws his motives of action from his deep heart-love for his Master. Up through the roots of his affection for Christ come faith, and an unselfish interest in those around him. The selfish desire to be first is quenched. There is no hatred in his thoughts, because there is no hatred in his heart. He has the faith that works by love, and purifies the soul. The refining influence of the Saviour’s life refreshes and invigorates his spiritual life. By his loyalty to his brethren he shows that he realizes the value of souls. He can pray with the spirit and with the understanding also. His zeal, his stanch adherence to principle, his devotion to all that is pure, honest, just, and of good report, make him companionable, and helpful to those with whom he associates.²²

The members of the church should pledge themselves to walk together in harmony. Each should set a guard over his own heart, not permitting himself to think evil of his brethren, but giving them credit for all the good qualities they possess. We should store the mind with the precious promises and instructions of God’s word. When Satan seeks to divert the attention to things of no profit, then we should think and talk of these heavenly promises, and the tempter will be vanquished. By thus battling day by day, with earnest prayer and determined faith, all may gain the victory. Those who have most to overcome will be like the sinner to whom Christ forgave much, and who loved much; and they will at last stand nearest to the throne.

Christ is willing to help all who feel their need of help; but if any are satisfied with themselves, the Saviour will pass them by. Flavel has said: “When the Lord intends to fill a soul, He first makes it empty; when He intends to enrich a soul, He first makes it poor; when He intends to exalt a soul, He first makes it sensible of its own miseries, want, and nothingness.”²³

Dealing With Wrong

“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:19–21).

Christ has paid an infinite price for the souls of men, and we are to treat them as Christ’s purchased possession. . . . In the prayer which [He] taught His disciples, He said: “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matthew 6:12). By this He did not mean us to understand that in order to be forgiven, we are not to require our just dues from our debtors; but if through unwise management they have been placed where they cannot pay, they are not to be treated harshly, oppressed, nor placed in prison.

There is no virtue in advocating that theft or fraudulent actions shall go unpunished; but there are matters connected with the church that are to be kept within its own borders. Personal revenge is not becoming to a child of God. If he is abused, he is to take it patiently; if defrauded of that which is his just due, he is not to appeal to unbelievers in courts of justice. Rather, let him suffer loss and wrong. The one wronged may feel injured, and may be tempted to cause oppression to his fellowman; but if he follows this course, he reveals that he has not the Spirit of Christ.

Christians need not contend for their rights. They stand under the protection of the banner of Christ. They are to acknowledge the supreme authority of the King of kings and Lord of lords. In matters of difficulty between them and their brethren, they are not to appeal to Caesar or to Pilate. An account is kept of all these matters; and in His own good time, Christ will avenge His own elect. God will deal with the one who defrauds his brother and the cause of God. “Vengeance is mine,” he says; “I will repay” (Romans 12:19).²⁴

The spirit of forgiveness is to be cherished; yet the Lord says, “If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him” (Luke 17:3). The trespass may be against ourselves, or against some other soul whom Christ has purchased with His own blood. These wrongs are not to be passed by. The Lord has commanded us not to suffer wrong against our brother. It is only right that indignation be felt against wrongdoing; for by it Christ is dishonored. Sin is to be called by its right name, and is to be plainly laid out before the wrongdoer.²⁴

Self-Denying Missionary Work

“Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Romans 13:14).

Bro. Geymet, a man who understands several languages, was engaging in missionary work with earnestness and with great self-sacrifice. We took a carriage to ascend the mountain, winding up the path he traveled to carry the truth to those who would hear. We were obliged to leave the carriage as the pathway grew narrow and a terrible precipice yawned beneath us. Winding up and up, he finally came to a stable, and there the peasants gathered to study the Bible. He had to traverse this perilous path at night, as that was the only time the people could meet him. In the winter these poor peasants of Italy live in the stables, that the heat of the cattle may be utilized for their warmth. Our missionaries there get a little milk and bread, and eat it with gladness of heart. This is the way the truth is carried to the people in the Piedmont Valley.

At ten and eleven o'clock at night the workers would have to climb over these terrible paths through the mountains, and for seven miles take their way beside precipice and gorge. We asked, “How do you manage to go in safety over these dangerous places?” They answered, “When we come near the precipices, we crawl on our hands and knees.” We asked one brother how much he would take to labor a year in the cause of God. He answered, “One hundred dollars,” and then said, “You know we wear out shoes and clothes in traveling over the mountains, and we have our families to support.” How many of us with families of five and six would be willing to live on such meager pay for the sake of the cause?

My heart ached when I saw how the poor had to get along in this country. We would see the children going along eating their dinner—a piece of dry bread moistened in the water of the fountain. But they were happy, and thought they had nothing to complain of. Why is it that we think we must have our pie and cake and rich puddings, when these very things only hinder us from becoming sanctified to God? We should seek to bring our expenses within our means. . . . [Some have] thought that they must go to the very best hotels. But is this the way to do? How can we indulge ourselves, in the face of all the misery and distress that there is around us? . . . Is it not best for us to believe that the eye of God is upon us?²⁵

Sharing in Christ's Joy

“We . . . that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification” (Romans 15:1, 2).

In view of what Christ has done for us, and what He has suffered for sinners, we should, out of pure, disinterested love for souls, imitate His example by sacrificing our own pleasure and convenience for their good. The joy set before Christ, which sustained Him in all His sufferings, was the salvation of poor sinners. This should be our joy and the spur of our ambition in the cause of our Master. . . . He first loved us, and withheld not from us His beloved Son, but gave Him from His bosom to die that we might have life. Love, true love for our fellowmen, evinces love to God. We may make a high profession, yet without this love it is nothing. Our faith may lead us to even give our bodies to be burned, yet without self-sacrificing love, such as lived in the bosom of Jesus and was exemplified in His life, we are as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.²⁶

[God] knows for what object we live, and whether our living is put to the very best account for poor, fallen humanity, or whether our eyes are eclipsed to everything but our own interest, and to everyone but our own poor selves. . . . He stands there in the person of the poor, the homeless orphans, and the afflicted widows, who need love, sympathy, affection, and encouragement. If you do it not unto one of these, you would not do it unto Christ. . . .

Avail yourselves while you may of every privilege of doing good. These privileges improved are as a passing shower, which will water and revive you. Lay hold of every opportunity. . . .

Few have a true sense of what is comprised in the word Christian. It is to be Christlike, to do others good, to be divested of all selfishness, and to have our lives marked with acts of disinterested benevolence. Our Redeemer throws souls into the arms of the church, for them to care for unselfishly and train for heaven, and thus be coworkers with Him. But the church too often thrusts them away, upon the devil's battlefield. One member will say, “It is not my duty,” and then bring up some trifling excuse. “Well,” says another, “neither is it my duty;” and finally it is nobody's duty, and the soul is left uncared for to perish. It is the duty of every Christian to engage in this self-denying, self-sacrificing enterprise.²⁷

Humble Reliance on God Alone

“The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. . . . God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Corinthians 1:18, 27–29).

Christ is the mystery of godliness, and God calls for a humble reliance upon Him, whose divine aid is promised to all. The church at Corinth did not make the fear of Christ the first, the last, and the best in everything. They were fearful of offending the Jews and the learned heathen, and they were becoming weak. Paul declared to them that he had not come to them with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that their faith might not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.²⁸

All pride of opinion, all dependence upon the wisdom of this world, are unprofitable and vain. . . . Anything like pride in learning, and dependence upon scientific knowledge, which you place between your soul and the word of the Bible, will most effectually close the door of your heart to the sweet, humble religion of the meek and lowly Jesus.²⁹

The precious grace of humility is sadly wanting in the ministry and the church. Men who preach the truth think too highly of their own abilities. True humility will lead a man to exalt Christ and the truth, and to realize his utter dependence upon the God of truth. It is painful to learn lessons of humility, yet nothing is more beneficial in the end. The pain attendant upon learning lessons of humility is in consequence of our being elated by a false estimate of ourselves, so that we are unable to see our great need. Vanity and pride fill the hearts of men. God’s grace alone can work a reformation.

It is your work . . . to humble yourself and not wait for God to humble you. God’s hand at times bears heavily upon men to humble them and bring them into a proper position before Him; but how much better it is to keep the heart daily humbled before God. We can abase ourselves, or we can build ourselves up in pride and wait till God abases us.³⁰

Inspired by a Sunset

“As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:9, 10).

The sun was passing behind the snow-capped mountains, leaving its softened beams of golden light to tint the heavens. As the blending tints were deepening and extending athwart the skies, with indescribable beauty, it seemed the gates of heaven were ajar to let the gleamings of its glory through. The golden hues were every moment more and more entrancing, as if to invite our imagination to picture the greater glory within. . . .

We have an infinite God, high above all heavens; and yet He condescends to dwell with him who is of a meek and contrite spirit. It is when we turn our eyes away from this world that we behold the beams of light from heaven. By faith a far more surpassing glory than the world can give dawns upon our senses. Here we see but the faint rays of what will be revealed to those who love God.

Heaven seemed very near. From its golden gates light seemed beaming forth, to bless and comfort, and make joyful the heart of man. As the eye was turned from the dazzling glories of the closing day, we could but reflect that should we see more of heaven by the eye of faith, greater light, more peace and joy would be all along life’s pathway. We keep our eyes fixed so closely upon the low land of earth, looking upon the transient and deceptive attractions of worldly things, that in beholding we become changed to the earthly. If the eye of faith were uplifted to see through the veil of the future and discern the tokens of God’s love and glory in the promised life beyond, we should be more spiritually minded, and the beauties and joys of heaven would mingle with our daily life. We should be fitting up for the faithful performance of our work in this life, and for the higher life beyond.³¹

We want to get in the habit of talking of heaven, beautiful heaven. Talk of that life which will continue as long as God shall live, and then you will forget your little trials and difficulties.³²

All the glories of God in the heavens, and everything lovely in our world, is to give us a correct knowledge of the character of God the giver.³³

A Test of Endurance

“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible” (1 Corinthians 9:24, 25).

To run the Christian course in triumph, it is as necessary for us to exercise fortitude, patience, and self-denial, as it was for the contestants in the games and races of the Greeks and Romans. Like them the Christian must not allow his attention to be attracted by the spectators, nor diverted by amusements, luxuries, or love of ease. All his habits and passions must be brought under the strictest discipline. Reason, enlightened by the teachings of God’s word, and guided by His Spirit, must hold the reins of control. Every hindrance must be laid aside; no weight must impede his course. And after this has been done, the utmost exertion is required in order to gain the victory.

“Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible” (1 Corinthians 9:25). The chaplet of fading laurel is presented before us in the strongest contrast with the enduring honor and the crown of immortal glory which he will receive who runs with triumph the Christian race, and becomes a victor in the spiritual warfare. There must be no flagging of zeal, no wavering steps, or the effort will be lost. The last few strides of the contestants in the race were always made with agonizing effort to keep up undiminished speed. So the Christian, as he nears the goal, must press on with even more zeal and determination than at the first part of his course.

Paul carries the illustration back to the preparation necessary to the success of the contestants in the race—to the preliminary discipline, the careful and abstemious diet, the temperance in all things. These were unflinchingly practiced in order to win the small recompense of earthly honor. How much more important that the Christian, whose eternal interest is at stake, be trained to put appetite and passion under subjection to reason and the will of God. If men will voluntarily submit to hardships, privations, and self-denial to secure the perishable reward of worldly distinction, how much more should the Christian be willing to do and to suffer for the sake of obtaining the crown of glory that fadeth not away.³⁴

No Temptation Too Much to Bear

“Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:12, 13).

Temptation is not sin, and is no indication that God is displeased with us. The Lord suffers us to be tempted, but He measures every temptation, and apportions it according to our power to resist and overcome evil. It is in time of trial and temptation that we are enabled to measure the degree of our faith and trust in God, and to estimate the stability of our Christian character. If we are easily jostled and overcome, we should be alarmed; for our strength is small.³⁵

The sharper the assaults of the enemy, the nearer will Jesus draw, and the more will His grace be bestowed upon us. . . . Every time you are called upon to meet temptation, it is your duty to obtain a victory through the grace of Christ; and when you endure temptation in the strength of Christ, you are a conqueror. Cease worrying, and begin to count up your blessings and privileges. Your temper will be tried. Your patience will be tested. Prayer alone, and earnest faith, will bring you through these things like a Christian. We are in the school of Christ. We are to be disciplined and trained, until our characters shall become Christlike. We are to grow daily in spiritual loveliness. We shall fail often in our efforts to copy the divine Pattern. We shall often have to bow down to weep at the feet of Jesus, because of our shortcomings and mistakes; but we are not to be discouraged. Pray more fervently. Believe more fully, and try again with more steadfastness to grow into the likeness of your Lord. As we distrust our own power, we shall trust the power of our Redeemer, and we shall praise.³⁶

We are [God’s] little children, and thus He deals with us. When we draw near to Him, He mercifully preserves us from the assaults of the enemy. Never will He betray one who trusts in Him as a child trusts in its parents. He sees the humble, trusting souls drawing near to Him, and in pity and love He draws near to them, and lifts up for them a standard against the enemy. “Touch them not,” He says, “for they are mine.” I have graven them upon the palms of my hands. He teaches them to exercise unquestioning faith in His power to work in their behalf.³⁷

Genuine Charity

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (1 Corinthians 13:13).

The false and the spurious are in the world, and we should closely examine our hearts that we may know whether or not we possess genuine charity. Genuine charity will not create distrust, and evil work. It will not blunt the sword of the Spirit so that it does no execution. Those who would cover evil under false charity, say to the sinner, “It shall be well with thee.” Thank God, there is a charity that will not be corrupted; there is a wisdom that cometh from above, that is (mark it) first pure, then peaceable, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy, and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. This is a description of heaven-born, heaven-bred charity. Charity loves the sinner but hates the sin, and will warn him faithfully of his danger, pointing him to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. Sin is not to be cloaked, but to be taken away. The love that is of heavenly birth is a resistless power, and it can be obtained only by a living connection with God. Would you move the hearts of men, then you must come into actual contact with the God of love. God must first take hold of you if you would take hold of others.³⁸

Real charity helps men to help themselves. If one comes to our door and asks for food, we should not turn him away hungry; his poverty may be the result of misfortune. But true beneficence means more than mere gifts. It means a genuine interest in the welfare of others. We should seek to understand the needs of the poor and distressed, and to give them the help that will benefit them most. To give thought and time and personal effort costs far more than merely to give money. But it is the truest charity.

Those who are taught to earn what they receive will more readily learn to make the most of it. And in learning to be self-reliant, they are acquiring that which will not only make them self-sustaining, but will enable them to help others. Teach the importance of life’s duties to those who are wasting their opportunities. Show them that Bible religion never makes men idlers. Christ always encouraged industry. “Why stand ye here all the day idle?” He said to the indolent. “I must work . . . while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (Matthew 20:6; John 9:4).³⁹

Living a Fragrant Life

“Let all your things be done with charity” (1 Corinthians 16:14).

If our lives are filled with holy fragrance, if we honor God by having good thoughts toward others, and doing good deeds to bless others, it matters not whether we live in a cottage or a palace. Circumstances have but little to do with the experiences of the soul. It is the spirit cherished which gives coloring to all our actions. A man at peace with God and his fellowmen cannot be made miserable. Envy will not be in his heart; evil surmising will find no room there; hatred cannot exist. The heart in harmony with God is lifted above the annoyances and trials of this life. But a heart where the peace of Christ is not, is unhappy, full of discontent; the person sees defects in everything, and he would bring discord into the most heavenly music. A life of selfishness is a life of evil. Those whose hearts are filled with love of self will store away evil thoughts of their brethren and will talk against God’s instrumentalities. Passions kept warm and fierce by Satan’s promptings are a bitter fountain, ever sending forth bitter streams to poison the life of others. . . . Let each one who claims to follow Christ esteem himself less and others more.⁴⁰

It is the conscientious attention to what the world calls little things that makes the great beauty and success of life. Little deeds of charity, little words of kindness, little acts of self-denial, a wise improvement of little opportunities, a diligent cultivation of little talents, make great men in God’s sight. If those little things be faithfully attended to, if these graces be in you, and abound, they will make you perfect in every good work.

It is not enough to be willing to give liberally of your means to the cause of God. He calls for an unreserved consecration of all your powers. Withholding yourselves has been the mistake of your life. You may think it very difficult in your position to maintain a close connection with God, but your work will be tenfold harder if you fail to do this. Satan will beset your path with his temptations, and it is only through Christ that you can gain the victory. The same indomitable will that gives success in intellectual pursuits is essential in the Christian course. You must be representatives of Jesus Christ. Your energy and perseverance in perfecting a Christian character should be as much greater than that displayed in any other pursuit as the things of eternity are of more importance than temporal affairs.⁴¹

Comforted to Comfort Others

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4).

When your brethren and neighbors come in to see you, talk of the wonderful love of Jesus. Rejoice in His intercession for lost man. Tell your friends of the love that you have for their souls, because they are the purchase of the blood of Christ. God forbid that we should make the pathway of other weary travelers harder by magnifying their errors, and by sitting in judgment upon their actions. God help us, that we may speak words of comfort and hope and courage to cheer the life of the lonely, and discouraged, and erring. Let us be like-minded one toward another, and not differ in opinion, merely for the sake of being on the opposite side from our brother. Throw all the sunlight you possibly can, into the pathway of others. It will be dark enough for them, even if you do this; for Satan presses his darkness upon every soul. Let the beams of the Sun of Righteousness shine upon your fellow pilgrims. . . . Let your light shine forth in such clear, steady rays, that no man may stand up in the judgment, and say, “Why did not you tell me about this truth? Why did you not care for my soul? Why did you love the world and its amusements so much, that you impressed me with the thought that they could not be wrong? Why did you not walk in the path cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in, and make straight paths for your feet?”⁴²

Let the heart melt into tenderness before God, as we recall His merciful dealings with us. Let the Spirit of God, like a holy flame, burn away the rubbish that is piled up at the door of the heart, and let Jesus in; then His love will flow out to others through us, in tender words and thoughts and acts.⁴³

Let the burden of your own weakness and sorrow and pain be cast upon the compassionate Saviour. Open your heart to His love, and let it flow out to others. Remember that all have trials hard to bear, temptations hard to resist, and you may do something to lighten these burdens. . . . Keep the heart full of the precious promises of God, that you may bring forth from this treasure, words that will be a comfort and strength to others.⁴⁴

A Gradual Transformation

“We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

We need to have a correct estimate of the value of our own souls; then we would not be as reckless in regard to our course of action as at present. We would seek most earnestly to know God’s way; we would work in an opposite direction from selfishness, and our constant prayer would be that we might have the mind of Christ, that we might be molded and fashioned after His likeness. It is in looking to Jesus and beholding His loveliness, having our eyes steadfastly fixed upon Him, that we become changed into His image. He will give grace to all that keep His way, and do His will, and walk in truth.⁴⁵

We need to study the Bible more, that our minds may dwell upon the infinite sacrifice of Christ, and His mediation in our behalf. Let not Christ’s words and the words of some finite being, bear with equal weight upon you. Fill the whole heart with the words of God. They are the living water, quenching your burning thirst. They are the living bread from heaven. Of this bread you must eat, and you will gain in spirituality and power, ever growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

He who desires the truth in his heart, who longs for the working of its power upon his life and character, will be sure to have it. And when our minds are filled with thoughts of God, the realities of the unseen world will open to our understanding, all the powers of the mind will be subject to new, fresh impressions, we shall take higher, holier views of the truth, and a transformation will be going on in us daily.⁴⁶

We are to copy no human being. There is no human being wise enough to be our criterion. We are to look to the man Christ Jesus, who is complete in the perfection of righteousness and holiness. He is the author and finisher of our faith. He is the pattern Man. His experience is the measure of the experience that we are to gain. His character is our model. Let us, then, take our minds off the perplexities and the difficulties of this life, and fix them on Him, that by beholding we may be changed into His likeness. We may behold Christ to good purpose. We may safely look to Him; for He is all-wise. As we look to Him and think of Him, He will be formed within, the hope of glory.⁴⁷

Be Not Overwhelmed

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body” (2 Corinthians 4:8–10).

Christ will never abandon the soul for whom He has died. The soul may leave Him and be overwhelmed with temptation, but Christ can never turn from one for whom He has paid the ransom of His own life. Could our spiritual vision be quickened, we should see souls bowed under oppression and burdened with grief, pressed as a cart beneath sheaves and ready to die in discouragement. We should see angels flying swiftly to aid these tempted ones, who are standing as on the brink of a precipice. The angels from heaven force back the hosts of evil that encompass these souls, and guide them to plant their feet on the sure foundation. The battles waging between the two armies are as real as those fought by the armies of this world, and on [this] issue . . . eternal destinies depend.

To us, as to Peter, the word is spoken, “Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not” (Luke 22:31, 32). Thank God, we are not left alone.⁴⁸

We must now make Christ our refuge, or in the days before us our souls will be overwhelmed with darkness and despair. There is a point beyond which human help cannot avail. Everyone must live by faith as he is forced into close and apparently deadly conflict with the powers of darkness. Each must stand or fall for himself. The arrows of the destroyer are about to be hurled against the faithful ones. . . . But could our eyes be opened we could see angels of God encircling the righteous, that no harm may come upon them. We have only to trust in God, and go forward in the way of obedience, and we shall be victorious.

“Now the just shall live by faith” (Hebrews 10:38). We must look to Jesus, study His words, pray for His Spirit. We should be more frequently alone with God in meditation and prayer. Let us pray more and talk less. We cannot trust to our own wisdom, our own experience, our own knowledge of the truth; we must be daily learners, looking to our heavenly Teacher for instruction, and then, without regard to ease, pleasure, or convenience, we must go forward, knowing that He is faithful who has called.⁴⁹

Preparing for the Unseen

“Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:17, 18).

This earth is the fitting-up place. You have not one moment to lose. All is harmony, peace, and love in heaven. No discord, no strife, no censuring, no unloving words, no clouded brows, no jars there; and no one will be introduced there who possesses any of these elements so destructive to peace and happiness. . . .

Forever cease your murmurings in regard to this poor life, but let your soul’s burden be, how to secure the better life than this, a title to the mansions prepared for those who are true and faithful to the end. If you make a mistake here, everything is lost. If you devote your lifetime to securing earthly treasures, and lose the heavenly, you will find that you have made a terrible mistake. You cannot have both worlds. “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36). . . .

[The] trials of life are God’s workmen to remove the impurities, infirmities, and roughness from our characters, and fit us for the society of pure, heavenly angels in glory. But as we pass through these trials, as the fires of affliction kindle upon us, we must not keep the eye on the fire which is seen, but let the eye of faith fasten upon the things unseen, the eternal inheritance, the immortal life, the eternal weight of glory; and while we do this the fire will not consume us, but only remove the dross, and we shall come forth seven times purified, bearing the impress of the Divine.⁵⁰

God wants men to labor in His cause who have hearts as true as steel and who will stand steadfast in integrity, undaunted by circumstances. Amid trial and gloom they are just what they were when their prospects were brightened by hope and when their outward surroundings were all that they could desire. . . . Paul in the dark dungeon, awaiting the sentence which he knew was to come from the cruel Nero, is the same Paul who addressed the court of Areopagus. A man whose heart is stayed upon God in the hour of his most afflicting trials and most discouraging surroundings is just what he was in prosperity, when the light and favor of God seemed to be upon him. Faith reaches to the unseen and grasps eternal things.⁵¹

Walking Up God's Pathway

"We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

We are to follow our Lord in the path of self-denial and self-sacrifice. We are not to choose the easiest path. The way that we shall be required to walk will necessitate the exercise of living faith; for it is by faith that we are to rejoice in tribulation, and send forth steady beams of light into the moral darkness that surrounds us.⁵²

None should go along shrinking and trembling, under continual doubt, sowing their path with complainings; but all should look up to God and see His goodness and rejoice in His love. Summon all your powers to look up, not down at your difficulties; then you will never faint by the way. You will soon see Jesus behind the cloud, reaching out His hand to help you; and all you have to do is to give Him your hand in simple faith and let Him lead you. As you become trustful you will, through faith in Jesus, become hopeful. The light shining from the cross of Calvary will reveal to you God's estimate of the soul and, appreciating that estimate, you will seek to reflect the light to the world. A great name among men is as letters traced in sand, but a spotless character will endure to all eternity.⁵³

Rejoice, Oh rejoice, that there is hope for you. Pray to the Lord Jesus that a holy influence may be brought into your life, an influence which shall subdue every passion, hush every murmuring thought, exalt your affections, and purify your heart. . . . Look up, look up, come out of the cave of unbelief, and stand with God. If you dwell upon your trials, you will have a hopeless life. If you look beyond the shadow to Jesus, your only hope, you will see the bright beams of the Sun of righteousness.

Learn the lessons of meekness and lowliness in the school of Christ. Realize how much He bore for us, and then count it not a mark of God's anger that you have some trials to bear for Jesus. If you trust God, the trials will always prove a blessing, and your faith will come forth the brighter, the stronger, the purer. Satan is always trying to press the soul into distrust of God, and therefore we must educate the mind to trust Him. Talk faith and hope when Satan says, as did the wife of Job, "Curse God, and die" (Job 2:9). If you trust God, you will see more reason to trust Him. As you talk of His goodness, you will see more of His love to talk about. Thus the mind may be trained to live in the brightness of the Sun of righteousness, and not in the shadow which Satan casts.⁵⁴

The Beauty of Godly Sorrow

"Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Corinthians 7:9, 10).

Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ must be exercised. As the sinner looks into this divine mirror, he will see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and will be driven to Christ. Godly sorrow will result from a realization of his frailty and depravity.⁵⁵

There is no salvation without repentance. No impenitent sinner can believe with his heart unto righteousness. Repentance is described by Paul as a godly sorrow for sin that "worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (2 Corinthians 7:10). This repentance has in it nothing of the nature of merit, but it prepares the heart for the acceptance of Christ as the only Saviour. . . .

As the sinner looks to the law, his guilt is made plain to him and pressed home to his conscience, and he is condemned. His only comfort and hope is found in looking to the cross of Calvary. As he ventures upon the promises, taking God at His word, relief and peace come to his soul. He cries, "Lord, Thou hast promised to save all who come unto Thee in the name of Thy Son. I am a lost, helpless, hopeless soul. Lord, save, or I perish." His faith lays hold on Christ, and he is justified before God.

But while God can be just, and yet justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ's righteousness while practicing known sins or neglecting known duties. God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul. . . . In order for man to be justified by faith, faith must reach a point where it will control the affections and impulses of the heart; and it is by obedience that faith itself is made perfect. . . .

Through divine grace, supernatural power is imparted to the man and works in mind and heart and character. It is through the impartation of the grace of Christ that sin is discerned in its hateful nature and finally driven from the soul temple.⁵⁶

Weapons for Winning a Heavenly Kingdom

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3–5).

Earthly kingdoms are established and upheld by physical force, but this was not to be the foundation of the Messiah’s kingdom. In the establishment of His government no carnal weapons were to be used, no coercion practiced; no attempt would be made to force the consciences of men. These are the principles used by the prince of darkness for the government of his kingdom. His agents are actively at work, seeking in their human independence to enact laws which are in direct contrast to Christ’s mercy and loving-kindness.

Prophecy has plainly stated the nature of Christ’s kingdom. He planned a government which would use no force; His subjects would know no oppression. The symbols of earthly governments are wild beasts, but in the kingdom of Christ, men are called upon to behold, not a ferocious beast, but the Lamb of God. . . . He came as the divine Restorer, bringing to oppressed and downtrodden humanity the rich and abundant grace of heaven, that by the power of His righteousness, man, fallen and degraded though he was, might be a partaker of divinity.⁵⁷

“Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation” (Mark 14:38). Watch against the stealthy approach of the enemy, watch against old habits and natural inclinations, lest they assert themselves; force them back, and watch. Watch the thoughts, watch the plans, lest they become self-centered. Watch over the souls whom Christ has purchased with His own blood. Watch for opportunities to do them good.⁵⁸

We need now the sword of the Lord to cut to the very soul and marrow of fleshly lusts, appetites, and passions. Minds that have been given up to loose thought need to change. . . . The thoughts must be centered upon God. Now is the time to put forth earnest effort to overcome the natural tendencies of the carnal heart.

Our efforts, our self-denial, our perseverance, must be proportionate to the infinite value of the object of which we are in pursuit. Only by overcoming as Christ overcame shall we win the crown of life.⁵⁹

Guided by the Holy Spirit

“Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16).

False teachers had brought to the Galatians doctrines that were opposed to the gospel of Christ. Paul sought to expose and correct these errors. He greatly desired that the false teachers might be separated from the church, but their influence had affected so many of the believers that it seemed hazardous to take action against them. There was danger of causing strife and division which would be ruinous to the spiritual interests of the church. He therefore sought to impress upon his brethren the importance of trying to help one another in love. He declared that all the requirements of the law setting forth our duty to our fellowmen are fulfilled in love to one another. He warned them that if they indulged hatred and strife, dividing into parties, and like the brutes biting and devouring one another, they would bring upon themselves present unhappiness and future ruin. There was but one way to prevent these terrible evils and that was, as the apostle enjoined upon them, to “walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16). They must by constant prayer seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which would lead them to love and unity.

A house divided against itself cannot stand. When Christians contend, Satan comes in to take control. How often has he succeeded in destroying the peace and harmony of churches. What fierce controversies, what bitterness, what hatred, has a very little matter started! What hopes have been blasted, how many families have been rent asunder by discord and contention!

Paul charged his brethren to beware lest in trying to correct the faults of others they should commit sins equally great themselves. He warns them that hatred, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, and envyings are as truly the works of the flesh as are lasciviousness, adultery, drunkenness, and murder, and will as surely close the gate of heaven against the guilty.

Christ declares: “Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea” (Mark 9:42). Whoever by willful deception or by a wrong example misleads a disciple of Christ is guilty of a great sin. Whoever would make him an object of slander or ridicule is insulting Jesus. Our Saviour marks every wrong done to His followers.¹

God's Plan for You

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Ephesians 1:3–6).

Christ passed no human being by as worthless and hopeless, but sought to apply the saving remedy to every soul who needed help. Wherever He was found, He had a lesson to present that was the right one for the time and circumstance. He sought to inspire with hope the most rough and unpromising, setting before them the idea that they might become blameless and harmless, and attain a character that would be Christlike. They could be the children of God, and shine as lights in the world, even though they lived among evil people. This was the reason that so many heard Him gladly. From His very childhood He worked for others, letting His light shine amid the moral darkness of the world. In bearing burdens in His home life, and in laboring in more public fields, He showed men what the character of God is. He encouraged everything that had a bearing on the real interests of life; but He did not encourage the youth in dreaming of what would be in the future. He taught them by His words and by His example that the future would be decided by the way in which they spent the present. Our destiny is marked out by our own course of action. Those who cherish that which is right, who work out God's plan though it be in a narrow sphere of action, and who do right because it is right, will find wider fields of usefulness. Those who are true to God's holy commandments in a humble place, are fitting themselves to do service in some higher position. The Lord will bless them with views of eternity, will help them to purify and elevate their characters. They may be as conscious of the favor of God as was Christ.²

Your obedience to God's commandments will prove that you are predestinated to a glorious inheritance. You are elected to be laborers together with God, to work in harmony with Christ, to wear His yoke, to lift His burden, and to follow in His footsteps.³

Quickened With Gratitude

“God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:4–6).

What a price has been paid for us! Behold the cross, and the Victim uplifted upon it. Look at those hands, pierced with the cruel nails. Look at His feet, fastened with spikes to the tree. Christ bore our sins in His own body. That suffering, that agony, is the price of your redemption. . . .

Know you not that He loved us, and gave Himself for us, that we in return should give ourselves to Him? Why should not love to Christ be expressed by all who receive Him by faith as verily as His love has been expressed to us for whom He died?

Christ is represented as hunting, searching, for the sheep that was lost. It is His love that encircles us, bringing us back to the fold. His love gives us the privilege of sitting together with Him in heavenly places. . . . Let us praise Him, not in words only, but by the consecration to Him of all that we are and all that we have.

“How much owest thou unto my Lord?” (Luke 16:5). Compute this you cannot. Since all that you have is His, will you withhold from Him that which He claims? When He calls for it, will you selfishly grasp it as your own? Will you keep it back and apply it to some other purpose than the salvation of souls? It is in this way that thousands of souls are lost. How can we better show our appreciation of God's sacrifice, His great donation to our world, than by sending forth gifts and offerings, with praise and thanksgiving from our lips, because of the great love wherewith He has loved us and drawn us to Himself?

Looking up to heaven in supplication, present yourselves to God as His servants, and all that you have as His, saying: “Lord, of Thine own we freely give Thee.” Standing in view of the cross of Calvary and the Son of the infinite God crucified for you, realizing that matchless love, that wonderful display of grace, let your earnest inquiry be: “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” He has told you: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). When you see souls in the kingdom of God saved through your gifts and your service, will not you rejoice that you had the privilege of doing this work?⁴

Focusing Our Mind for Pure Speech

“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:29, 30).

Angels are watching over and guarding us; we often grieve these angels by indulging in trifling conversation, jesting, and joking. . . . There is a great lack of Christian fortitude and serving God from principle. We should not seek to please and gratify self, but to honor and glorify God, and in all we do and say to have an eye single to His glory. If we would let our hearts be impressed with the following important words, and ever bear them in mind, we should not so easily fall into temptation and our words would be few and well chosen: “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.” “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” “Thou God seest me” (Isaiah 53:5; Matthew 12:36; Genesis 16:13).

We could not think of these important words, and call to mind the sufferings of Jesus that we poor sinners might receive pardon and be redeemed unto God by His most precious blood, without feeling a holy restraint upon us and an earnest desire to suffer for Him who suffered and endured so much for us. If we dwell on these things, dear self, with its dignity, will be humbled, and its place will be occupied by a childlike simplicity which will bear reproof from others and will not be easily provoked. A self-willed spirit will not then come in to rule the soul.

The true Christian’s joys and consolation must and will be in heaven. The longing souls of those who have tasted of the powers of the world to come and have feasted on heavenly joys, will not be satisfied with things of earth. Such will find enough to do in their leisure moments. Their souls will be drawn out after God. Where the treasure is, there will the heart be, holding sweet communion with the God they love and worship. Their amusement will be in contemplating their treasure—the Holy City, the earth made new, their eternal home. And while they dwell upon those things which are lofty, pure, and holy, heaven will be brought near, and they will feel the power of the Holy Spirit.⁵

Walk in Love

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour” (Ephesians 4:31–5:2).

The love of God must pervade the soul, or the fruits of righteousness will not appear. It is not safe to indulge in vanity and pride, or love of power or gain. . . . When Christ is in the heart it will be so softened and subdued by love for God and man that fretting, faultfinding, and contention will not exist there.⁶

As is the seed, so will be the harvest. If we sow distrust, envy, jealousy, self-love, bitterness of thought and feeling, we shall reap bitterness to our own souls. If we manifest kindness, love, tender thought for the feelings of others, we shall receive the same in return.⁷

A cultivated intellect is a great treasure; but without the softening influence of sympathy and sanctified love, it is not of the highest value. We should have words and deeds of tender consideration for others. We can manifest a thousand little attentions in friendly words and pleasant looks, which will be reflected upon us again. Thoughtless Christians manifest by their neglect of others that they are not in union with Christ. It is impossible to be in union with Christ and yet be unkind to others and forgetful of their rights. Many long intensely for friendly sympathy. God has given each of us an identity of our own, which cannot be merged in that of another; but our individual characteristics will be much less prominent if we are indeed Christ’s and His will is ours. Our lives should be consecrated to the good and happiness of others, as was our Saviour’s. We should be self-forgetful, ever looking out for opportunities, even in little things, to show gratitude for the favors we have received of others, and watching for opportunities to cheer others and lighten and relieve their sorrows and burdens by acts of tender kindness and little deeds of love. These thoughtful courtesies, that, commencing in our families, extend outside the family circle, help make up the sum of life’s happiness; and the neglect of these little things makes up the sum of life’s bitterness and sorrow.⁸

October 6

Dependable Light Bearers

“Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8).

Christians may learn a lesson from the faithfulness of the lighthouse keeper. “A gentleman once visited a lighthouse that was placed in a very dangerous position to warn men of the perils that threaten them on the trackless sea. The keeper was boasting of the brilliancy of his light, which could be seen ten leagues out at sea, when the visitor said to him: “You speak with enthusiasm, sir; and that is well. I like to hear men tell what they are sure they know; but what if one of the lights should go out?”

“Never, never! absurd! impossible!” replied the sensitive watchman, in consternation at the mere supposition of such a thing. “Why, sir,” he continued, pointing to the ocean, “yonder where nothing can be seen, there are ships going by to every port in the world. If, tonight, one of my burners should go out, within six months would come a letter, perhaps from India, perhaps from Australia, perhaps from a port I never heard of before—a letter saying that on such a night, at such an hour, at such a minute, the light at such a point burned low and dim; that the watchman neglected his post, and that vessels were consequently put in jeopardy on the high seas. Ah, sir,” and his face shone with the intensity of his thought, “sometimes in the dark nights, and in the stormy weather, I look out upon the sea and feel as though the eye of the whole world were looking at my light. Go out? Burn dim? That flame flicker low or fail? No, sir, never!”

And shall Christians, shining for tempted sinners, allow their light to fail? For, ever out upon life’s billowy sea are souls we see not, strange sailors in the dark, passing by, struggling, it may be, amid the surges of temptation. Christ is the great light, and Christians are appointed to reflect that light. The ocean is vast, its dangers are many, and the eyes of faraway voyagers are turned toward the lighthouse—the church of Jesus Christ. If the world intervenes between the church and Christ, its light will burn dim, and souls will be lost because of a lack of that light. Shall it not be the language of every heart, . . . What! let the light that is in me go out or burn dim! Never! never! . . .

God holds us responsible for the influence we exert over others. . . . It is as impossible for us to determine the result as it was for the watchman to see the ships that were scattered upon the sea.⁹

October 7

God Works in All Circumstances

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

Let us consider the experience of Paul for a little. At the very time when it seemed that the apostle’s labors were most needed to strengthen the tried and persecuted church, his liberty was taken away, and he was bound in chains. But this was the time for the Lord to work, and precious were the victories won. When to all appearance Paul was able to do the least, then it was that the truth found an entrance into the royal palace. Not Paul’s masterly sermons before these great men, but his bonds attracted their attention. Through his captivity he was a conqueror for Christ. The patience and meekness with which he submitted to his long and unjust confinement, set these men to weighing character. . . .

The sustaining grace of God ministered to Paul in his imprisonment, making him cheerful, and he could even rejoice in tribulation. With faith and assurance he writes to his Philippian brethren, showing them that his imprisonment has resulted in the furtherance of the Gospel. “I would ye should understand, brethren,” he writes, “that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear” (Philippians 1:12–14).

We have a lesson to learn from this history, revealing as it does God’s way of working. The Lord can bring victory out of that which to us may seem discomfiture and defeat. It is always His plan to disappoint the enemy. We are apt to forget God, and look at the things which are seen, which are temporal, when we should look at the things which are not seen, which are eternal. When misfortune or sudden calamity comes, we are ready to charge God with cruelty. If He sees fit to cut off our usefulness in some line, we mourn and lament. We do not stop to consider that this may be God’s way of working. We have yet to learn that chastisement is a part of God’s great plan; that under affliction’s rod we may do far more for the Master than when engaged in active service. . . . When we are pressed by suffering or bereavement, God sends the needed help. His promises are proved to be steadfast and unailing.¹⁰

Esteeming Others Better Than Ourselves

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Philippians 2:3, 4).

The soul that is constantly looking unto Jesus will see His self-denying love and deep humility, and will copy His example. Pride, ambition, deceit, hatred, selfishness, must be cleansed from the heart. With many these evil traits are partially subdued, but not thoroughly uprooted from the heart. Under favorable circumstances they spring up anew and ripen into rebellion against God. Here lies a terrible danger.¹¹

The first great commandment is: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.” “And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mark 12:30, 31). On these two commandments the whole interest and duty of moral beings hang. Those who do their duty to others as they would that others should do to them are brought into a position where God can reveal Himself to them. They will be approved of Him. They are made perfect in love, and their labors and prayers will not be in vain. They are continually receiving grace and truth from the Fountainhead, and as freely transmitting to others the divine light and salvation they receive. In them is fulfilled the language of the Scripture: “Ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Romans 6:22).

Selfishness is abomination in the sight of God and holy angels. Because of this sin many fail to attain the good which they are capable of enjoying. They look with selfish eyes on their own things, and do not love and seek the interest of others as they do their own. They reverse God’s order. Instead of doing for others what they wish others to do for them, they do for themselves what they desire others to do for them, and do to others what they are most unwilling to have returned to them. Here is where you need to learn. Love is of God. You have not the love which dwelt in the bosom of Christ. The unconsecrated heart cannot originate, or produce, this plant of heavenly origin, which, in order to flourish, must be watered constantly with the dew of heaven. It can flourish only in the heart where Christ reigns. This love cannot live and flourish without action; and it cannot act without increasing in fervency, and extending and diffusing its nature to others.¹²

Christ Bowed Down to Lift Us Up

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:5–8).

The apostle [Paul] lingers over point after point, that our minds may grasp and fully comprehend the wonderful condescension of the Saviour in behalf of sinners. He presents Christ before us as He was when equal with God and receiving the adoration of angels, and then traces His descent until He reaches the lowest depths of humiliation, that with His human arm He may reach fallen man and lift him from his degradation to hope, joy, and heaven.

Paul was deeply anxious that the humiliation of Christ should be seen and realized. He was convinced that if the minds of men could be brought to comprehend the amazing sacrifice made by the Majesty of heaven, all selfishness would be banished from their hearts. He directs the mind first to the position which Christ occupied in heaven, in the bosom of His Father; he reveals Him afterward as laying off His glory, voluntarily subjecting Himself to all the humbling conditions of man’s nature, assuming the responsibilities of a servant, and becoming obedient unto death, and that death the most ignominious and revolting, the most shameful, the most agonizing—the death of the cross. Can Christians contemplate this wonderful exhibition of the love of God to man without emotions of love and a realizing sense of the fact that we are not our own? Such a Master should not be served from grudging, covetous, selfish motives.¹³

Jesus might have remained at His Father’s right hand, wearing His kingly crown and royal robes. But He chose to exchange all the riches, honor, and glory of heaven for the poverty of humanity, and His station of high command for the horrors of Gethsemane and the humiliation and agony of Calvary. He became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, that by His baptism of suffering and blood He might purify and redeem a guilty world.¹⁴

Notwithstanding all that was His by right Christ yielded it all up, that He might give you life, and teach you how to live for Him. Do not disappoint Him. . . . Tell of His goodness.¹⁵

Working Out Our Own Salvation

“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12, 13).

There are many who give no decided evidence that they are true to their baptismal vows. Their zeal is chilled by formality, worldly ambition, pride, and love of self. . . . Those who experience the work of true conversion in their hearts will reveal the fruits of the Spirit in their lives. Oh, that those who have so little spiritual life would realize that eternal life can be granted only to those who become partakers of the divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust!¹⁶

Religion is not merely an emotion, a feeling. It is a principle which is interwoven with all the daily duties and transactions of life. Nothing will be entertained, no business engaged in, which will prevent the accompaniment of this principle. To retain pure and undefiled religion, it is necessary to be workers, persevering in effort. We must do something ourselves. No one else can do our work. None but ourselves can work out our salvation with fear and trembling. This is the very work which the Lord has left for us to do.¹⁷

Man is allotted a part in this great struggle for everlasting life; he must respond to the working of the Holy Spirit. It will require a struggle to break through the powers of darkness, and the Spirit works in him to accomplish this. But man is no passive being, to be saved in indolence. He is called upon to strain every muscle and exercise every faculty in the struggle for immortality; yet it is God that supplies the efficiency.¹⁸

We must be workers together with God. Life must become to us a humble, earnest working out of salvation with fear and trembling; and then faith, hope, and love will abide in our hearts, giving us an earnest of the reward that awaits the overcomer.

A relentless and determined foe has prepared his wiles for every soul that is not braced for trial, and guarded by constant prayer and living faith. We cannot individually, or as a body, secure ourselves from his constant assaults; but in the strength of Jesus every temptation, every opposing influence, whether open or secret, may be successfully resisted.¹⁹

Shining Lights Rejoicing

“Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:14, 15).

Through the mercy of God we have been taken out of the quarry of the world by the mighty cleaver of truth, to be hewn, and polished, and fitted for the heavenly building. We have been brought into the highway cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in. And we should go in this way with rejoicing, instead of with complaining.²⁰

If you have been in the habit of murmuring, complaining, and finding fault, you must cease, for you are showing the satanic side of your character. If you neglect your own soul, and begin to find fault and pick flaws in others, you are doing Satan’s work. But if you are talking of the love of Jesus, and are trying to bless those around you with your influence, you are a blessing and not a curse, you are bringing yourself into close relationship to Jesus. Every day we are to be gaining the victory. . . .

You must not be controlled by feeling. You must look away from the things that are seen, to the things that are unseen, trusting and rejoicing in the promises of God. I have thought with what joy the angels would look down from heaven upon us, if we were all praising God, and abiding in Christ. If, indeed, there is joy to the full for the Christian, why should we not possess it, and manifest it to the world?²¹

Now suppose you put away all murmuring and complaining, and look to the light. Let us try it, and see what kind of a life we shall have. When Satan suggests doubt and darkness, say, I will be free, I am free, and when Satan tells you that you are a sinner, tell him, I know it; but Jesus said, “I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matthew 9:13). Ask God to help you to place your thoughts upon Jesus, and Satan cannot control your mind. Put away all commonness; determine that through Jesus you will elevate your soul above all that is low and earthly, and become lights to the world. Let your words be as choice silver, your conversation full of hope and courage in the Lord, and wherever you are those around you will realize that a precious influence goes with you. The light and love and power of God will rest upon you.²²

That I May Win Christ

“What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Philippians 3:7-9).

Whenever a soul falls in love with Jesus, every other affection is placed in subservience to this pure, refining principle of heavenly love. Pride, passion, and ambition, which have held sway over the natural heart, are surrendered to Jesus Christ.²³

If we receive Jesus Christ, we must receive all the conditions, all the requirements, and make it our life business in everything to make the kingdom of God our first consideration. Difficulties will present themselves as obstructions. *But the greatest difficulties originate with self.* It will cost all there is of the man, for Christ demands the heart, the soul, the strength, and the mind of every human agent. . . . It will cost self-humiliation, self-denial, self-sacrifice, a constant conflict with human passions. *Our natural temperaments cannot be carried along. . . .*

To be half for Christ and half unrenewed, having the mind of the enemy, means to be a stumbling block to one’s self and a stumbling block to others, a reproach to Christ and a weakness in the church and in the ministry. If we do not propose to be wholly converted, to be doers of the word, then for Christ’s sake let us not spoil the Christian experience of others, causing them to be led astray by our serving sin and the devil while professedly serving the Lord. Without the absolute surrender of self, soul, body, and spirit the contest is hopeless. Self must be hid in Christ.²⁴

The world’s Redeemer was scorned as a deceiver, hunted down as a malefactor; and shall those who become the servants of Christ expect to be treated any better than was their Lord? If they work the works of Christ, friends and relatives will rise up against them. They will persecute, forsake, and betray them. Let the believer not become discouraged because of the things he must suffer. Let his only anxiety be that hatred be kindled against him for no other reason than that of faithfulness in the discharge of his duty for Christ’s sake. The true child of God will say, I know I have to do with God, who trieth the heart, and hath pleasure in uprightness.²⁵

Press On

“Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13, 14).

If we have dark chapters in our experience, let us not keep their memory fresh by repetition. Forgetting the things that are behind, let us press forward to the things that are before. Cultivate only those thoughts and feelings which produce gratitude and praise. If you have been wronged, forget it, and think only of the great mercy, the loving-kindness, the inexpressible love of Jesus. Learn to praise rather than to censure. If you meet with insult and abuse, do not become discouraged, for Jesus met the same. Go forward, doing your work with fidelity. Store the mind with the precious promises of God’s word, and hold sweet communion with Him by frequently repeating them. Cease fretting, cease murmuring, cease finding fault, and make melody to God in your hearts. Think of everything you have to be thankful for, and then learn to praise God.²⁶

When temptations assail you, as they surely will, when care and perplexity surround you, when, distressed and discouraged, you are almost ready to yield to despair, look, O look, to where with the eye of faith you last saw the light. . . . When sin struggles for the mastery in your soul, and burdens the conscience, when unbelief clouds the mind, go to the Saviour. His grace is sufficient to subdue sin. He will pardon us, making us joyful in God.

Looking at self, we see only weakness, and we forget God’s purpose for us. We forget that He placed on us so high a value that He gave Christ to die for us. Oh, after all that has been done for us, how can we disappoint Christ by failing to live the life that He has made it possible for us to live? Let us no longer talk of our inefficiency and lack of power. Forgetting the things that are behind, let us press forward in the heavenward way. Let us neglect no opportunity that, if improved, will make us more useful in God’s service. Then like threads of gold, holiness will run through our lives, and the angels, beholding our consecration, will repeat the promise, “I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir” (Isaiah 13:12). All heaven rejoices when weak, faulty human beings give themselves to Jesus, to live His life.²⁷

Living Above Circumstances

“[Paul declared,] I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:11–13).

God permits us to be placed under circumstances that will test us, to increase our love and to perfect our trust in Him. Through self-denial and suffering with Christ, we grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. Trials will come, but they are an evidence that we are children of God. Paul passed through great trials, but he did not despair as though his Father in heaven were dead. He rejoiced in tribulation; for he desired, through participation in the sufferings of Christ, to be conformed to His image.²⁸

It is love of selfish ease, love of pleasure, your self-esteem, self-exaltation, that prevents you from learning the precious life-lessons in the school of Christ. It is the Christian’s duty not to permit surroundings and circumstances to mold him; but to live above surroundings, fashioning his character according to the divine Model. He is to be faithful in whatever place he is found. He is to do his duty with fidelity, improving the opportunities given him of God, making the most of his capabilities. With an eye single to the glory of God, he is to work for Jesus wherever he may be. We are to surrender the will, the heart, to God, and become acquainted with Christ. We must deny self, take up the cross, and follow Jesus. Not one of us can reach heaven, save by the narrow, cross-bearing way. But how many wear the cross as an ornament of the person, but fail to bear the cross in practical, everyday life.

How many profess to be the servants of Christ; but how loath are they to bear reproach and shame, for His sake. The cross is not to please self; it lies directly across the path of the pleasure-lover, and cuts through our carnal desires and selfish inclinations. The cross rebukes all unfaithfulness in your labors. If you bear the cross of Christ, you will not shun responsibilities or burden bearing.²⁹

Patient, cheerful contentment is one of the “best gifts” (1 Corinthians 12:31). So also is courage to follow in the path of duty, even when this path separates us from friends. But courage of conviction must never lead to stubbornness, which leads a man to adhere to his own ideas. Let all watch and pray.³⁰

Becoming Grounded and Settled

“You, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel” (Colossians 1:21–23).

Are we individually rooted and grounded in gospel truth so that we may be established, strengthened, and settled in the faith? Are we, as those who have the knowledge of the mysteries of God, those to whom God has committed the living oracles, loyal and true to our stewardship? Those who are truly converted will reveal, as missionaries for God, what the truth means to them in its transforming efficiency and sanctifying power. . . .

The world would not be what it now is if professed believers in Christ were receivers of His divine nature. It is the example of men who claim to believe the truth, but who do not practice the truth, that detracts from the influence of Christianity.³¹

Every position of our faith will be searched into; and if we are not thorough Bible students, established, strengthened, and settled, the wisdom of the world’s great men will lead us astray.³²

We cannot be settled in the faith unless we educate and train every faculty of the mind. To continue in the faith means to have a determined purpose to use every God-given power in becoming an experienced and competent builder with God, building up the souls of those in the faith, and striving to reach those who have not yet come to a knowledge of the truth.³³

Strength comes by exercise. All who put to use the ability which God has given them will have increased ability to devote to His service. Those who do nothing in the cause of God will fail to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. A man who would lie down and refuse to exercise his limbs would soon lose all power to use them. Thus the Christian who will not exercise his God-given powers not only fails to grow up into Christ, but he loses the strength which he already has; he becomes a spiritual paralytic. It is those who, with love for God and their fellowmen, are striving to help others that become established, strengthened, settled, in the truth. The true Christian works for God, not from impulse, but from principle; not for a day or a month, but during the entire period of life.³⁴

A Humble, Thankful Walk

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving” (Colossians 2:6, 7).

Christ died for all. The sacrifice was complete. It is your privilege and duty to show to the world that you have an entire, all-powerful Saviour. It was the Son of the infinite God who died to purchase a full and free salvation for all that would accept it. Then why not take Him as your Saviour? He rebukes your unbelief; He honors your faith.

Go into a cellar, and you may well talk of darkness, and say, I cannot see; I cannot see. But come up into the upper chamber, where the light shines, and you need not be in darkness. Come where Christ is, and you will have light. Talk unbelief, and you will have unbelief; but talk faith, and you will have faith. According to the seed sown will be the harvest. If you talk of heaven and the eternal reward, you will become lighter and lighter in the Lord, and your faith will grow, because it is exercised. Fasten your eyes upon Jesus, dear friends, and by beholding you will become assimilated to His image. Do not allow your thoughts to dwell continually upon things of the earth, but place them upon things that are heavenly, and then, wherever you are, you will be a light to the world.

Live the life of faith day by day. Do not become anxious and distressed about the time of trouble, and thus have a time of trouble beforehand. Do not keep thinking, I am afraid I shall not stand in the great testing day. You are to live for the present, for this day only. Tomorrow is not yours. Today you are to maintain the victory over self. Today you are to live a life of prayer. Today you are to fight the good fight of faith. Today you are to believe that God blesses you. And as you gain the victory over darkness and unbelief, you will meet the requirements of the Master, and will become a blessing to those around you.³⁵

The truly holy, who walk with God like Enoch of old, will not be boastful of their purity, but be courteous, humble, unselfish, free from spiritual pride and exaltation. Those who know most of God, and keep their eye fixed on the Author and Finisher of their faith, will see nothing good or great in themselves. They will feel, after doing all in their power to be faithful, that they are yet unprofitable servants.³⁶

Dead to Self, Alive to God

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:1–3).

Study the whole of this chapter of Colossians [3] carefully and prayerfully. Bear in mind that they are addressed who have been buried by baptism in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. If you will ever remember that you are dead to worldly interests and attractions, and have risen to seek those things which are above, these heavenly powers are pledged to give you power to walk with Him in newness of life.³⁷

It is the love of self that destroys our peace. While self is all alive, we stand ready continually to guard it from mortification and insult; but when we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God, we shall not take neglects or slights to heart. We shall be deaf to reproach and blind to scorn and insult. . . .

Happiness drawn from earthly sources is as changeable as varying circumstances can make it; but the peace of Christ is a constant and abiding peace. It does not depend upon any circumstances in life, on the amount of worldly goods or the number of earthly friends. Christ is the fountain of living water, and happiness drawn from Him can never fail.³⁸

When we are alive to God, we are dead to self. May God help us to die to self. Whose names will not be blotted out of the book of life? Only the names of those who have loved God with all the powers of their being, and their neighbors as themselves. . . .

Selfishness is inwrought in our very being. It has come to us as an inheritance, and has been cherished by many as a precious treasure. No special work for God can be accomplished until self and selfishness are overcome. To many everything connected with themselves is of great importance. Self is a center, around which everything seems to revolve. Were Christ on the earth now, He would say to such, “Launch out into the deep” (Luke 5:4). Be not so self-caring. There are thousands whose lives are just as precious as yours. Then why do you wrap your coat about you, and hug the shore? Awake to duty and to usefulness! If you will launch out into the deep and let down your nets, the Master will gather in the fishes, and you will see of the mighty working of God.³⁹

The Heavenly Master Sees All

“Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:22–24).

It is the most abhorrent form of selfishness that leads the worker to neglect the improvement of time, the care of property, because he is not directly under the eye of the master. But do such workers imagine that their neglects are not noticed, their unfaithfulness not recorded? Could their eyes be opened, they would see that a Watcher looks on, and all their carelessness is recorded in the books of heaven. . . .

The servants of God are to feel at all times that they are under the eye of their employer. He who watched the sacrilegious feast of Belshazzar is present in all our institutions, in the counting-room of the merchant, in the private workshop; and the bloodless hand is as surely recording your neglect, as it recorded the awful judgment of the blasphemous king. Belshazzar’s condemnation was written in words of fire, “Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting” (Daniel 5:27); and if you fail to fulfill your God-given obligations, your condemnation will be the same.

There are many who profess to be Christians who are not united with Christ. . . . They are anxious to reduce their service to the minimum of effort, and at the same time exact the highest of wages. The name “servant” applies to every man; for we are all servants, and it will be well for us to see what mold we are taking on. Is it the mold of unfaithfulness, or of fidelity?

Is it the disposition generally among servants to do as much as possible? Is it not rather the prevalent fashion to slide through the work as quickly, as easily, as possible, and obtain the wages at as little cost to themselves as they can? The object is not to be as thorough as possible but to get the remuneration. . . .

Those who enter the work as eye-servants, will find that their work cannot bear the inspection of men or of angels. The thing essential for successful work is a knowledge of Christ; for this knowledge will give sound principles of right, impart a noble, unselfish spirit, like that of our Saviour whom we profess to serve. Faithfulness, economy, care-taking, thoroughness, should characterize all our work, wherever we may be.⁴⁰

Feeling Covetous—or Content?

“Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1 Timothy 6:6–8).

The great apostle, in his letter to Timothy, would impress upon his mind the necessity of giving such instruction as should remove the deception which so easily steals upon the rich, that because of their ability to acquire wealth they are superior in wisdom and judgment to those who are in poverty; that gain is godliness. They flatter themselves that because of their wealth they are especially favored of God. Here is the fearful deception.

Individuals may devote their whole lives to the one object of acquiring riches, yet as they brought nothing into the world they can carry nothing out. They must die and leave that which cost them so much labor to obtain. They stake their eternal interest to obtain a little of this world, and lose both worlds. But some are determined to be rich; it is their constant study; and in their zeal, eternal considerations are overlooked. In the pursuit of wealth, they are blinded by Satan and made to believe that their motives are good. . . . If not disappointed in their object, they are disappointed in the happiness they supposed wealth would bring.⁴¹

With the follower of Christ the love of money will not be all-absorbing. For Christ’s sake he will labor for it, deny self, cut off every needless expenditure, that the means which come into his possession may be used in the great work of saving souls who are without Christ and without hope in the world. Thus he will cooperate with the world’s Redeemer, who for our sake became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. The Commander of the angelic host laid aside His royal robes and crown of honor. He left the royal courts of heaven, and clothed His divinity with humanity, that humanity might touch humanity, and that divinity might lay hold of the power of God in behalf of the fallen race. The love of ease and pleasure and self-exaltation did not characterize the life of Christ. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. . . . All who make an unreserved surrender of themselves to God will share in the self-denial of Christ, and will have fellowship with Him in His sufferings.⁴²

Escaping Many Sorrows

“They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (1 Timothy 6:9–11).

Many are determined to be rich; this is their study, and in their zeal eternal considerations are overlooked. They are blinded by Satan and make themselves believe that it is for good purposes they desire this gain; they strain their consciences, deceive themselves, and are constantly coveting riches. . . . They have sacrificed their noble, elevated principles, given up their faith for riches and, if not disappointed in their object, they are disappointed in the happiness which they supposed riches would bring. They are entangled, perplexed with care; they have made themselves slaves to their avarice and compelled their families to the same slavery, and the advantages they reap are many sorrows. . . .

The apostle Paul shows the only true use for riches, and bids Timothy charge the rich to do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; for in so doing they are laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come—referring to the close of time—that they may lay hold on eternal life.⁴³

If the eye of the mind beholds the excellence of the mystery of godliness, the advantage of spiritual riches over worldly riches, the whole body will be full of light. If the imagination is perverted by the fascination of earthly pomp and splendor until gain seems godliness, the whole body will be full of darkness. When the powers of the mind are concentrated upon the treasures of earth, they are debased and belittled. The Saviour makes more plain the results of covetousness on heart and soul, when He calls the condition of such a person “darkness.” When the eye is blinded by desires for worldly treasure, the value of eternal treasure cannot be discerned. . . . Virtue can never be related to avarice; self-indulgence, love of luxury, and greed of gain, can never be united with supreme love of God; but “if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light” (Matthew 6:22).⁴⁴

The Good Fight of Faith

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses” (1 Timothy 6:12).

We are continually to be found fighting the good fight of faith. We are to behold Christ, to study His character in the light of His word with fervent prayer, dwelling upon His attributes and virtues, until we shall become changed into His image. There is no time to halt and rest upon the ladder of progress. The command is to go forward and upward, looking to God, who is above the ladder. To look back is to become dizzy, to relax your hold, to lose all, to fall back into darkness. You must keep hold on Christ your Mediator, ascending step by step, being changed from glory to glory, from character to character, as by the Spirit of the Lord.⁴⁵

There is earnest work to be done by us individually if we would fight the good fight of faith. Eternal interests are at stake. We must put on the whole armor of righteousness, we must resist the devil, and we have the sure promise that he will be put to flight. The church is to conduct an aggressive warfare, to make conquests for Christ, to rescue souls from the power of the enemy. God and holy angels are engaged in this warfare. Let us please Him who has called us to be soldiers.

All can do something in the work. None will be pronounced guiltless before God unless they have worked earnestly and unselfishly for the salvation of souls. The church should teach the youth, both by precept and example, to be workers for Christ. There are many who complain of their doubts, who lament that they have no assurance of their connection with God. This is often attributable to the fact that they are doing nothing in God’s cause. Let them seek earnestly to help and bless others, and their doubts and despondency will disappear.

Many who profess to be followers of Christ speak and act as though their names were a great honor to the cause of God, while they bear no burdens and win no souls to the truth. Such persons live as though God had no claims upon them. If they continue in this course they will find at last that they have no claims upon God.

He who has appointed “to every man his work” (Mark 13:34), according to his ability, will never let the faithful performance of duty go unrewarded. Every act of loyalty and faith will be crowned with special tokens of God’s favor and approbation.⁴⁶

Why Is There Persecution?

“All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12).

The mysterious providence which permits the righteous to suffer persecution at the hand of the wicked has been a cause of great perplexity to many who are weak in faith. Some are even ready to cast away their confidence in God because He suffers the basest of men to prosper, while the best and purest are afflicted and tormented by their cruel power. How, it is asked, can One who is just and merciful, and who is also infinite in power, tolerate such injustice and oppression? This is a question with which we have nothing to do. God has given us sufficient evidence of His love, and we are not to doubt His goodness because we cannot understand the workings of His providence. . . . Jesus suffered for us more than any of His followers can be made to suffer through the cruelty of wicked men. Those who are called to endure torture and martyrdom are but following in the steps of God’s dear Son. . . .

[The Lord] does not forget or neglect His children; but He permits the wicked to reveal their true character, that none who desire to do His will may be deceived concerning them. Again, the righteous are placed in the furnace of affliction, that they themselves may be purified; that their example may convince others of the reality of faith and godliness; and also that their consistent course may condemn the ungodly and unbelieving.

God permits the wicked to prosper and to reveal their enmity against Him, that when they shall have filled up the measure of their iniquity all may see His justice and mercy in their utter destruction. The day of His vengeance hastens, when all who have transgressed His law and oppressed His people will meet the just recompense of their deeds; when every act of cruelty or injustice toward God’s faithful ones will be punished as though done to Christ Himself. . . .

The religion which is current in our day is not of the pure and holy character that marked the Christian faith in the days of Christ and His apostles. It is only because of the spirit of compromise with sin, because the great truths of the word of God are so indifferently regarded, because there is so little vital godliness in the church, that Christianity is apparently so popular with the world. Let there be a revival of the faith and power of the early church, and the spirit of persecution will be revived, and the fires . . . rekindled.⁴⁷

A Forgiving Spirit

“Speak evil of no man, . . . be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared” (Titus 3:2–4).

Meekness is a precious grace, willing to suffer silently, willing to endure trials. Meekness is patient and labors to be happy under all circumstances. Meekness is always thankful and makes its own songs of happiness, making melody in the heart to God. Meekness will suffer disappointment and wrong, and will not retaliate. Meekness is not to be silent and sulky. A morose temper is the opposite of meekness; for this only wounds and gives pain to others, and takes no pleasure to itself.⁴⁸

The mercy and favor which God manifests towards us is an example of how we should treat the erring. When those who claim to believe the truth humble their hearts before God and obey His word, then the Lord will listen to their prayers.

If your brethren have erred, you must forgive them. You should not say, as some have said who ought to know better: “I do not think they feel humble enough. I do not think they feel their confession.” What right have you to judge them, as if you could read the heart? The word of God says: “If he repent, forgive him” (Luke 17:3). . . . And not only seven times, but seventy times seven should you forgive him, just as often as Christ forgives you.

God has freely forgiven our sins, not asking us to render any equivalent. The Lord has given us this example in order that men may see how they should treat their fellowmen. As God for Christ’s sake has forgiven your sins, you should forgive your brethren who trespass against you. If you are an overcomer at last, it will not be because of your own righteousness, but because of the righteousness of Christ, because of the long forbearance, mercy, and forgiveness of God. But if you do not cherish kindness, love, and a forgiving spirit toward your brethren, you will not be of the number who will receive the forgiveness of God. The lesson that Jesus would impress upon His disciples is that those who profess His name should not cherish a revengeful spirit, or do an unkind action.⁴⁹

How Important Is Today?

“Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (Hebrews 3:15).

Look not to a future, more convenient season when the cross to be lifted will be less heavy, when the inclinations of the carnal heart will be subdued with less effort. . . . Today go about the work, else you may be one day too late. The impression that you have now may not be as strong tomorrow. Satan’s snare may close about you. The candlestick may be moved out of its place, and you left in darkness. “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh” (Hebrews 12:25). Says the true Witness, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock” (Revelation 3:20). Every warning, reproof, and entreaty in the word of God, or through His delegated messengers, is a knock at the door of the heart; it is the voice of Jesus asking for entrance. With every knock unheeded, your determination to open becomes weaker and weaker. If the voice of Jesus is not heeded at once, it becomes confused in the mind with a multitude of other voices, the world’s care and business engross the attention, and conviction dies away. The heart becomes less impressible, and lapses into a perilous unconsciousness of the shortness of time, and of the great eternity beyond. The heavenly Guest is standing at your door, while you are piling up obstructions to bar His entrance. Jesus is knocking through the prosperity He gives you. He loads you with blessings to test your fidelity, that they may flow out from you to others.⁵⁰

Conscience is the voice of God, heard amid the conflict of human passions; when it is resisted, the Spirit of God is grieved. . . . It is not that God sends out a decree that man shall not be saved. He does not throw a darkness before the eyes which cannot be penetrated. But man at first resists a motion of the Spirit of God, and, having once resisted, it is less difficult to do so the second time, less the third, and far less the fourth. . . .

When secret prayer and reading of the Scriptures are neglected today, tomorrow they can be omitted with less remonstrance of conscience. There will be a long list of omissions, all for a single grain sown in the soil of the heart. On the other hand, every ray of light cherished will yield a harvest of light. Temptation once resisted will give power to more firmly resist the second time; every new victory gained over self will smooth the way for higher and nobler triumphs. Every victory is a seed sown to eternal life.⁵¹

Sharper Than a Scalpel

“The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

The Lord calls upon His people to repent and to do their first works. He admonishes them to examine themselves, whether they are in the faith, whether their hopes are well founded, whether they are not petting and excusing defects of character, when they should be going on to perfection. The worldliness in the church, which is the great cause of spiritual death, is attributable to the influence of selfish, ease-loving members. The progress of this deadly malady must be checked. The surgeon’s knife cuts deep when it is necessary to remove festering, pestilent matter; so the word of God, sharper than any two-edged sword, must be made to cut to the heart, or the evil will never be removed. . . .

What we need, what we cannot do without, is the Spirit of God to work with our efforts. All pampering of self must be at an end. There must be an earnest longing, a soul hunger, for the presence of the Lord. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6).

It is a case of life or death with us. We have been stricken with spiritual paralysis, and everyone needs the help of the great Physician. He alone can reach our case. He is only waiting to be invited by us with earnest heart, with sincere desire. . . . God is no respecter of persons or of places. It cannot be because of any reluctance on the part of the great Physician that they are passed by. They did not prepare the way for Him. Perhaps they neglected to make humble confessions to those whom they had injured. They have not put away the idols from the soul temple. They have a work to do to repent of their self-indulgence, of the favorite sins which they are not ready to surrender. Nothing is wanting but a preparation of heart, and earnest, believing prayer, to bring Jesus to our side as a mighty helper. He longs to come. He is only waiting for us to prepare the way, and He will come. When He walked in His humiliation, a man among the children of men, He delighted in doing good to the bodies and souls of all who sought Him and trusted Him. So He will now verify His promises to His people, if they will do what He has enjoined in His word to prepare the way for His blessing.⁵²

The Attitude of the Heirs

“The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you. . . . That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Hebrews 6:7–9, 12).

The Christian is represented by the figure of the earth, which drinks in the rain that comes upon it, and brings forth fruit to the one who dresses and cares for it. The follower of Christ is to gather sap and nourishment from the living Vine. He is to produce fruit to the glory of God.⁵³

[The love of Christ awakens] in the heart of those who receive it, respect and reverence for the holy law of God. In the light reflected from Calvary, the law is seen to be holy, just, and good. It cost the life of the Son of God to pay the debt of transgression which the sinner had incurred. It is when the sinner has a realization of the offensive character of sin, a realization to some extent of what it cost the Son of God to redeem him, to give him another trial and probation, that his heart is filled with love and gratitude, and an earnest faith awakens that works by love and purifies the soul. This faith and love will be seen in the soul of him who is truly converted to God; and he who experiences the love of God will ever feel humiliation and repentance for past transgression. If Christ had to make so great a sacrifice, if He had to endure such sufferings because of my sin, shall I not bow in humility, and regret that I have inflicted such grief upon His divine soul? Shall I not fear lest I shall crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame? The soul who appreciates the precious gift of salvation will ever behold Christ dying upon the cross, and the language of that soul will be the language of unselfish sorrow that he has ever committed sin to so wound the Son of God. I shall always grieve that I have sinned, and have cost the Man of Calvary so great anguish. I look upon Him whom I have pierced, and I mourn that I have transgressed the law of God. When we have a proper appreciation of the sacrifice that has been made in our behalf, we shall not plead for the privilege of continuing in transgression. We shall put away sin, and our hard hearts will melt under the amazing love of Christ for our souls.⁵⁴

With Eyes Heavenward

“We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man” (Hebrews 8:1, 2).

Christians that carry a gloomy countenance are misrepresenting their Lord. They represent the Christian life as one of toil and hardship. They go mourning and groaning as if it were uphill work. Is the gate of heaven shut? Have they no Father in heaven? You might think from their attitude that Jesus was in Joseph’s new tomb, and a great stone rolled against the door. But Jesus is risen. He has ascended on high, and has led captivity captive, and has given gifts unto men. He has made manifest what He will do. He will break the fetters of the tomb, and bring forth His people from the land of their captivity. We dwell too near to the lowlands of earth. Let us raise our eyes to the open doors of the heavenly sanctuary, where the light of the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus Christ, who “is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him” (Hebrews 7:25). Why not talk of the plan of salvation? Why not dig in the mines of truth for the treasures of wisdom, that you may appreciate the promises of God? Why not dwell in the love of Christ, and talk of the plan of redemption? We should study how to overcome appetite, ambition, and the love of the world. Is there not enough for us to do that we have to give so much time to matters of small importance?

When Christ left the world, He committed His work to His followers. He came to represent the character of God to the world, and we are left to represent Christ to the world. We are not to go on in the path of darkness, stumbling on the dark mountains of unbelief. There is a way cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in, and this is where we may walk securely every day. Do not grasp the thistles, gather the roses, the lilies, and the pinks. If we are to understand the rich treasures of God’s word, we must separate our souls from all iniquity, that we may not come under its denunciations. As loyal soldiers we are to march under the banner of Prince Immanuel. We are to study the Bible, that we may know how to meet the assaults of the enemy. When Christ was tempted, how did He overcome? He met the tempter with, It is written. He used the words of God. . . . This is the way that we are to overcome.⁵⁵

In View of the Judgment

“It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

When the Judgment shall sit, and the books shall be opened, there will be many astonishing disclosures. Men will not then appear as they appear to the human eyes and finite judgments. Secret sins will then be laid open to the view of all. Motives and intentions which have been hidden in the dark chambers of the heart will be revealed. Designing ambitions, selfish purposes, will be seen where the outward appearance told only of a desire to honor God and to do good to men. What revelations will then be made. Men of pure motives and true and noble purpose may now be slighted, neglected, slandered, and despised; but they will then appear as they are, and will be honored with the commendation of God. Hypocritical, ambitious teachers may now be admired and exalted by men; but God, who knows the secrets of the heart will strip off the deceptive covering and reveal them as they are. Every hypocrite will be unmasked, every slandered believer will be justified, and every faithful steward of God will be approved and rewarded.

Not all are Christ’s who adopt His name and wear His badge. Jesus says, Follow me. Are those who indulge sinful habits and enjoy the frivolities of the world, Christ’s children? Can we see the footprints of the Saviour in the path they tread? Are those who are neglectful of religious duties following Christ? . . .

We cannot serve two masters. We cannot belong to Christ and to Belial. If we are the world’s in our habits and practices, we do not belong to Christ. We may be His, in the sense in which the earth and the beasts of the forest are His, but we are not His chosen ones. We shall be prepared to stand as stewards of God, only as we are in Christ.⁵⁶

You have a crown to win, a heaven to gain, and a hell to shun. Then for Christ’s sake I ask you, Will you have the light shine before you in clear and distinct rays, and then turn away from it and say, I love this, and I love that? God calls upon every one of you to begin to plan, to cooperate with God in His great care and love, to elevate, ennoble, and sanctify the whole soul, body, and spirit, that we may be workers together with God. There is a work to be begun in every city, in every town. What are you going to do to help it forward?⁵⁷

Aim to Win

“If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. . . . But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions” (Hebrews 10:26, 27, 32).

If we would permit our minds to dwell more upon Christ and the heavenly world, we should find a powerful stimulus and support in fighting the battles of the Lord. Pride and love of the world will lose their power as we contemplate the glories of that better land so soon to be our home. Beside the loveliness of Christ, all earthly attractions will seem of little worth.

Let none imagine that without earnest effort on their part they can obtain the assurance of God’s love. When the mind has been long permitted to dwell only on earthly things, it is a difficult matter to change the habits of thought. That which the eye sees and the ear hears, too often attracts the attention and absorbs the interest. But if we would ever enter the city of God, and look upon Jesus in His glory, we must become accustomed to beholding Him with the eye of faith here. The words and the character of Christ should be often the subject of our thoughts and of our conversation; and each day some time should be especially devoted to prayerful meditation upon these sacred themes.

Sanctification is a daily work. Let none deceive themselves with the belief that God will pardon and bless them while they are trampling upon one of His requirements. The willful commission of one known sin silences the witnessing voice of the Spirit, and separates the soul from God. Whatever may be the ecstasies of religious feeling, Jesus cannot abide in the heart that disregards the divine law. God will honor those only who honor Him.

“His servants ye are to whom ye obey” (Romans 6:16). If we indulge anger, lust, covetousness, hatred, selfishness, or any other sin, we become servants of sin. . . . If we serve sin, we cannot serve Christ. The Christian will feel the promptings of sin, for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit; but the Spirit striveth against the flesh, keeping up a constant warfare. Here is where Christ’s help is needed. Human weakness becomes united to divine strength, and faith exclaims, “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” (1 Corinthians 15:57).⁵⁸

A Better Country

“[The true children of Abraham] were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. . . . They desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city” (Hebrews 11:13–16).

The difference between those who love the world and those who love Christ is so plain as to be unmistakable. While worldlings are all earnestness and ambition to secure earthly treasure, God’s people are not conformed to the world, but show by their earnest, watching, waiting position that they are transformed; that their home is not in this world, but that they are seeking a better country, even a heavenly.⁵⁹

If we are indeed but sojourners here, traveling to a land where none but the holy can dwell, we shall make it our first business to become acquainted with that country; we shall make diligent inquiry as to the preparation needed, the manners and character which we must have, in order to become citizens there. Jesus, the King of that land, is pure and holy. He has commanded His followers, “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). If we are hereafter to associate with Christ and sinless angels, we must here obtain a fitness for such society.⁶⁰

Do not make it appear to anyone that the road to heaven is an unpleasant path. Show by your words and actions that although this road is too straight and narrow to be entered with the burden of the world and of pride and self-importance, it is a precious way, cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in. Although marked with trials and discouragements, it may be made, through faith and determined effort to defeat the enemy, a victorious, triumphant way.

We are pilgrims and strangers in this world; but we are traveling to a heavenly country. We shall meet with disappointments; but it is our privilege to turn every apparent defeat into a victory. Satan will contend for our souls every step of the way; but if we look over to Jesus, our present help in every time of need, He will lift up for us a standard against the enemy. Instead of complaining at every difficulty, we are to fight the good fight of faith, enduring hardness as good soldiers of the cross of Christ. The wounds and scars of our warfare will be to us, as to Paul, the trophies of victory.⁶¹

Our Father Chastens in Love

“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? . . . Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Hebrews 12:7, 11).

We . . . need to learn that trials mean benefit, and not to despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when we are rebuked of Him.⁶²

Those who have borne the greatest sorrows are frequently the ones who carry the greatest comfort to others, bringing sunshine wherever they go. Such ones have been chastened and sweetened by their afflictions; they did not lose confidence in God when trouble assailed them, but clung closer to His protecting love. Such ones are a living proof of the tender care of God, who makes the darkness as well as the light, and chastens us for our good. Christ is the light of the world; in Him is no darkness. Precious light! Let us live in that light! Bid adieu to sadness and repining. Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice.

The afflicted may take courage, the desponding may hope, for they have a sympathizing friend in Jesus. All our troubles and griefs we may pour into His sympathizing ears. When we associate together, let it not be to talk darkness and unbelief, to recount the gloomy chapters in our life experience. Let us talk of the love of God that has been manifested to us, that is seen in nature, in the firmament of the heavens, in all the wise arrangements of Providence. Let us search out the rays of sunshine that have brightened our pathway, and linger over their memory with grateful hearts. Let us dwell upon the matchless love of Christ; for in Him we have a constant theme of rejoicing. In Him is no darkness. He is the Light of life, the chief among ten thousand, and the one altogether lovely.⁶³

Let us begin each day as if it were the last we should pass upon earth, and continuing in prayer let us live in such a way that we may ask God at its close to bless our efforts and influence. . . . He will bestow upon us heavenly gifts that will satisfy the deepest cravings of the heart. If you come to Him as little children, pleading God’s promises, making them your own, you will receive fulness of joy, and have a foretaste of eternal blessedness.⁶⁴

Curing the Diseased Member

“The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!” (James 3:5).

Let each member of the church work with earnest determination, and with prayer for help, to cure the diseased member, the tongue. Let every one feel that it is his duty and privilege to pass over little differences and mistakes without comment. Do not magnify the small mistakes made by some one, but think of the good that is in him. Each time these mistakes are thought of and talked about, they grow larger. A mountain is made out of a molehill. Ill-feeling and a lack of confidence is the result.¹

Too often those who claim to love Jesus, deny Him by their lack of confidence in one another. Too often evil is watched for, actions are viewed in the worst light, words are misconstrued and misinterpreted. Many talk earnestly about the faults of others, but their own faults trouble them little. If they would devote their voices to the confession of their own sins, it would be better. God knows the ways of His children. Every word, every thought, every motive, is open before the eyes of Him who sees all things. Then let us show that we love Jesus by enthroning Him in our hearts, by denying self for the sake of others. Let us work together harmoniously, as staunch members of one family.

We must guard well every point; for Satan is unwearied in his work of temptation. Watch well your words; guard well the spirit that prompts your words. Stand as faithful sentinels over your own defective attributes of character, that you may do nothing which will prove a stumbling block to your brother. Do not make crooked paths for your feet, paths that will turn his feet out of the way of life. I wish all to remember that a day is coming in which the case of everyone will be revealed. Then the plague spot that tainted your character, the rock of offense that wrecked your bark, will be seen. Many will then realize that the tongue, though a little member, can do a weight of mischief. Many, eternally lost, will then, in their despair, look reproachfully upon those who sowed bitterness in their hearts, and planted suspicious thoughts in their minds.

No provision has been made for Christians to draw apart from one another. By our unity and love we are to reveal the character of Christ.²

Yield to the Master

“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (James 4:8–10).

What does the text mean which says, “Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded”? (James 4:8). It means that some have been serving God with a divided heart. They esteem God some, but themselves more. We must not esteem ourselves more highly than we ought. Let not Christ’s words and words of some finite being bear with equal weight upon your heart. Fill the whole heart with the words of God. They are the living water quenching your burning thirst. . . . We cannot have Christ’s words dwelling in us richly, and at the same time have our thoughts centered upon ourselves. . . . We want to come into a place where we will surrender our souls to God. And it is not enough merely to surrender, but we must cling to Jesus, bring Him into our life, and work for Him with all the powers of our being. And we want by living faith to grasp the promise, and say, God has said the blessing is mine; I must have it, and I believe I shall have it; and keeping the mind on Christ, holding firmly to Him, and at the same time surrendering ourselves to Him, we shall find that Christ will come in.³

He who seeks to serve God and mammon at the same time, will find only unrest and trouble; for a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. When you have an eye single to the glory of God, it will be easy to serve your Lord, easy to walk in the path to heaven. The whole being must be consecrated to God; for our precious Saviour never shares a divided heart. Our inclinations and desires must be under the control of the Spirit of God, and then we shall be strengthened to fight the good fight of faith. We should daily ask, What are the Captain’s orders?⁴

The Lord speaks: enter into your closet, and in silence commune with your own heart; listen to the voice of truth and conscience. Nothing will give such clear views of self as secret prayer. He who seeth in secret and knoweth all things, will enlighten your understanding and answer your petitions. Plain, simple duties that must not be neglected will open before you. Make a covenant with God to yield yourselves and all your powers to His service.⁵

A Forgiving Heart

“Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door” (James 5:9).

It is impossible for us to believe that Jesus endured the untold agonies of the cross for us, without having our hearts melted in love for Him. And if we love Him, we shall be solicitous to please Him, to obey Him. The heart stirred by the love of Christ will earnestly inquire, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6).

Dear brethren, “examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith” (2 Corinthians 13:5). Many respond, Why, yes, I am in the faith; I believe every point of the truth. But do you practice what you believe? Are you at peace with God and your brethren? Can you pray with sincerity, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”? (Matthew 6:12). Or are you estranged from your brother, because you think he has injured you? Are there no heart-burnings among you? Is there no bitterness in your hearts, no envy, no jealousy, no evil surmising, no misjudging of your brethren? Is there no emulation, no desire for special favor or honors, no wish to have the supremacy? These feelings should not exist among Christians.

Jesus, who died for us, loves us with a love that is infinite; and we must love one another. We must put away all selfishness, and work together in love and unity. We have loved and petted ourselves, and excused ourselves in waywardness; but we have been unmerciful toward our brethren, who may not be as faulty as ourselves. The Lord loves us, and bears with us, even when we are ungrateful to Him, forgetful of His mercies, wickedly unbelieving; but consider, brethren, how relentless we are to one another, how pitiless; how we hurt and wound one another, when we should love as Christ has loved us. Let us make a complete change. Let us cultivate the precious plant of love, and delight to help one another. We must be kind, forbearing, patient with one another’s errors; we must keep our sharp criticisms for ourselves, but hope all things of our brethren.

Some of you seem to be earnestly seeking forgiveness of sins, for freedom in God. Do you deserve the pardon that you are seeking? No, you do not, nevertheless. God is willing to grant it freely. And dare you withhold from your brethren the forgiveness and affection of which you do not think them worthy? Would you have God deal thus with you?⁶

Confession and Prayer

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).

Worldly wisdom teaches that prayer is not essential. Men of science claim that there can be no real answer to prayer; that this would be a violation of law, a miracle, and that miracles have no existence. The universe, say they, is governed by fixed laws, and God Himself does nothing contrary to these laws. Thus they represent God as bound by His own laws—as if the operation of divine laws could exclude divine freedom. Such teaching is opposed to the testimony of the Scriptures. Were not miracles wrought by Christ and His apostles? The same compassionate Saviour lives today, and He is as willing to listen to the prayer of faith as when He walked visibly among men. The natural cooperates with the supernatural. It is a part of God’s plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask.⁷

The prayer needed at this time is the earnest, unbroken, continuous prayer, not fitful, uncertain prayers, wavering as the waves of the sea. If several should meet together with one accord, with hearts burdened for perishing souls, and should offer earnest, fervent prayers, they would prove effectual. Brethren, why not pray more in faith, in child-like simplicity, since our rightful place is at the very feet of God?⁸

Too often our prayers are hindered by our pride of heart, by our refusal to confess faults and to remove wrong impressions. Let us remember that our prayers are not acceptable to God while we suffer a fellow worker to misapprehend us. If we are not to blame for the misunderstanding that exists, we can, perhaps, make an explanation that will remove the misunderstanding. If we are to blame, if we have left a wrong impression on a brother’s mind, we are certainly under obligation to do all in our power to remove this impression.⁹

Fervent and effectual prayer will be regarded in heaven. It is the privilege of Christians to obtain strength from God to hold every precious gift of His Spirit. The power of God has not decreased. His grace and His Spirit will be just as freely bestowed now as formerly. It is the church of God that have lost their faith to claim, their energy to wrestle, as did Jacob, crying, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me” (Genesis 32:26).¹⁰

Elijah's Jealousy for God

"Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months" (James 5:17).

The fear of God was daily growing less in Israel. The blasphemous tokens of their blind idolatry were to be seen among the Israel of God. There were none who dared to expose their lives by openly standing forth in opposition to the prevailing blasphemous idolatry. The altars of Baal, and the priests of Baal who sacrificed to the sun, moon, and stars, were conspicuous everywhere. They had consecrated temples and groves wherein the work of men's hands was placed to be worshiped. The benefits which God gave to this people called forth from them no gratitude to the Giver. All the bounties of heaven—the running brooks, the streams of living waters, the gentle dew, the showers of rain which refreshed the earth and caused their fields to bring forth abundantly—these they ascribed to the favor of their gods.

Elijah's faithful soul was grieved. His indignation was aroused, and he was jealous for the glory of God. He saw that Israel was plunged into fearful apostasy. And when he called to mind the great things that God had wrought for them, he was overwhelmed with grief and amazement. But all this was forgotten by the majority of the people. He went before the Lord and, with his soul wrung with anguish, pleaded for Him to save His people if it must be by judgments. He pleaded with God to withhold from His ungrateful people dew and rain, the treasures of heaven, that apostate Israel might look in vain to their gods, their idols of gold, wood, and stone, the sun, moon, and stars, to water and enrich the earth, and cause it to bring forth plentifully. The Lord told Elijah that He had heard his prayer and would withhold dew and rain from His people until they should turn unto Him with repentance.¹¹

Heaven is not closed against the fervent prayers of the righteous. Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, yet the Lord heard and in a most striking manner answered his petitions. The only reason for our lack of power with God is to be found in ourselves. If the inner life of many who profess the truth were presented before them, they would not claim to be Christians. They are not growing in grace. A hurried prayer is offered now and then, but there is no real communion with God. We must be much in prayer if we would make progress in the divine life.¹²

Why Seven Times?

"[Elijah] prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (James 5:18).

After the destruction of the prophets of Baal, Elijah said to Ahab, "Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain" (1 Kings 18:41). After the king's departure, Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and "he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees" (Verse 42). When he had bidden Ahab go up and eat and drink, did he have an evidence that the showers were about to fall? Did he see the clouds in the heavens? Did he see the rain, or hear the thunder? No; he spoke these words because the Spirit of the Lord moved upon his mind, and led him to believe that his prayer would be heard. He had done all that was possible to make manifest his faith, and now he began to pray for the outpouring of the abundance of rain. . . .

The servant watched while Elijah prayed. Six times he returned from the watch, saying, There is nothing, no cloud, no sign of rain. But the prophet did not give up in discouragement. He kept reviewing his life, to see where he had failed to honor God, he confessed his sins, and thus continued to afflict his soul before God, while watching for a token that his prayer was answered. As he searched his heart, he seemed to be less and less, both in his own estimation and in the sight of God. It seemed to him that he was nothing, and that God was everything; and when he reached the point of renouncing self, while he clung to the Saviour as his only strength and righteousness, the answer came.¹³

[God] wants us to have all our interests interwoven with His interests, and then He can safely bless us; for we shall not then take glory to self when the blessing is ours, but shall render all the praise to God. God does not always answer our prayers the first time we call upon Him; for should He do this, we might take it for granted that we had a right to all the blessings and favors He bestowed upon us. Instead of searching our hearts to see if any evil was entertained by us, any sin indulged, we would become careless, and fail to realize our dependence upon Him, and our need of His help.

Elijah humbled himself until he was in a condition where he would not take the glory to himself. This is the condition upon which the Lord hears prayer, for then we shall give the praise to Him.¹⁴

Climbing the Heavenward Ladder

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:3–5).

We are not living for the applause of the world; we are living for the future, immortal inheritance. We are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. When sorrow takes hold of your soul, when you are persecuted and afflicted, lift up your head; for your redemption draweth nigh. You are to have a life that measures with the life of God. You are not to seek to meet the world’s standard, but to be commandment keepers, to be members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King, and to enjoy eternal riches.

Climb the ladder of progress heavenward. Christ is the ladder, whose base is on the earth, and whose topmost round reaches to the highest heaven. God is above the ladder, and His glory is shining on every round. You must climb the ladder by clinging to Christ, and finally reach His everlasting kingdom.¹⁵

Let no one imagine that it is an easy thing to overcome the enemy and that he can be borne aloft to an incorruptible inheritance without effort on his part. To look back is to grow dizzy; to let go the hold is to perish. Few appreciate the importance of striving constantly to overcome. They relax their diligence and, as a result, become selfish and self-indulgent. Spiritual vigilance is not thought to be essential. Earnestness in human effort is not brought into the Christian life.

There will be some terrible falls by those who think they stand firm because they have the truth, but they have it not as it is in Jesus. A moment’s carelessness may plunge a soul into irretrievable ruin. One sin leads to the second, and the second prepares the way for the third, and so on. We must, as faithful messengers of God, plead with Him constantly to be kept by His power. If we swerve a single inch from duty, we are in danger of following on in a course of sin that will end in perdition. There is hope for every one of us, but only in one way, and that is by binding ourselves to Christ, and exerting every energy to attain to the perfection of His character.¹⁶

Faith More Precious Than Gold

“Ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:6–9).

In this time of trial we need to be encouraged and comforted by one another. The temptations of Satan are greater now than ever before, for he knows that his time is short and that very soon every case will be decided, either for life or for death. It is no time now to sink down beneath discouragement. . . . [The Lord’s] grace is sufficient for all our trials; and although they are greater than ever before, yet if we trust wholly in God, we can overcome every temptation and through His grace come off victorious.

If we overcome our trials and get victory over the temptations of Satan, then we endure the trial of our faith, which is more precious than gold, and are stronger and better prepared to meet the next. But if we sink down and give way to the temptations of Satan, we shall grow weaker and get no reward for the trial and shall not be so well prepared for the next. In this way we shall grow weaker and weaker, until we are led captive by Satan at his will. We must have on the whole armor of God and be ready at any moment for a conflict with the powers of darkness. When temptations and trials rush in upon us, let us go to God and agonize with Him in prayer. He will not turn us away empty, but will give us grace and strength to overcome, and to break the power of the enemy. . . .

God . . . gave His people a bitter cup to drink, to purify and cleanse them. It is a bitter draught, and they can make it still more bitter by murmuring, complaining, and repining. But those who receive it thus must have another draught, for the first does not have its designed effect upon the heart. And if the second does not effect the work, then they must have another, and another, until it does have its designed effect, or they will be left filthy, impure in heart. . . . This bitter cup can be sweetened by patience, endurance, and prayer, and that it will have its designed effect upon the hearts of those who thus receive it, and God will be honored and glorified.¹⁷

The Secret of Growing in Grace

“Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:13–16).

During the waking hours, the mind will be constantly employed. If it dwells upon unimportant matters, the intellect is dwarfed and weakened. There may be some spasmodic flashes of thought; but the mind is not disciplined to steady, sober reflection. There are themes that demand serious consideration. They are those connected with the great plan of redemption, which is soon to be finished. Jesus is about to be revealed in the clouds of heaven, and what manner of characters must we have to enable us to stand in that day? By dwelling upon these themes of eternal interest, the mind is strengthened, and the character developed. Here lies the foundation of that firm, unswerving principle which Joseph possessed. Here is the secret of growth in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. . . .

The child of God will not rest satisfied until he is clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and sustained by His life-giving power. When he sees a weakness in his character, it is not enough to confess it again and again; he must go to work with determination and energy to overcome his defects by building up opposite traits of character. He will not shun this work because it is difficult. Untiring energy is required of the Christian; but he is not obliged to work in his own strength; divine power awaits his demand. Everyone who is sincerely striving for victory over self will appropriate the promise, “My grace is sufficient for thee” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Through personal effort joined with the prayer of faith, the soul is trained. Day by day the character grows into the likeness of Christ; and finally, instead of being the sport of circumstances, instead of indulging selfishness and being carried away by light and trifling conversation, the man is master of his thoughts and words. It may cost a severe conflict to overcome habits which have been long indulged, but we may triumph through the grace of Christ. He invites us to learn of Him. He would have us practice self-control, and be perfect in character, working that which is well pleasing in His sight.¹⁸

Knowing God’s Will

“Laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Peter 2:1–3).

The Holy Spirit will not compel men to take a certain course of action. We are free moral agents; and when sufficient evidence has been given us as to our duty it is left with us to decide our course. . . .

You who pray for light and truth from heaven, have you studied the Scriptures? Have you desired the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby? Have you submitted yourselves to the revealed command? Thou shalt, and thou shalt not, are definite requirements, and there is no place for idleness in the Christian life. You who mourn your spiritual dearth, do you seek to know and to do the will of God? Are you striving to enter in at the strait gate? There is work, earnest work, to be done for the Master. The evils condemned in God’s word, must be overcome. You must individually battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. The word of God is called the “sword of the Spirit,” and you should become skillful in its use, if you would cut your way through the hosts of opposition and darkness.

Wrench yourself away from hurtful associations. Count the cost of following Jesus, and make it, with a determined purpose to cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. Eternal life is worth your all, and Jesus has said, “Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). He who does nothing, but wait to be compelled by some supernatural agency, will wait on in lethargy and darkness. God has given His word. God speaks in unmistakable language to your soul. Is not the word of His mouth sufficient to show you your duty, and to urge its fulfillment?

Those who humbly and prayerfully search the Scriptures, to know and to do God’s will, will not be in doubt of their obligations to God. “For if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine” (John 7:17). If you would know the mystery of godliness, you must follow the plain word of truth—feeling or no feeling, emotion or no emotion. Obedience must be rendered from a sense of principle, and the right must be pursued under all circumstances. This is the character that is elected of God unto salvation.¹⁹

Fleeing the Enemies of Our Soul

“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11).

The word of God will make but a feeble impression upon those whose faculties are benumbed by any sinful gratification. The heart cannot preserve consecration to God while the animal appetites and passions are indulged at the expense of health and life. Paul writes to the Corinthians, “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

[Yet] how many professed Christians are enfeebling their powers in the pursuit of gain or the worship of fashion; how many are debasing their godlike manhood by gluttony, by wine drinking, by forbidden pleasure. And the church, instead of rebuking, too often encourages the evil by appealing to appetite, to desire for gain, or love of pleasure, to replenish her treasury, which love for Christ is too feeble to supply. Were Jesus to enter the churches of today, and behold the feasting and unholy traffic there conducted in the name of religion, would He not drive out those desecrators, as He banished the money-changers from the temple?²⁰

The world is given up to self-indulgence. “The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16) control the masses of the people. But Christ’s followers have a holier calling. “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean” (2 Corinthians 6:17). In the light of God’s word we are justified in declaring that sanctification cannot be genuine which does not work this utter renunciation of the sinful pursuits and gratifications of the world.²¹

Every perverted appetite becomes a warring lust. Appetite indulged to the injury of physical strength causes disease of the soul. The lust which the apostle mentions is not confined to the violation of the seventh commandment, but every indulgence of the taste which lessens physical vigor is a warring lust. The apostle declares that he who would gain special victories and make higher attainments in righteousness must be “temperate in all things” (1 Corinthians 9:25). Temperance in eating and drinking at our tables, as well as the exercise of temperance in every other respect, is essential if we would overcome as Christ overcame. God has given us light, not to be treated indifferently, but to be our guide and help.²²

Respect for Civil Authority

“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king” (1 Peter 2:13–17).

It is not wise to find fault continually with what is done by the rulers of government. It is not our work to attack individuals or institutions. We should exercise great care lest we be understood as putting ourselves in opposition to the civil authorities. It is true that our warfare is aggressive, but our weapons are to be those found in a plain Thus saith the Lord. Our work is to prepare a people to stand in the great day of God. We should not be turned aside to lines that will encourage controversy or arouse antagonism in those not of our faith.

We should not work in a manner that will mark us out as seeming to advocate treason. We should weed out from our writings and utterances every expression that, taken by itself, could be so misrepresented as to make it appear antagonistic to law and order. Everything should be carefully considered, lest we place ourselves on record as encouraging disloyalty to our country and its laws. We are not required to defy authorities.²³

In the name of the Lord we are to go forward, unfurling His banner, advocating His word. When the authorities command us not to do this work, when they forbid us to proclaim the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, then it will be necessary for us to say as did the apostles: “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19, 20).²⁴

Spiritual success comes only to those who have learned meekness and lowliness in the school of Christ. We should remember that the world will judge us by what we appear to be. Let those who are seeking to represent Christ be careful not to exhibit inconsistent features of character. . . . Let God have the matter of condemning authorities and governments wholly in His own keeping. In meekness and love let us as faithful sentinels defend the principles of truth as it is in Jesus.²⁵

Immune to Insult

“Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God” (1 Peter 2:18–20).

Do not retaliate. So far as you can do so, remove all cause for misapprehension. Avoid the appearance of evil. Do all that lies in your power, without the sacrifice of principle, to conciliate others.²⁶

We cannot afford to let our spirits chafe over any real or supposed wrong done to ourselves. Self is the enemy we most need to fear. No form of vice has a more baleful effect upon the character than has human passion not under the control of the Holy Spirit. No other victory we can gain will be so precious as the victory gained over self.

We should not allow our feelings to be easily wounded. We are to live, not to guard our feelings or our reputation, but to save souls. As we become interested in the salvation of souls we cease to mind the little differences that so often arise in our association with one another.²⁷

Christians will be tested and tried. But if they are sincerely trying to serve God, strength will be given them for every conflict. They are not to listen to the false reports that come to their ears, but are to go straight forward in the path of duty. They are to learn to think for themselves, and their actions are ever to be in accordance with the word of God.

Do not go out of your way to call your enemy to account. His words of censure and malice are like sparks which, if not blown upon, will go out of themselves. Live down the evil reports of those whose tongues are set on fire of hell. If you stop to dispute, you will but open the way for further abuse. Often difficulties may be healed by silence. Let the evil talker alone. Go about your own work as one who has a sacred trust to fulfil. When you are criticized, move on as one who hears not. Your heart may be wounded: nevertheless, do not allow yourself to be turned aside from your work. Give your time and attention to matters of eternal interest.²⁸

Meekness Under Provocation

“Hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1 Peter 2:21–23).

He who was one with the Father stepped down from the glorious throne in heaven, laid aside His royal robe and crown, and clothed His divinity with humanity, thus bringing Himself to the level of man’s feeble faculties. . . . It would have been far easier to crush the world out of existence than to reform it. But Christ declares, “The Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them” (Luke 9:56). The Son of God understood the desperate situation and Himself came to our world, that man through Him might have eternal life. Son of the Most High though He was, He submitted Himself to insult, mockery, and a cruel death because He loved man, and would save Him from ruin. But, as if determined to cut themselves off from all communication with heaven, as if scorning God’s mercy and defying Omnipotence, the world whom He came to save, crucified the Lord of glory. Can we, my dear brethren and sisters, behold such love, such infinite sacrifice, unmoved?²⁹

The Son of God took upon Him the nature of man, bore insult, ignominy, shame, and death, in order to save a wicked world. He was tempted in all points like as we are, that He might become acquainted with our temptations; by this experience of suffering and trial, He opened the way that the sons and daughters of Adam may return to allegiance to God, and make their way back to the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. That Jesus has been tempted in all points like us we are . . . has given men confidence to come to him and pour out all their sorrows before Him; for He has borne our griefs, and is touched with the heeling of our infirmities. . . . We are to study the life and character of our Lord, and learn of Him meekness and lowliness of heart.³⁰

A schoolgirl, when asked for a definition of meekness, said, Meek people are those who give soft answers to rough questions.³¹

We are not understood by the world, we never shall be; but we must not let this discourage us. We are not to look at present appearances, nor be angry when we are misjudged, but we should improve every opportunity of doing good.³²

His Ears Are Open

“The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (1 Peter 3:12).

Cry unto the Lord, tempted soul. Cast yourself, helpless, unworthy, upon Jesus, and claim His very promise. The Lord will hear. He knows how strong are the inclinations of the natural heart, and he will help in every time of temptation.

Have you fallen into sin? Then without delay seek God for mercy and pardon. When David was convicted of his sin, he poured out his soul in penitence and humiliation before God. He felt that he could endure the loss of his crown, but he could not be deprived of the favor of God. Mercy is still extended to the sinner. The Lord is calling to us in all our wanderings, “Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings” (Jeremiah 3:22). The blessing of God may be ours if we will heed the pleading voice of His Spirit. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him” (Psalm 103:13).³³

Our faith must grasp the glorious fact that God hears and answers the prayers of every sincere seeker. As the believer bows in supplication before God, and in humility and contrition offers his petition from unfeigned lips, keeping his eyes fixed steadily on the Mediator of the new covenant, he loses all thought of self. His mind is filled with the thought of what he must have in order to build up a Christlike character. He prays, Lord, if I am to be a channel through which Thy love is to flow day by day and hour by hour, I claim by faith the grace and power that Thou hast promised. . . .

How this dependence pleases the Master! How He delights to hear the steady, earnest pleading! How quickly the sincere, fervent prayer is recognized and honored! How intensely interested the heavenly angels are! “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Hebrews 1:14). With wonderful and ennobling grace the Lord sanctifies the humble petitioner, giving him power to perform the most difficult duties. All that is undertaken is done unto the Lord, and this elevates and sanctifies the lowliest calling. It invests with new dignity every word, every act, and links the humblest worker, the poorest of God’s servants, with the highest of the angels in the heavenly courts. . . .

He has provided power to enable us to be overcomers.³⁴

Ready Always to Witness

“Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15).

God desires every believer to be a soul winner; and He will bless all who look to Him in confidence for wisdom and guidance. As they move guardedly, walking in wisdom’s way and remaining true to the Lord God of Israel, the purity and simplicity of Christ, revealed in the life practice, will witness to the possession of genuine piety. In all that they say and do, they will glorify the name of Him whom they serve.

The believer who is imbued with a true missionary spirit is a living epistle, known and read of all men. The truth goes forth from his lips in no feigned words. His piety and zeal and consecrated judgment grow with the passing days, and the unbelieving world sees that he is in living communion with God, and is learning of Him. The words spoken by converted lips are accompanied by a power that touches the cold hearts of unbelievers; for even those who know not God are enabled to distinguish between the human and the divine.³⁵

You are to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; but what kind of fear are you to feel? It is a holy fear, lest self shall appear, lest feelings of self-esteem and superiority shall mingle with your testimony; for if you would rightly represent Christ, self must be hid in Jesus.

In relating your Christian experience, you are not to exalt self, but show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Let those who have entered the service of Christ be clothed with humility, and through faith in their Master, in kindness and love, do all in their power to draw souls to Christ. You cannot pass indifferently by those who do not know the Lord. You must be laborers together with God. The more you work in the missionary line, the more aptitude you will manifest; for you will be brought into circumstances where you will feel your need of wisdom from above, and in meeting special cases you will acquire valuable knowledge that will qualify you to labor for souls who are under temptation, separated from God by yielding to the suggestions of the enemy. There is need for every follower of Christ to press close to His side.³⁶

Trials Strengthen Our Faith

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4:12, 13).

[Jesus] permits temptations, trials, and afflictions to come to His loved ones. They are His providences, visitations of mercy to bring them back when they stray from His side, and give them a deeper sense of His presence and providential care. . . . Faith must grow through conflict and suffering. We must individually learn to suffer and be strong.³⁷

Trials and obstacles are the Lord’s chosen methods of discipline and His appointed conditions of success. . . . The fact that we are called upon to endure trial shows that the Lord Jesus sees in us something precious which He desires to develop.³⁸

Full and entire consecration to God is required of us. While the Redeemer of sinful mortals was laboring and suffering for us, He denied Himself, and His whole life was one continued scene of toil and privation. Had He chosen to do so, He could have passed His days on earth in ease and plenty, and appropriated to Himself all the pleasures and enjoyments of this life. But He did not; He considered not His own convenience. He lived not to gratify Himself, but to do good and to save others from suffering, to help those who most needed help. He endured to the end. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and He hath borne the iniquity of us all. The bitter cup was apportioned to us to drink. Our sins mingled it. But our dear Saviour took the cup from our lips and drank it Himself, and in its stead He presents to us a cup of mercy, blessing, and salvation. Oh, what an immense sacrifice was this for the fallen race! What love, what wondrous and matchless love! After all this manifestation of suffering to show His love, shall we shrink from the small trials we have to bear? Can we love Christ, and refuse to lift the cross? Can we love to be with Him in glory, and not follow Him even from the judgment hall to Calvary? If Christ be in us the hope of glory, we shall walk even as He walked; we shall imitate His life of sacrifice to bless others; we shall drink of the cup, and be baptized with the baptism; we shall welcome a life of devotion, trial, and self-denial, for Christ’s sake. Heaven will be cheap enough whatever sacrifice we may make to obtain it.³⁹

Suffering for the Right Reason

“Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Peter 4:15, 16).

By trial the Lord proves the strength of His children. Is the heart strong to bear? Is the conscience void of offense? Does the Spirit bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God? This the Lord ascertains by trying us. In the furnace of affliction He purifies us from all dross. He sends us trials, not to cause us needless pain, but to lead us to look to him, to strengthen our endurance, to teach us that if we do not rebel, but put our trust in Him, we shall see of His salvation.

Christ has given us no assurance that to attain perfection of character is an easy matter. It is a conflict, a battle, a march day after day. It is through much tribulation that we enter the kingdom of heaven. If we sit with Christ on His throne, we must first be partakers with Him in His suffering. Individually we must experience that which was spoken of Christ. It became Him, “in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Hebrews 2:10; 5:8). Shall we then be timid and cowardly because of the trials we must meet as we advance? Shall we not meet them without repining or complaint? In this world we shall have tribulation; but the Lord Jesus will give us all the help that we ask, and believe that He will bestow.

By God’s mighty cleaver of truth we have been taken from the quarry of the world and brought into the workshop of the Lord to be prepared for a place in His temple. In this work the hammer and chisel must act their part, and then comes the polishing. Rebel not under this process of grace. You may be a rough stone, on which much work must be done before you are prepared for the place God designs you to fill. You need not be surprised if with the hammer and the chisel of trial God cuts away your defects of character. He alone can accomplish this work. And be assured that He will not strike one useless blow. His every blow is struck in love, for your eternal good and happiness. He knows your defects, and works to restore, not to destroy. He sends trials to you to make you strong to do and to suffer for Him.⁴⁰

Genuine Humility

“Be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:5–7).

There is such a thing as humility on stilts, a humility that parades itself before men to be seen of them. The humility that God will honor is that humility which is the result of the soul’s realization of its helplessness.⁴¹

Do not be zealous to humble one another. Humble *yourselves*. Take hold of your own case, and by humble confession stand clear before God. Confess your faults to one another, that you may be healed. How many there are who are carrying a load of unconfessed wrongdoing. They try to shape matters so that their dignity will not be hurt. To make wrongs right from the very first departure, looks to them like extinguishing themselves. They think that if they did this, their usefulness would be destroyed. If they would cease this reasoning, and place themselves in the hands of God, to let Him work out His will in them, how much safer they would be. Delaying the confession of injustice to others is the most dangerous course that can be followed. Thus a compromise is made with Satanic agencies. The burden of unconfessed sin is the heaviest burden that can be borne. Jesus, the great Burden Bearer, asks you to transfer your load to Him.⁴²

The more exalted opinion we have of ourselves, the less need shall we feel of Jesus. True goodness never exalts self; but the self-righteous are always reaching out for the honor and praise of men. They have set up a false standard, and have too high an opinion of themselves. All who fall upon the rock, and are broken, Christ shall build up in true purity and holiness. We should be grateful every moment of our lives, for such a compassionate Redeemer. True humility will lead us to know our sins and to confess them. It will lead us to accept Jesus, as the only one who can forgive our sins, and who can cleanse us from all unrighteousness. . . . His arm is mighty to save, His grace is strong to deliver. He would have us wear a cheerful face, and bear hearts full of rejoicing. . . .

Your temper will be tried. Your patience will be tested. Prayer alone, and earnest faith, will bring you through these things like a Christian.⁴³

How to Recognize Godly Fellowship

“God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:5–7).

Satan uses some professed Christians to lead souls from the simplicity of the gospel of Christ. Worldly associates and amusements sow the seeds of doubt and skepticism. The sentiment of many worldly professors is, “Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us. Speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits” (Isaiah 30:11, 10). Many are daily cheating their souls with a form of godliness without the power; but the Lord has removed His smile and the inspiration of His Spirit from them. His displeasure is against them because their deeds are evil. He demands decided changes in the life and character. Good intentions, good resolutions, good acts, cannot be accepted as substitutes for repentance, faith, and willing obedience.

The people . . . love to have their consciences quieted—love to be rocked to sleep in the cradle of carnal security. In their blind selfishness, they deceive themselves. . . . “Everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved” (John 3:20). So in this age; the church will neither search the Scriptures nor listen to the truth, lest her works be reproved. She is more willing to depart from the commandments of God than from the customs and friendship of the world. And because great men and worldly wise men are in her favor, because numbers and temporal prosperity are hers, she believes herself favored of God. . . .

But earthly prosperity is no evidence of the favor of God. . . . The true child of God cannot enjoy the friendship of the world. If he seeks it, it will become a snare to him; he will adopt the customs, precepts, and standards of the world, and will finally become like them in spirit. But there can be no fellowship between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness. Says the apostle John, “The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God” (1 John 3:1, 2). They are unknown, unacknowledged by the world; but their names, cast out as evil by the lovers of sin, are written in the book of life. They are the adopted heirs of Christ, the nobility of heaven.⁴⁴

Molded Into the Perfect Pattern

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him” (1 John 2:1–5).

Through the ministry of the angels the Holy Spirit is enabled to work upon the mind and heart of the human agent and draw him to Christ, who has paid the ransom money for his soul, that the sinner may be rescued from the slavery of sin and Satan. But the Spirit of God does not interfere with the freedom of the human agent. The Holy Spirit is given to be a helper, so that the human agent may cooperate with the divine intelligences; and it is its province to draw the soul, but never to force obedience. Christ is ready to impart all heavenly influences. He knows every temptation that comes to man, and the capabilities of every human agent. He weighs his strength. He sees the present and the future, and presents before the mind the obligations that should be met, and urges that common, earthly things shall not be permitted to be so absorbing that eternal things shall be lost out of reckoning. The Lord has fulness of grace to bestow on everyone that will receive the heavenly gift. The Holy Spirit will bring the God-entrusted capabilities into Christ’s service and will mold and fashion the human agent according to the divine Pattern, in proportion as the human agent shall earnestly desire the transformation. . . .

Walk not hesitatingly, but firmly in the strength and grace of Jesus Christ. Unto Him is committed all power in heaven and in earth. Take refuge in Jesus Christ, and enter into a firm covenant with Him in faith, to love and serve Him. Choose Him as your Advocate; for the door of mercy is wide open for you. The promise is that if we ask anything according to His will, our request is granted if we ask in faith. Jesus says, “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you” (John 16:23). The soul who neglects to comply with the conditions of salvation will be left without excuse; for the treasures of His grace are absolutely unlimited.⁴⁵

Is Christ in Us?

“He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him” (1 John 2:9, 10).

Many are not awake to the fact that the Lord is testing and proving them to make it manifest whether or not they really love Jesus. The spirit and attitude manifested to their brethren tells their spirit and attitude toward God. . . .

If the love of God was a living, abiding element in the soul, there would be love among the brethren, and many who have been indifferent to the great Teacher’s commandment, who now bite and devour one another, would be convinced of their mistake and draw into fellowship. God has made every provision for better things. God’s people have close, severe battles to fight; but these battles are not to be against their brethren. All desire to hurt and weaken and destroy the influence of even the weakest of God’s workers is registered in the books of heaven as desire to weaken the influence of Jesus Christ. The warfare we are to undertake is to be waged against the confederacy of evil, which is arrayed against the people of God. But woe unto those who shall turn their implements of warfare against their own brethren. God reminds us that we are to fight in unison with the angels of heaven, and that more than angels are engaged in the warfare.⁴⁶

God imparts His blessing to us, that we may give to others. And as long as we yield ourselves as the channels through which His love can flow, He will keep the channels supplied. When you ask God for your daily bread, He looks right into your heart to see if you will impart the same to others, more needy than yourself. When you pray, God be merciful to me a sinner, He watches to see if you will manifest compassion to those with whom you associate. This is the evidence of our connection with God—that we are merciful even as our Father who is in heaven is merciful. If we are His, we shall do with a cheerful heart just what He tells us to do, however inconvenient, however contrary it may be to our own feelings.⁴⁷

We need to practice close self-examination, to see what we are cherishing in ourselves that will grieve the Spirit of God, and to understand the work we have to do that we may be a blessing to others.⁴⁸

Oriented Toward Heaven

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:15–17).

As soon as any have a desire to imitate the fashions of the world, that they do not immediately subdue, just so soon God ceases to acknowledge them as His children.⁴⁹

Conversion is a work that most do not appreciate. It is not a small matter to transform an earthly, sin-loving mind and bring it to understand the unspeakable love of Christ, the charms of His grace, and the excellency of God, so that the soul shall be imbued with divine love and captivated with the heavenly mysteries. When he understands these things, his former life appears disgusting and hateful. He hates sin and, breaking his heart before God, he embraces Christ as the life and joy of the soul. He renounces his former pleasures. He has a new mind, new affections, new interest, new will; his sorrows, and desires, and love are all new. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, which have heretofore been preferred before Christ, are now turned from, and Christ is the charm of his life, the crown of his rejoicing. Heaven, which once possessed no charms, is now viewed in its riches and glory; and he contemplates it as his future home, where he shall see, love, and praise the One who hath redeemed him. . . .

The works of holiness, which appeared wearisome, are now his delight. The word of God, which was dull and uninteresting, is now chosen as his study, the man of his counsel. It is as a letter written to him from God, bearing the inscription of the Eternal. His thoughts, his words, and his deeds are brought to this rule and tested. He trembles at the commands and threatenings which it contains, while he firmly grasps its promises and strengthens his soul by appropriating them to himself. The society of the most godly is now chosen by him, and the wicked, whose company he once loved, he no longer delights in. He weeps over those sins in them at which he once laughed. Self-love and vanity are renounced, and he lives unto God, and is rich in good works. This is the sanctification which God requires. Nothing short of this will He accept.⁵⁰

Purification

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin” (1 John 3:2–5).

Those who think they can serve the world and yet love God are double-minded. But they cannot serve God and mammon. They are men of two minds, loving the world and losing all sense of their obligation to God, and yet professing to be Christ’s followers. They are neither the one thing nor the other. They will lose both worlds unless they cleanse their hands and purify their hearts through obedience to the pure principles of truth.⁵¹

Fervent prayer, humility, and earnestness must be combined with God’s help, for human frailties and human feelings are continually striving for the mastery. Every man must purify his soul through obedience to the truth, and with an eye single to God’s glory he must abase self and exalt Jesus and His grace. By thus continually advancing toward the light he will become acquainted with God and receive His help.⁵²

Let us relate ourselves to God in self-denying, self-sacrificing obedience. Faith in Christ always leads to willing, cheerful obedience. He died to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. There is to be perfect conformity in thought, word, and deed, to the will of God. Heaven is for those only who have purified their souls through obedience to the truth. It is a place where unsullied purity alone can dwell. . . .

In perfect obedience there is perfect happiness. “These things have I spoken unto you,” Christ said, “that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John 15:11). May the Lord bless us, and strengthen our faith, and lead us onward to the heights to which we have not yet ascended. He gave Christ to die for us, that we might be purified from all iniquity. He has promised to pour out His Spirit upon us, that we may be sanctified through the truth. He has given us His word, that through obedience to its teachings, we may be made holy. It is our privilege, our duty, to grow in grace. This is the will of God, even your sanctification.⁵³

Which Brother Do We Resemble?

“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous” (1 John 3:10–12).

Those who are unreconciled to the law of Jehovah are unreconciled to those who magnify the law of God, calling it holy, just, and good. They manifest the same spirit of bitterness, malice, and hate, as did Cain toward Abel. The younger brother carried out the express direction of God in bringing the sacrifice to the altar; but Cain, exalting his judgment above that of the Infinite, determined to bring an offering according to his own ideas. When the Lord manifested His approval of Abel’s course and refused to accept the offering of Cain, Cain was filled with envy, jealousy, and hate. . . .

Many, many in the Christian world are following a course after the order of that which Cain followed. The Lord has given to men His law, and has promised that He will bless those who keep His commandments. In the fourth commandment He has enjoined upon men the keeping of the Sabbath, a memorial of His creative works and power; but men have sought out many inventions, and Satan has been permitted to wind his way into the faith and doctrine of the professedly Christian church, until the Sabbath of the Lord, the memorial of creative power, has been set aside, and the law made void by sinful men, while a spurious sabbath has been instituted in its place. Men declare that the first day of the week is commemorated in honor of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, when not one line in the word of God can be found requiring this at their hands. . . . Many sweep away the Ten Commandments entirely, announcing that they were nailed to the cross with the ceremonial law of types and sacrifices. While professing to honor the Son by keeping a day in honor of His resurrection, they pour contempt upon the law of Jehovah, and are following the course of Cain in offering that which God has never commanded, and in ignoring a plain command which He has given. Those who obey the voice of God, as did Abel, receive from the hands of the disobedient, treatment similar to that which Abel met.⁵⁴

Leave the Skeptics Alone

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God” (1 John 4:1–3).

In this age of the world we see every grade and degree of skepticism. There are rank infidels, those who believe in the lying wonders of Spiritualism, and those who reject the claims of divine truth. All these are placed among the class that John has written of, and are controlled by the spirit of antichrist. Ignorance of the character of God, pride of understanding, and the love of sin, are the source of infidelity. Men deny the divinity of Christ, cast away the Bible, and thus seek to free themselves from personal accountability to God. . . . These doubters can start inquiries which the most humble and pious Christian would be perplexed to know how to answer. But because their queries cannot be answered is no evidence that the Bible is not true. . . . The truth of God’s word will be revealed to those who are of a lowly heart, who will comprehend its duties and obey its precepts. It is pride of opinion that leads to skepticism and to the denial of the divinity of Jesus Christ. Skepticism has its origin in love of sin, love of ambition, and self-exaltation.

Jesus, the world’s Redeemer, is the channel through which all our blessings come, and those who refuse to acknowledge Him as the divine Son of God, virtually say, I will not have this man to rule over me. Those who are self-willed, puffed up with pride and self-importance, while they will not give up their wills to be in harmony with God’s will, yet will accept the delusions of false prophets, and be led to refuse to acknowledge Christ as the Son of God. . . . There are many who have not taken the ground that infidels take, and yet they are in the first stages of infidelity. They question everything that is of a divine character, seeking to bring down everything to the level of that which is common and natural. Their minds are like a sponge, and absorb every suggestion of unbelief. They pass these suggestions to others, and thus sow the seeds of skepticism, and what they sow they will reap. When a believer seeks to answer one question started by a skeptic, he will propound another and another. The only way to do is to let skeptics alone until they truly desire light.⁵⁵

His Love to Be Perfected in Us

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:10–12).

Faith works by love, and purifies the soul from all selfishness. Thus the soul is perfected in love. And having found grace and mercy through Christ’s precious blood, how can we fail to be tender and merciful?⁵⁶

Instead of finding fault with others, let us be critical with ourselves. Every one should inquire, Is my heart right before God? Am I glorifying my heavenly Father? If you have cherished a wrong spirit, banish it from the soul. Eradicate from your heart everything that is of a defiling nature. Pluck up every root of bitterness, lest others be contaminated by the baleful influence. Do not allow one poisonous plant to remain in the soil of your heart. Root it out this very hour and cultivate in its stead the plant of love. Let Jesus be enshrined in the soul temple.⁵⁷

If Christ is abiding in the heart, His love will diffuse itself to others through its possessor, and will bind heart to heart. The grace of Christ must be the sole dependence of the Christian, and when it is, he will love his brethren as Christ has loved him. Then he can say, Come, and beseech and woo souls, entreating them to be reconciled to God. His influence will be more and more decided, and he will devote his life to Christ, who was crucified for him. Where love is perfected, the law is kept, and self finds no place. Those who love God supremely, work, suffer, and live for Him who gave His life for them. . . . When we receive the heavenly gift, the righteousness of Christ, we shall find that divine grace has been provided for us, and that human resources are powerless. Jesus gives the Holy Spirit in large measure for great emergencies, to help our infirmities, to give us strong consolation, to illuminate our minds and purify and ennoble our hearts. Christ becomes unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. From the first to the last of the Christian life, not one successful step can be taken without Christ. He has sent His Spirit to be with us constantly, and by confiding in Christ to the uttermost, surrendering our will to Him, we may follow Him whithersoever He goeth.⁵⁸

Courage in Christ

“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:17–19).

Love to Jesus will be seen, will be felt. It cannot be hidden. It exerts a wondrous power. It makes the timid bold, the slothful diligent, the ignorant wise. It makes the stammering tongue eloquent, and rouses the dormant intellect into new life and vigor. It makes the desponding hopeful, the gloomy joyous. Love to Christ will lead its possessor to accept responsibilities for His sake, and to bear them in His strength. Love to Christ will not be dismayed by tribulation, nor turned aside from duty by reproaches. The soul that is not imbued with this love for Jesus is none of His.

Peace in Christ is of more value than all the treasures of earth. Let us seek the Lord with all our heart, let us learn of Christ to be meek and lowly, that we may find rest of soul. Let us arouse our dormant energies, and become active, earnest, fervent. The very example and deportment as well as the words of the Christian should be such as to awaken in the sinner a desire to come to the Fountain of life.

Let us open our hearts to the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Let us work cheerfully, joyfully in the service of our Master. A slothful, languid professor will never secure an abundant entrance into the kingdom of God. From the cross to the crown there is earnest work to be done. There is wrestling with inbred sin; there is warfare against outward wrong.

The Christian life is a battle and a march. Let us go forward, for we are striving for an immortal crown. Let us give diligence to make our calling and election sure. We shall triumph at last, if we do not become weary in well-doing.⁵⁹

Go forward firmly, valiantly, courageously. You may err in judgment, but do not lose your hold on Jesus. . . . The more you are jostled, misapprehended, misstated, misrepresented, the more evidence you have that you are doing a work for the Master, and the more closely you must cling to your Saviour. In all your difficulties be calm and undisturbed, patient and forbearing, not rendering evil for evil, but good for evil. Look to the top of the ladder. God is above it. His glory shines on every soul ascending heavenward.⁶⁰

The Supreme Test

“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and everyone that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him” (1 John 4:20–5:1).

Many will lose heaven unless they change their selfish, unlovable, unsympathetic ways, and learn that the Spirit of Christ is not selfish and forbidding, uncourteous and loveless. . . . Unless we practice Christ’s ways, and receive His Spirit, we are none of His. . . . All that we do should flow from a deep, abiding principle of love—a principle that is after the similitude of Christ, who is love and light and peace. But how little, how very little, of Christ’s character is revealed! The spirit of self-denial is becoming a rare thing.⁶¹

Love is the basis of godliness. No man has love to God, no matter what his profession may be, unless he has unselfish love for his brother. As we love God because He first loved us, we shall love all for whom Christ died. We shall not feel like letting the soul who is in the greatest peril and in the greatest need, go unlabored for and uncared for. We shall not feel like holding the erring off, or letting them alone to plunge into further unhappiness and discouragement, and to fall on Satan’s battleground. . . . Everyone who has been free to condemn, to dishearten, and to discourage; who has failed to give tender kindness, sympathy, and compassion to the tempted and the tried, will in his own experience be brought over the ground which others have passed, and will feel what others have suffered because of his want and sympathy, until he shall abhor his hardness of heart and open the door for Jesus to come in. The converting power of God must come to every soul who has any connection with the work and cause of God, that each one may be filled with the love and compassion of Christ, or many will never see the kingdom of heaven. The mutual admiration that is manifested among special friends will not abide the test of trial; for it is not of a holy character. When Christ abides in the soul, He will be revealed in the uplifting of those who most need uplifting. Our neighbor is every person who needs our help. Our neighbor is every soul who is wounded and bruised by the adversary. Our neighbor is everyone who is the property of God.⁶²

Abide in the Doctrine of Christ

“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 9–11).

Our faith is holy; our work is to vindicate the honor of God’s law, and is not of a character to bring anyone down to a low level in thought or in deportment. There are many who claim to believe and teach the truth who have error and fanciful ideas of their own mingled with the truth. But there is an exalted platform for us to stand upon. We must believe and teach the truth as it is in Jesus. Holiness of heart will never lead to impure actions.⁶³

Genuine faith is founded on the Scriptures; but Satan uses so many devices to wrest the Scriptures and bring in error, that great care is needed if one would know what they really do teach. It is one of the great delusions of this time to dwell much upon feeling, and to claim honesty while ignoring the plain utterances of the word of God because that word does not coincide with feeling. Many have no foundation for their faith but emotion. Their religion consists in excitement; when that ceases, their faith is gone. Feeling may be chaff, but the word of God is the wheat. And “what,” says the prophet, “is the chaff to the wheat?” (Jeremiah 23:28).⁶⁴

God is displeased with us when we go to listen to error, without being obliged to go; for unless He sends us to those meetings where error is forced home to the people by the power of the will, He will not keep us. The angels cease their watchful care over us, and we are left to the buffetings of the enemy, to be darkened and weakened by him and the power of his evil angels; and the light around us becomes contaminated with the darkness.⁶⁵

More harm can be done by one who has a mixture of truth and error, than many who teach the whole truth can undo and correct. . . . Error takes root in the soil of the heart more readily.⁶⁶

Pure doctrine will blend with works of righteousness; heavenly precepts will mingle with holy practices. The heart that is filled with the grace of Christ will be made manifest by its peace and joy; and where Christ abides, the character will become purified, elevated, ennobled, and glorified.⁶⁷

Deceptions—a Sign of the End

“As [Jesus] sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many” (Matthew 24:3–5).

False Christs did arise, deceiving the people, and leading great numbers into the desert. Magicians and sorcerers, claiming miraculous power, drew the people after them into the mountain solitudes. But this prophecy was also spoken for the last days. Companies inspired by Satan will be formed to deceive and delude. This will be a sign of the second advent.¹

Satan has come down in these last days to work with all deceitfulness of unrighteousness in them that perish. His satanic majesty works miracles in the sight of false prophets, in the sight of men, claiming that he is indeed Christ Himself. Satan gives his power to those who are aiding him in his deceptions; therefore those who claim to have the great power of God can only be discerned by the great detector, the law of Jehovah. The Lord tells us if it were possible they would deceive the very elect. The sheep’s clothing seems so real, so genuine, that the wolf can be discerned only as we go to God’s great moral standard and there find that they are transgressors of the law of Jehovah.

If ever there was a time when we needed faith and spiritual enlightenment, it is now. Those who are watching unto prayer and are searching the Scriptures daily with an earnest desire to know and do the will of God will not be led astray by any of the deceptions of Satan. They alone will discern the pretext which cunning men adopt to beguile and ensnare. So much time and attention are bestowed upon the world, upon dress and eating and drinking, that no time is left for prayer and the study of the Scriptures.²

Not only is Satan leading the world captive, but his deceptions are leavening the professed churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. The great apostasy will develop into darkness deep as midnight, impenetrable as sackcloth of hair. To God’s people it will be a night of trial, a night of weeping, a night of persecution for the truth’s sake. But out of that night of darkness God’s light will shine.³

The Greatest Earthquake Foretold the End

“When ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: And great earthquakes shall be in divers places” (Luke 21:9–11).

In fulfillment of this prophecy [Luke 21:25; Mark 13:24–26; Revelation 6:12] there occurred, in the year 1755, the most terrible earthquake that has ever been recorded. Though commonly known as the earthquake of Lisbon, it extended to the greater part of Europe, Africa, and America. It was felt in Greenland, in the West Indies, in the island of Madeira, in Norway and Sweden, Great Britain and Ireland. It pervaded an extent of not less than four million square miles. In Africa the shock was almost as severe as in Europe. A great part of Algiers was destroyed; and a short distance from Morocco, a village containing eight or ten thousand inhabitants was swallowed up. . . .

It was in Spain and Portugal that the shock manifested its extreme violence. At Cadiz the inflowing wave was said to be sixty feet high. Mountains, “some of the largest in Portugal, were impetuously shaken, as it were, from their very foundations, and some of them opened at their summits, which were split and rent in a wonderful manner, huge masses of them being thrown down into the adjacent valleys. Flames are related to have issued from these mountains.”—Sir Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology*, p. 495.

At Lisbon “a sound of thunder was heard underground, and immediately afterwards a violent shock threw down the greater part of that city. In the course of about six minutes sixty thousand persons perished. . . .

“The shock” of the earthquake “was instantly followed by the fall of every church and convent, almost all the large public buildings, and more than one fourth of the houses. In about two hours after the shock, fires broke out in different quarters, and raged with such violence for the space of nearly three days, that the city was completely desolated. The earthquake happened on a holyday, when the churches and convents were full of people, very few of whom escaped.”—*Encyclopedia Americana*, art. Lisbon, note (ed. 1831). . . . It has been estimated that ninety thousand persons lost their lives on that fatal day.⁴

A Striking Symbol

“And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. . . . He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints” (Revelation 13:1, 2, 10).

This symbol [of the leopardlike beast], as most Protestants have believed, represents the papacy, which succeeded to the power and seat and authority once held by the ancient Roman empire. Of the leopardlike beast it is declared: “There was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies. . . . And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations” (Revelation 13:5–7). This prophecy, which is nearly identical with the description of the little horn of Daniel 7, unquestionably points to the papacy.⁵

In the sixth century the papacy had become firmly established. Its seat of power was fixed in the imperial city, and the bishop of Rome was declared to be the head over the entire church. . . . Christians were forced to choose either to yield their integrity and accept the papal ceremonies and worship, or to wear away their lives in dungeons or suffer death.⁶

Says the prophet, “I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death.” And again: “He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword” (Revelation 13:3, 10). The forty and two months are the same as the “time and times and the dividing of time,” three years and a half, or 1260 days, of Daniel 7—the time during which the papal power was to oppress God’s people. This period . . . began with the supremacy of the papacy, A.D. 538, and terminated in 1798. At that time the pope was made captive by the French army, the papal power received its deadly wound, and the prediction was fulfilled, “He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity.”⁷

The Heavens Foretold the End

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken” (Matthew 24:29).

After describing the long period of trial for the church—the 1260 years of papal persecution, concerning which [Christ] had promised that the tribulation should be shortened—He thus mentioned certain events to precede His coming, and fixed the time when the first of these should be witnessed: “In those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light” (Mark 13:24). The 1260 days, or years, terminated in 1798. A quarter of a century earlier, persecution had almost wholly ceased. Between these two dates, according to the words of Christ, the sun was to be darkened. On the 19th of May, 1780, this prophecy was fulfilled.

“Almost if not altogether alone as the most mysterious and as yet unexplained phenomenon of its kind, . . . stands the dark day of May 19, 1780—a most unaccountable darkening of the whole visible heavens and atmosphere in New England.”—R. M. Devens, *Our First Century*, page 89. That the darkness was not due to an eclipse is evident from the fact that the moon was then nearly full. It was not caused by clouds, or the thickness of the atmosphere, for in some localities where the darkness extended, the sky was so clear that the stars could be seen. Concerning the inability of science to assign a satisfactory cause for this manifestation, Herschel the astronomer declares: “The dark day in North America was one of those wonderful phenomena of nature which philosophy is at a loss to explain.” . . .

May 19, 1780, stands in history as “The Dark Day.” Since the time of Moses, no period of darkness of equal density, extent, and duration has ever been recorded.⁸

“The stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind” (Revelation 6:13). This prophecy received a striking and impressive fulfillment in the great meteoric shower of November 13, 1833. That was the most extensive and wonderful display of falling stars which has ever been recorded. . . . In a word, the whole heavens seemed in motion.”—R. M. Devens, *American Progress*; or, *The Great Events of the Greatest Century*, ch. 28, pars. 1–5.⁹

The Ten Commandments Opened

“The nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail” (Revelation 11:18, 19).

In holy vision John was taken into the heavenly sanctuary. He says: “The temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament. And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened” (Revelation 11:19; 15:5). The sanctuary that Moses was commanded to make was to be after the pattern of the heavenly sanctuary. In the ark were placed the ten commandments which had been written by the finger of God. The law that was placed in the ark on earth was a copy of the law that is contained in the ark of the testament in heaven, and the precepts of Jehovah are immutable. The ten commandments constitute the moral standard of character. God requires on the part of man perfect conformity to His law, and a curse is pronounced against everyone who continues not in all things written in the law to do them.¹⁰

God’s requirement under grace is just the same He made in Eden—perfect obedience to His law. In the judgment, God will ask those who profess to be Christians, Why did you claim to believe in my Son, and continue to transgress My law? Who required this at your hands—to trample upon My rules of righteousness? . . . The gospel of the New Testament is not the Old Testament standard lowered to meet the sinner and save him in his sins. God requires of all His subjects obedience, entire obedience to all His commandments. He demands now as ever perfect righteousness as the only title to heaven. Christ is our hope and our refuge. His righteousness is imputed only to the obedient. Let us accept it through faith, that the Father shall find in us no sin. But those who have trampled on the holy law will have no right to claim that righteousness. Oh that we might view the immensity of the plan of salvation as obedient children to all God’s requirements, believing that we have peace with God through Jesus Christ, our atoning sacrifice!¹¹

The Judgment-Hour Message

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Revelation 14:6, 7).

The first angel’s message of Revelation 14, announcing the hour of God’s judgment and calling upon men to fear and worship Him, was designed to separate the professed people of God from the corrupting influences of the world and to arouse them to see their true condition of worldliness and backsliding. In this message, God had sent to the church a warning, which, had it been accepted, would have corrected the evils that were shutting them away from Him. Had they received the message from heaven, humbling their hearts before the Lord and seeking in sincerity a preparation to stand in His presence, the Spirit and power of God would have been manifested among them. The church would again have reached that blessed state of unity, faith, and love which existed in apostolic days, when the believers “were of one heart and of one soul, and spake the word of God with boldness, when the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 4:32, 31; 2:47).¹²

The announcement, “The hour of His judgment is come,” points to the closing work of Christ’s ministration for the salvation of men. It heralds a truth which must be proclaimed until the Saviour’s intercession shall cease and He shall return to the earth to take His people to Himself. The work of judgment which began in 1844 must continue until the cases of all are decided, both of the living and the dead; hence it will extend to the close of human probation. That men may be prepared to stand in the judgment, the message commands them to “fear God, and give glory to Him,” “and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” The result of an acceptance of these messages is given in the word: “Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12). In order to be prepared for the judgment, it is necessary that men should keep the law of God. That law will be the standard of character in the judgment.¹³

A Message Preached by Babes

“The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (1 Peter 4:17, 18).

In many places where the power of the clergy was exercised to prevent the preaching of the advent truth, the Lord was pleased to send the message through little children. As they were under age, the law of the State could not restrain them, and they were permitted to speak freely and unmolested. Thus the warning of the soon-coming Judgment was given to the people. This continued about nine months. After that, the influence upon the children was declared by the authorities to be a disease, and some of them were taken to the hospitals; but their mouths were not stopped; for they preached as long as God chose to use them as witnesses.

The movement began in the fall of 1842, and continued through the winter of 1843. An eye witness, speaking of the work accomplished through these children, says: . . . The child, who was six or eight years old, moved around among them, and they asked her questions, which she answered as a child usually does. The people flocked together, till the house was surrounded by a great number. When the last had arrived, her manner changed entirely, both in boldness and movements, clearly indicating that she was moved by an invisible power, and not by her own natural gifts. When she commenced speaking, her voice also changed. She said, “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come” (Revelation 14:7). She reproved sins, such as drinking, theft, adultery, swearing, and backbiting, and also reproved churchgoers for attending church with worldly business in view, instead of listening to God’s word and conforming their lives to it. Her voice and words were impressive. Many were weeping and sighing. They were told that time was given them to repent, but they must do it immediately, and not put it off.

We went home with stricken and trembling hearts. I felt that I must take my Bible, which I thought I had carefully studied, and search it yet deeper. I could hardly work the following week. My thoughts were constantly running on God’s word, and the sharp reproofs and expositions I had heard from that little child, who probably had not even learned to read.¹⁴

The Fall of Babylon

“And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” (Revelation 14:8).

When the first angel’s message was given, all who heard were invited to receive it and share the blessing to follow its acceptance; but many scorned and rejected the call. One turned to his farm, another to his merchandise, and they cared for none of these things. Inspiration declares that when the antediluvians rejected Noah’s words, the Spirit of God ceased to strive with them. So when men now despise the warnings which God in mercy sends them, His Spirit after a time ceases to arouse conviction in their hearts. God gives light to be cherished and obeyed, not to be despised and rejected. The light which He sends becomes darkness to those who disregard it. When the Spirit of God ceases to impress the truth upon the hearts of men, all hearing is vain, and all preaching also is vain.

When the churches spurned the counsel of God by rejecting the Advent message, the Lord rejected them. The first angel was followed by a second, proclaiming, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” (Revelation 14:8). This message was understood by Adventists to be an announcement of the moral fall of the churches in consequence of their rejection of the first message. The proclamation, Babylon is fallen, was given in the summer of 1844 and, as the result, about fifty thousand withdrew from these churches.

The term Babylon, derived from Babel, and signifying confusion, is applied in Scripture to the various forms of false or apostate religion. But the message announcing the fall of Babylon must apply to some religious body that was once pure, and has become corrupt. It cannot be the Romish Church which is here meant, for that church has been in a fallen condition for many centuries. But how appropriate the figure as applied to the Protestant churches, all professing to derive their doctrines from the Bible, yet divided into almost innumerable sects. The unity for which Christ prayed does not exist. Instead of one Lord, one faith, one baptism, there are numberless conflicting creeds and theories. Religious faith appears so confused and discordant that the world know not what to believe as truth.¹⁵

The Third Angel's Message

“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name” (Revelation 14:9–11).

The first and second messages were given in 1843 and 1844, and we are now under the proclamation of the third; but all three of the messages are still to be proclaimed.¹⁶

The fearful judgments denounced against the worship of the beast and his image (Revelation 14:9–11), should lead all to a diligent study of the prophecies to learn what the mark of the beast is, and how they are to avoid receiving it.¹⁷

The worshipers of God will be especially distinguished by their regard for the fourth commandment, since this is the sign of God's creative power and the witness to His claim upon man's reverence and homage. The wicked will be distinguished by their efforts to tear down the Creator's memorial and to exalt the institution of Rome. In the issue of the conflict all Christendom will be divided into two great classes, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and those who worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark.¹⁸

Christians of past generations observed the Sunday, supposing that in so doing they were keeping the Bible Sabbath; and there are now true Christians in every church, not excepting the Roman Catholic communion, who honestly believe that Sunday is the Sabbath of divine appointment. God accepts their sincerity of purpose and their integrity before Him. But when Sunday observance shall be enforced by law, and the world shall be enlightened concerning the obligation of the true Sabbath, then whoever shall transgress the command of God, to obey a precept which has no higher authority than that of Rome, will thereby honor popery above God. He is paying homage to Rome and to the power which enforces the institution ordained by Rome. He is worshipping the beast and his image.¹⁹

The Counsel of Christ

“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” (Revelation 3:17–19).

“Be zealous and repent,” is the admonition of Jesus to the Laodicean church. There is something to repent of. Worldly-mindedness, selfishness, and covetousness have been eating out their spiritual life. While they flatter themselves that they are rich, and increased with goods, and in need of nothing, Christ declares them to be “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

Among the greatest dangers that threaten the church is the love of the world. Out of this spring the sins of selfishness and covetousness. With many, the more they get of earthly treasure, the more they set their affections on it, and still they reach out for more. . . .

Satan employs every means which he can devise to overthrow the followers of Christ. With marvelous skill and cunning he adapts his temptations to the peculiar temperament of each. Those who are naturally selfish and covetous he often tempts by throwing prosperity in their way. He knows that if they do not overcome their natural temperament, the love of mammon will cause them to stumble and fall.²⁰

The straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans . . . will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver of the testimony, and it will lead him to exalt the standard and pour forth the straight truth. This straight testimony, some will not bear. They will rise up against it, and this will cause a shaking among God's people.²¹

The gold that Jesus would have us buy of Him is gold tried in the fire; it is the gold of faith and love, that has no defiling substance mingled with it. The white raiment is the righteousness of Christ, the wedding garment which Christ alone can give. The eyesalve is the true spiritual discernment that is so wanting among us, for spiritual things must be spiritually discerned.²²

Plenty of Deceptive Teachers

“Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many” (Matthew 24:11).

Teachers of falsehood will arise to draw you away from the narrow path and the strait gate. Beware of them; though concealed in sheep’s clothing, inwardly they are ravaging wolves. Jesus gives a test by which false teachers may be distinguished from the true. “Ye shall know them by their fruits,” He says. “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” (Matthew 7:16).

We are not bidden to prove them by their fair speeches and exalted professions. They are to be judged by the word of God. . . . What message do these teachers bring? Does it lead you to reverence and fear God? Does it lead you to manifest your love for Him by loyalty to His commandments? If men do not feel the weight of the moral law; if they make light of God’s precepts; if they break one of the least of His commandments, and teach men so, they shall be of no esteem in the sight of heaven. We may know that their claims are without foundation. They are doing the very work that originated with the prince of darkness, the enemy of God.

Not all who profess His name and wear His badge are Christ’s. Many who have taught in My name, said Jesus, will be found wanting at last. . . . There are persons who believe that they are right, when they are wrong. . . .

A mere profession of discipleship is of no value. The faith in Christ which saves the soul is not what it is represented to be by many. “Believe, believe,” they say, “and you need not keep the law.” But a belief that does not lead to obedience is presumption. . . . Let none cherish the idea that special providences or miraculous manifestations are to be the proof of the genuineness of their work or of the ideas they advocate. When persons will speak lightly of the word of God, and set their impressions, feelings, and exercises above the divine standard, we may know that they have no light in them.

Obedience is the test of discipleship. It is the keeping of the commandments that proves the sincerity of our professions of love. When the doctrine we accept kills sin in the heart, purifies the soul from defilement, bears fruit unto holiness, we may know that it is the truth of God. When benevolence, kindness, tenderheartedness, sympathy, are manifest in our lives; when the joy of right doing is in our hearts; when we exalt Christ, and not self, we may know that our faith is of the right order.²³

Spiritualism in the Last Days

“Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not” (Matthew 24:23–26).

Satan is a cunning foe. And it is not difficult for the evil angels to represent both saints and sinners who have died, and make these representations visible to human eyes. These manifestations will be more frequent, and developments of a more startling character will appear as we near the close of time. . . .

The boastful spiritualist claims great freedom, and in smooth, flowery language seeks to fascinate and delude unwary souls to choose the broad path of pleasure and sinful indulgence, rather than the narrow path and the straight way. Spiritualists call the requirements of God’s law bondage, and say those who obey them live a life of slavish fear. With smooth words and fair speeches they boast of their freedom, and seek to cover their dangerous heresies with the garments of righteousness. They would make the most revolting crimes be considered as blessings to the race.

They open before the sinner a wide door to follow the promptings of the carnal heart, and violate the law of God, especially the seventh commandment. Those who speak these great swelling words of vanity, and who triumph in their freedom in sin, promise those whom they deceive the enjoyment of freedom in a course of rebellion against the revealed will of God. These deluded souls are themselves in the veriest bondage to Satan and are controlled by his power, and yet promising liberty to those who will dare to follow the same course of sin that they themselves have chosen. . . .

We are not to attend their circles, neither are our ministers to engage in controversy with them. They are of that class specified whom we should not invite into our houses, or bid them God speed. We have to compare their teachings with the revealed will of God. We are not to engage in an investigation of spiritualism. . . . We need not be deceived by them. If we obey the divine injunction, we shall have no sympathy with spiritualists, however smooth and fair may be their words.²⁴

Cling to Christ, the Saviour

“Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. . . . And the dragon was wrath with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:12, 17).

God is leading His people out from the abominations of the world, that they may keep His law; and because of this, the rage of “the accuser of our brethren” knows no bounds.²⁵

The powers from beneath are moving the people to take the measures that will bring the people of God into tribulation. Satan is ever seeking to weaken the church by bringing in dissension and discord, that we shall not fulfill the words of Christ, and be one as He and the Father are one, and so bear a decided testimony to the world of the divinity of Christ. But we must look by faith to Jesus, and the trial will lose its force, and no art of the enemy can avail to cripple our hope in Christ; for we shall realize that we have a Saviour who is mighty to save. Through the darkness of trial and sorrow, we shall be able to distinguish the marks of the crucifixion in His hands and feet and side, and shall hear the voice of the Lord of glory saying: Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. Our whole future eternal life depends on whether we shall so live that our names may remain graven upon the palms of His hands.

We are to follow our Lord in the path of self-denial and self-sacrifice. We are not to choose the easiest path. The way that we shall be required to walk will necessitate the exercise of living faith; for it is by faith that we are to rejoice in tribulation, and send forth steady beams of light into the moral darkness that surrounds us. . . . The Lord would have us receive that mold of character which will make us fit to be living members of the heavenly family. We are to shed forth light to those who are in darkness and the shadow of death. We are to put out our talents to the exchangers, using, to the best of our ability, the power that God has given us. Jesus is looking to see how you behave yourselves now, that He may judge you worthy of a place in the mansions above; that He may gather you home as children of His family, subjects of the heavenly King.²⁶

Enduring in the Face of Coldness

“Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Matthew 24:12, 13).

When Christ was upon this earth, the world preferred Barabbas. And today the world and the churches are making the same choice. The scenes of the betrayal, the rejection, and the crucifixion of Christ have been reenacted, and will again be reenacted on an immense scale. People will be filled with the attributes of the enemy, and with them his delusions will have great power. Just to that degree that light is refused will there be misconception and misunderstanding. Those who reject Christ and choose Barabbas work under a ruinous deception. Misrepresentation and false witness will grow to open rebellion. The eye being evil, the whole body will be full of darkness. Those who give their affections to any leader but Christ will find themselves under the control, body, soul, and spirit, of an infatuation that is so entrancing that under its power souls turn away from hearing the truth to believe a lie. They are ensnared and taken, and by their every action they cry, Release unto us Barabbas, but crucify Christ.

Even now this decision is being made. The scenes enacted at the cross are being reenacted. In the churches that have departed from truth and righteousness it is being revealed what human nature can do and will do when the love of God is not an abiding principle in the soul. We need not be surprised at anything that may take place now. We need not marvel at any developments of horror. Those who trample under their unholy feet the law of God have the same spirit as had the men who insulted and betrayed Jesus. Without any compunction of conscience, they will do the deeds of their father, the devil. They will ask the question that came from the traitorous lips of Judas, What will you give me if I betray unto you Jesus the Christ? Even now Christ is being betrayed in the person of His saints.

In view of the history of the life and death of Christ, can we be surprised if the world is hollow and insincere? Can we in our day trust in man, or make flesh our arm? Shall we not choose Christ as our leader? He alone can save us from sin.²⁷

This is the time when men and women should make determined efforts to keep wide awake spiritually because of the prevalence of iniquity. Those who preserve their first love will be saved.²⁸

A Warning Repeated in Love

“I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Revelation 18:1–4).

The message of the fall of Babylon, as given by the second angel, is repeated, with the additional mention of the corruptions which have been entering the churches since 1844. The work of this angel comes in at the right time to join in the last great work of the third angel’s message as it swells to a loud cry. And the people of God are thus prepared to stand in the hour of temptation, which they are soon to meet.²⁹

God still has a people in Babylon; and before the visitation of His judgments these faithful ones must be called out, that they partake not of her sins and receive not of her plagues. Hence the movement symbolized by the angel coming down from heaven, lightening the earth with his glory and crying mightily with a strong voice, announcing the sins of Babylon. In connection with his message the call is heard, “Come out of her, my people” (Revelation 18:4). These announcements, uniting with the third angel’s message, constitute the final warning to be given.³⁰

Sensitive persons, as they view the conflicts and trials before them, shrink from the responsibility they must bear in warning the world of the judgments that are about to come. They fear its rude touch will stain their souls. But we are none of us to be shut up as precious perfumes, lest the fragrance shall escape.³¹

The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them. The light of the Sun of Righteousness is to shine forth in good works—in words of truth and deeds of holiness.³²

When Will My Name Come Up in Judgment?

“Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Matthew 24:40–44).

The antitypical land of promise is just before us, and Satan is determined to destroy the people of God and cut them off from their inheritance. The admonition, “Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation” (Mark 14:38), was never more needed than now. We are now living in the great day of atonement. In the typical service, while the high priest was making the atonement for Israel, all were required to afflict their souls by repentance of sin and humiliation before the Lord, lest they be cut off from among the people. In like manner, all who would have their names retained in the book of life should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before God by sorrow for sin and true repentance. There must be deep, faithful searching of heart. The light, frivolous spirit indulged by so many of professed Christians must be put away. There is earnest warfare before all who would subdue the evil tendencies that strive for the mastery. The work of preparation is an individual work. We are not saved in groups. The purity and devotion of one will not offset the want of these qualities in another. Though all nations are to pass in judgment before God, yet He will examine the case of each individual with as close and searching scrutiny as if there were not another being upon the earth. Everyone must be tested, and found without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

Solemn are the scenes connected with the closing work of the atonement. Momentous are the interests involved therein. The judgment is now passing in the sanctuary above. For more than sixty years this work has been in progress. Soon—none know how soon—it will pass to the cases of the living. In the awful presence of God our lives are to come up in review. At this time above all others it behooves every soul to heed the Saviour’s admonition, “Watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is” (Mark 13:33).³³

Sins Blotted Out

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19).

There is a constant warring of the flesh against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. The pollutions cherished in the soul war against the pure, sanctifying truth. Some have advanced the idea that if we are once in grace, we are always in grace. But our work is to overcome every day. Temptations press upon every hand; do we resist them, and come off victor in the name of Christ?

When we become children of God, our names are written in the Lamb’s book of life and they remain there until the time of the investigative judgment. Then the name of every individual will be called, and His record examined by Him who declares, “I know thy works” (Revelation 3:8). If in that day it shall appear that all our wicked deeds have not been fully repented of, our names will be blotted from the book of life and our sins will stand against us. If the professed believer becomes self-confident, if in word or spirit he breaks the least precept of God’s holy law, he misrepresents Jesus, and in the judgment the awful words will be spoken, Blot out his name from the book of life; he is a worker of iniquity. But the Father pities the self-distrustful, God-fearing soul, harassed though he may be with doubts and temptations. Jesus pleads for him, and confesses his name before the Father and His holy angels.

He who is to be our judge knows our works. He understands every temptation and trial. . . . He knows the circumstances that surround every soul. He knows our weaknesses and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. “If any man sin, says John, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). Oh, how precious is the name of Jesus, and how precious every name that He confesses before the Father! When our gracious Redeemer says of the poor penitent, He is Mine; I have graven his name on the palms of My hands, the answer comes, I will not blot his name from the book of life, but his sins shall be remembered against him no more.

The promise is, “Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me” (Isaiah 27:5). There is power in the blood of Christ to remove sin. Poor, trembling sinner, today you are the prisoner of hope. Jesus lives, and because He lives you may live also.³⁴

Aim to Be Faultless

“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads. . . . These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. . . . And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God” (Revelation 14:1, 4, 5).

We must be partakers with Christ of His sufferings if we would sit down in triumph with Him on His throne. So long as we choose the easy path of self-indulgence and are frightened at self-denial, our faith will never become firm, and we cannot know the peace of Jesus nor the joy that comes through conscious victory. The most exalted of the redeemed host that stand before the throne of God and the Lamb, clad in white, know the conflict of overcoming, for they have come up through great tribulation.³⁵

What are you doing, brethren, in the great work of preparation? Those who are uniting with the world are receiving the worldly mold and preparing for the mark of the beast. Those who are distrustful of self, who are humbling themselves before God and purifying their souls by obeying the truth—these are receiving the heavenly mold and preparing for the seal of God in their foreheads. When the decree goes forth and the stamp is impressed, their character will remain pure and spotless for eternity.

Now is the time to prepare. The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the ambitious, world-loving man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of men or women of false tongues or deceitful hearts. All who receive the seal must be without spot before God—candidates for heaven.³⁶

Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.

It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:12, margin). Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain.³⁷

Is Christ Waiting for Me?

“This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matthew 24:14).

Not that all are called to be ministers or missionaries in the ordinary sense of the term; but all may be workers with Him in giving the glad tidings to their fellowmen. To all, great or small, learned or ignorant, old or young, the command is given.

In view of this command, can we educate our sons and daughters for a life of respectable conventionality, a life professedly Christian, but lacking His self-sacrifice, a life on which the verdict of Him who is truth must be, “I know you not?” (Matthew 25:12).

Thousands are doing this. They think to secure for their children the benefits of the gospel while they deny its spirit. But this cannot be. Those who reject the privilege of fellowship with Christ in service, reject the only training that imparts a fitness for participation with Him in His glory. They reject the training that in this life gives strength and nobility of character. Many a father and mother, denying their children to the cross of Christ, have learned too late that they were thus giving them over to the enemy of God and man.³⁸

By giving the gospel to the world, it is in our power to hasten the coming of the day of God. Had the church of Christ done her appointed work as the Lord ordained, the whole world would before this have been warned, and the Lord Jesus would have come to the earth in power and great glory.

Living power must attend the message of Christ’s second appearing. We must not rest until we see many souls converted to the blessed hope of the Lord’s return. In the days of the apostles the message that they bore wrought a real work, turning souls from idols to serve the living God. The work to be done today is just as real, and the truth is just as much truth; only we are to give the message with as much more earnestness as the coming of the Lord is nearer. The message for this time is positive, simple, and of the deepest importance. We must act like men and women who believe it. Waiting, watching, working, praying, warning the world—this is our work.³⁹

Long has God waited for the spirit of service to take possession of the whole church.⁴⁰

Under the Power of the Latter Rain

“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James 5:7, 8).

Are we emptying our hearts of all selfishness, and cleansing them, preparatory to receiving the latter rain from heaven?⁴¹

As the members of the body of Christ approach the period of their last conflict, the time of Jacob’s trouble, they will grow up into Christ, and will partake largely of His spirit. As the third message swells to a loud cry, and as great power and glory attend the closing work, the faithful people of God will partake of that glory. It is the latter rain which revives and strengthens them to pass through the time of trouble. Their faces will shine with the glory of that light which attends the third angel.⁴²

Many do not realize what they must be in order to live in the sight of the Lord without a high priest in the sanctuary through the time of trouble. Those who receive the seal of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully.

I saw that many were neglecting the preparation so needful and were looking to the time of refreshing and the latter rain to fit them to stand in the day of the Lord and to live in His sight. Oh, how many I saw in the time of trouble without a shelter! They had neglected the needful preparation; therefore they could not receive the refreshing that all must have to fit them to live in the sight of a holy God.⁴³

Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement. Then the latter rain will fall upon us as the early rain fell upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost.⁴⁴

We must get ready for the latter rain. The earth is to be lighted with the glory of the third angel—not a little corner only, but the whole earth. You may think that the work you are doing now is lost; but I tell you it is not lost. When the message shall go with a loud cry, those who hear the truth now will spring to the front and work with mighty power. But you must have faith.⁴⁵

Troubles Escalate

“Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another” (Matthew 24:6–10).

All this the [early] Christians suffered. Fathers and mothers betrayed their children; children betrayed their parents; friends delivered their friends to the Sanhedrin. . . .

In the arrest, the trial, and the imprisonment of His witnesses, God manifested Himself. He gave them words to speak, and a tongue and voice with which to vindicate the truth and acknowledge Him as the Son of God. . . . By killing them, the Jews crucified afresh the Son of God.

So it will be again. But it is over the seventh-day Sabbath that the battle will be fought. The authorities of this world will rise up in their pride and power to make laws to restrict religious liberty. They will assume a right that is God’s alone and, like Nebuchadnezzar, will think that they can force the conscience, which only God can control. Even now they are making a beginning, and this they will carry forward till they reach a boundary over which they can not step. Then God will interpose in behalf of His loyal, commandment-keeping people. . . .

Whenever persecution takes place, the spectators make decisions either for or against Christ. Because of persecution, many will be offended. The principles of the truth cut directly across their practice, and they will stumble and fall, apostatizing from the faith they once advocated. Many who have professed to love the truth will then show that they have no vital union with the True Vine. They will be cut away, as branches that bear no fruit, and will be bound up with unbelievers, scoffers, and mockers.

Those who apostatize in time of trial will bear false witness and betray their brethren, to secure their own safety. They will tell where their brethren are concealed, putting the wolves on their track. Christ has warned us of this, that we may not be surprised at the cruel, unnatural course pursued by friends and relatives.⁴⁶

In View of the Soon-Coming Decree

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes” (Matthew 24:15–18).

It is no time now for God’s people to be fixing their affections or laying up their treasure in the world. The time is not far distant, when, like the early disciples, we shall be forced to seek a refuge in desolate and solitary places. As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians, so the assumption of power on the part of our nation in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath will be a warning to us. It will then be time to leave the large cities, preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains. And now, instead of seeking expensive dwellings here, we should be preparing to move to a better country, even a heavenly. Instead of spending our means in self-gratification, we should be studying to economize. Every talent lent of God should be used to His glory in giving the warning to the world. God has a work for His laborers to do in the cities. Our missions must be sustained; new missions must be opened. To carry forward this work successfully will require no small outlay. Houses of worship are needed, where the people may be invited to hear the truths for this time. For this very purpose, God has entrusted a capital to His stewards. Let not your property be tied up in worldly enterprises, so that this work shall be hindered. Get your means where you can handle it for the benefit of the cause of God. Send your treasures before you into heaven.

The members of the church should individually hold themselves and all their possessions upon the altar of God. . . . Those who are fastening their means in large houses, in lands, in worldly enterprises, are saying by their actions: God cannot have it; I want it for myself. They have bound up their one talent in a napkin and hid it in the earth. There is cause for such to be alarmed. Brethren, God has not entrusted means to you to lie idle nor to be covetously retained or hid away, but to be used to advance His cause, to save the souls of the perishing.⁴⁷

An Image to the Beast

“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live” (Revelation 13:11–14).

The power of God had rested upon His people; they had accomplished their work and were prepared for the trying hour before them. They had received the latter rain, or refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and the living testimony had been revived. The last great warning had sounded everywhere, and it had stirred up and enraged the inhabitants of the earth who would not receive the message.⁴⁸

God had children who do not see and keep the Sabbath. They had not rejected the light on it. And at the commencement of the time of trouble, we were filled with the Holy Ghost as we went forth and proclaimed the Sabbath more fully. This enraged the churches and nominal Adventists, as they could not refute the Sabbath truth.⁴⁹

“The commencement of that time of trouble,” here mentioned does not refer to the time when the plagues shall begin to be poured out, but to a short period just before they are poured out, while Christ is in the sanctuary.⁵⁰

John beheld a new power . . . the last that is to wage war against the church and the law of God, was symbolized by a beast with lamblike horns. The beasts preceding it had risen from the sea, but this came up out of the earth, representing the peaceful rise of the nation which is symbolized. The two horns like a lamb well represent the character of the United States Government, as expressed in its two fundamental principles, republicanism and Protestantism. . . .

But the stern tracing of the prophetic pencil reveals a change in this peaceful scene. The beast with lamblike horns speaks with the voice of a dragon, and “exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him” (Revelation 13:12). Prophecy declares that he will say to them that dwell on the earth that they should make an image to the beast.⁵¹

The Mark of the Beast Imposed

“And [the second beast with lamblike horns] causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six” (Revelation 13:16–18).

The Spirit of God is being withdrawn from the earth. When the angel of mercy folds her wings and departs, Satan will do the evil deeds he has long wished to do. Storm and tempest, war and bloodshed—in these things he delights, and thus he gathers in his harvest. And so completely will men be deceived by him that they will declare that these calamities are the result of the desecration of the first day of the week. From the pulpits of the popular churches will be heard the statement that the world is being punished because Sunday is not honored as it should be. And it will require no great stretch of imagination for men to believe this. They are guided by the enemy, and therefore they reach conclusions which are entirely false. . . .

Satan claims the world, but there is a little company who withstand his devices and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Satan sets himself to destroy this commandment-keeping company. But God is their tower of defense.⁵¹

Refraining from work on Sunday is not receiving the mark of the beast; and where this will advance the interests of the work, it should be done. We should not go out of our way to work on Sunday.

After the Sabbath has been sacredly observed, in places where the opposition is so strong as to arouse persecution if work is done on Sunday, let our brethren make that day an occasion to do genuine missionary work. Let them visit the sick and the poor, ministering to their wants, and they will find favorable opportunities to open the Scriptures to individuals and to families. Thus most profitable work can be done for the Master. When those who hear and see the light on the Sabbath take their stand upon the truth to keep God’s holy day, difficulties will arise; *for efforts will be brought to bear against them to compel men and women to transgress the law of God. Here they must stand firm, that they will not violate the law of God.*⁵²

The Worst Deception in History

“Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14).

In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation (Chapter 1:13–15). The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld. The shout of triumph rings out upon the air, Christ has come! Christ has come! The people prostrate themselves in adoration before him. . . . He claims to have changed the Sabbath to Sunday, and commands all to hallow the day which he has blessed. . . .

But the people of God will not be misled. The teachings of this false christ are not in accordance with the Scriptures. His blessing is pronounced upon the worshipers of the beast and his image—the very class upon whom the Bible declares that God’s unmingled wrath shall be poured out. And, furthermore, Satan is not permitted to counterfeit the manner of Christ’s advent. The Scriptures teach that “as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matthew 24:27); that he “cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him” (Revelation 1:7); that he “will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:16); that he will “come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him” (Matthew 25:31), and will “send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect” (Matthew 24:31). Those who have received the love of the truth will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive. By the testimony of the Scriptures they will detect the deceiver in his disguise.

To all, the testing time will come. By the sifting of temptation, the genuine Christian will be revealed. Are the people of God now so firmly established upon His word that they would not yield to the evidence of their senses? Would they, in such a crisis, cling to the Bible, and the Bible only? Satan will, if possible, prevent them from obtaining a preparation to stand in that day. He will so arrange affairs as to hedge up their way, entangle them with earthly treasures, cause them to carry a heavy, wearisome burden, that their hearts may be overcharged with the cares of this life, and the day of trial may come upon them as a thief.⁵³

The Great Time of Trouble

“And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. . . . And [the second beast] had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed” (Revelation 16:1; 13:15).

Let none be discouraged in view of the severe trials to be met in the time of Jacob’s trouble, which is yet before them. They are to work earnestly, anxiously, not for that time, but for today. What we want is to have a knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ now, and a personal experience now. In these precious closing hours of probation, we have a deep and living experience to gain. We shall thus form characters that will ensure our deliverance in the time of trouble.

The time of trouble is the crucible that is to bring out Christlike characters. It is designed to lead the people of God to renounce Satan and his temptations. The last conflict will reveal Satan to them in his true character, that of a cruel tyrant, and it will do for them what nothing else could do, uproot him entirely from their affections. For to love and cherish sin, is to love and cherish its author, that deadly foe of Christ.⁵⁴

The nations are now getting angry, but when our High Priest has finished His work in the sanctuary, He will stand up, put on the garments of vengeance, and then the seven last plagues will be poured out. I saw that the four angels would hold the four winds until Jesus’ work was done in the sanctuary, and then will come the seven last plagues. These plagues enraged the wicked against the righteous, and they thought that we had brought them down upon them, and if they could rid the earth of us, then the plagues would be stayed. A decree went forth to slay the saints, which caused them to cry day and night for deliverance. This was the time of Jacob’s trouble. Then all the saints cried out with anguish of spirit, and were delivered by the voice of God. Then the 144,000 triumphed. Their faces were lighted up with the glory of God. Then I was shown a company who were howling in agony. . . . The angel said, these are they who have once kept the Sabbath and have given it up. . . . They had drunk of the deep waters, and fouled the residue with their feet—trodden the Sabbath underfoot, and that is why they were weighed in the balance and found wanting.⁵⁵

The Coming of Christ

“The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17).

Jesus is coming, but not as at His first advent, a babe in Bethlehem, not as He rode into Jerusalem, when the disciples praised God with a loud voice and cried, Hosannah; but in the glory of the Father, and with all the retinue of holy angels with Him, to escort Him on His way to earth. All heaven will be emptied of the angels. While the waiting saints will be looking for Him, and gazing into heaven, as were the “men of Galilee” (Acts 1:8) when He ascended from the Mount of Olivet. Then, those only who are holy, those who have followed fully the meek Pattern will, with rapturous joy, exclaim as they behold Him, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us” (Isaiah 25:9). And they will be changed “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump” (1 Corinthians 15:52), that wakes the sleeping saints, and calls them forth from their dusty beds, clothed with glorious immortality, shouting, Victory! Victory! over death and the grave. The changed saints are caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air, never more to be separated from the object of their love.⁵⁶

All should now endeavor to realize the shortness and solemnity of the time in which we live. There is no time now to be spent in serving self, and in acquiring property for ourselves and our children. A change is soon to take place; a new order of things is to begin. . . . There is no second trial. Probation is forever ended. All unbelief in regard to the claims of God’s law here ceases; for it is by this standard that all are judged. Every eye then sees Him; and every soul then realizes what has proved his ruin. It is then seen and acknowledged that God’s law governs all created intelligences. There is none to question His authority. Scoffers no longer say, Where is the promise of His coming? neither do they wonder that a peculiar people believed in, and waited for, their Lord’s appearing. The reason of this is apparent to all. His coming is the greatest event in the world’s history. Those who have had respect to all His commandments, are then classed among the loyal and true, and rewarded with eternal life.⁵⁷

Entrusted as Kings and Priests

“I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4).

At the coming of Christ the wicked are blotted from the face of the whole earth—consumed with the spirit of His mouth, and destroyed by the brightness of His glory. Christ takes His people to the city of God, and the earth is emptied of its inhabitants. . . .

For a thousand years, Satan will wander to and fro in the desolate earth, to behold the results of his rebellion against the law of God. The Revelator, after presenting the scenes of the Lord’s second coming and the destruction of the wicked, prophesies of Satan’s imprisonment, and declares that “he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season” (Revelation 20:3).

During the thousand years between the first and the second resurrection, the judgment of the wicked takes place. Daniel declares that when the Ancient of days came, “judgment was given to the saints of the Most High” (Daniel 7:22). At this time the righteous reign as kings and priests unto God. . . . It is at this time that, as foretold by Paul, “the saints shall judge the world” (1 Corinthians 6:2). In union with Christ they judge the wicked, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Bible, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body. Satan also and evil angels are judged by Christ and His people.⁵⁸

The despised remnant are clothed in glorious apparel, nevermore to be defiled by the corruptions of the world. Their names are retained in the Lamb’s book of life, enrolled among the faithful of all ages. They have resisted the wiles of the deceiver; they have not been turned from their loyalty by the dragon’s roar. Now they are eternally secure from the tempter’s devices. Their sins are transferred to the originator of sin. And the remnant are not only pardoned and accepted, but honored. A fair miter is set upon their heads. They are to be as kings and priests unto God. While Satan was urging his accusations and seeking to destroy this company, holy angels, unseen, were passing to and fro, placing upon them the seal of the living God.⁵⁹

A Cleansing Fire

“The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10).

Jesus will descend with the saints upon the Mount of Olives, and the mount will part asunder, and become a mighty plain for the Paradise of God to rest upon. The rest of the earth will not be cleansed until the wicked dead are raised (at the end of the one thousand years) and gather up around the city; for the feet of the wicked will never desecrate the earth made new. Then fire will come down from God out of heaven and devour them; burn them up root and branch. Satan is the root, and his children are the branches. The same fire that will devour the wicked, will purify the earth.⁶⁰

At the close of the thousand years the second resurrection will take place. Then the wicked will be raised from the dead and appear before God for the execution of “the judgment written” (Psalm 149:9). Thus the Revelator, after describing the resurrection of the righteous, says, “The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished” (Revelation 20:5).

The wicked receive their recompense in the earth. “Upon the wicked he shall rain quick burning coals, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup” [see Psalm 11:6]. Fire comes down from God out of heaven. The earth is broken up. The weapons concealed in its depths are drawn forth. Devouring flames burst from every yawning chasm. The very rocks are on fire. The day has come that shall burn as an oven. The elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein are burned up. The wicked “shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 4:1). All are punished “according to their deeds” (Psalm 28:4).

In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch—Satan the root, his followers the branches. The full penalty of the law has been visited; the demands of justice have been met; and heaven and earth, beholding, declare the righteousness of Jehovah. . . .

The fire that consumes the wicked purifies the earth. Every trace of the curse is swept away. No eternally burning hell will keep before the ransomed the fearful consequences of sin.⁶¹

New Heavens and a New Earth

“We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless” (2 Peter 3:13, 14).

The true Christian’s joys and consolation must and will be in heaven. The longing souls of those who have tasted of the powers of the world to come and have feasted on heavenly joys, will not be satisfied with things of earth. Such will find enough to do in their leisure moments. Their souls will be drawn out after God. Where the treasure is, there will the heart be, holding sweet communion with the God they love and worship. Their amusement will be in contemplating their treasure—the Holy City, the earth made new, their eternal home. And while they dwell upon those things which are lofty, pure, and holy, heaven will be brought near, and they will feel the power of the Holy Spirit, and this will tend to wean them more and more from the world and cause their consolation and chief joy to be in the things of heaven, their sweet home.⁶²

The glorious city of God has twelve gates, set with pearls most glorious. It also has twelve foundations of various colors. The streets of the city are of pure gold. In this city is the throne of God, and a pure, beautiful river proceeding out of it, as clear as crystal. Its sparkling purity and beauty makes glad the city of God. The saints will drink freely of the healing waters of the river of life.

On either side of this beautiful river is the tree of life. And the redeemed saints, who have loved God and kept His commandments here, will enter in through the gates of the city and have right to the tree of life. They will eat freely of it, as our first parents did before their fall. The leaves of that immortal wide-spread tree will be for the healing of the nations. All their woes will then be gone. Sickness, sorrow and death they will never again feel, for the leaves of the tree of life have healed them.⁶³

Here in this world we are to learn what we must be in order to have a place in the heavenly courts. We are to learn the lessons that Christ desires to teach us, that we may be prepared to be taken to the higher school in the courts above, where the Saviour will lead us beside the river of life, explaining to us many things that here we could not comprehend, and teaching us of the mysteries of God. There we shall see the glory of God as we have never seen it here.⁶⁴

Trusting Our Good Shepherd

“Little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming” (1 John 2:28).

Soon the work of God in the earth will close triumphantly. Soon those who have remained steadfast unto the end will be granted an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord. . . .

Of all the joys that await the redeemed in the earth made new, one of the highest will be the privilege of mingling our voices with the voices of those whom we have helped to save.⁶⁵

Oh, what happiness we shall enjoy, gathered round about the throne, clothed in the white robes of the righteousness of Christ. No more sorrow, no more separation, but to dwell in peace, to dwell in happiness, to dwell in glory throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. What a happy, happy company we may be!⁶⁶

The cross of Christ will be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity. In Christ glorified they will behold Christ crucified. Never will it be forgotten that He whose power created and upheld the unnumbered worlds through the vast realms of space, the Beloved of God, the Majesty of heaven, He whom cherub and shining seraph delighted to adore—humbled Himself to uplift fallen man; that He bore the guilt and shame of sin, and the hiding of His Father’s face, till the woes of a lost world broke His heart and crushed out His life on Calvary’s cross.⁶⁷

We are not to stand in the shadow, but in the saving light of the cross. With hearts cleansed by His most precious blood, and in full consciousness of His presence, although unseen, we may listen to His voice that thrills the soul with the words: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).⁶⁸

Fall in your helplessness at the foot of the cross; today believe the promise of God. Jesus loves us with a love that is infinite. Oh, what love, what matchless love, He has shown for the children of men! Jesus does not desire you to wait to make yourself better; He desires you to take Him today as your Saviour. . . .

He is not willing that any of us should perish, but that all should have eternal life; but He wants us to follow Him as the sheep follow the shepherd; and by and by He will lead us to living waters, and wipe away all tears from our eyes.⁶⁹

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