

Ellen G. White 1884 Sign Of The Times

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Heathen Plots Against Nehemiah

Sanballat, Tobiah, and their confederates, dared not openly make war upon the Jews; but with increasing malice they continued their secret efforts to perplex, injure, and discourage them. The wall about Jerusalem was rapidly approaching completion. When it should be finished, and its gates set up, these enemies of Israel could not hope to force an entrance into the city. Therefore they were the more eager and determined in their efforts to stop the work without delay. At last they devised a plan to draw Nehemiah from his station, and kill or imprison him while they had him in their power.

Pretending to desire a compromise of the opposing parties, they proposed a conference with Nehemiah, and invited him to meet them in a village on the plain of Ono. But the Spirit of God, enlightening the mind of his servant, enabled him to discern their real purpose. Says Nehemiah, "I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down; why should the work cease, whilst I leave it and come down to you?" But these emissaries of Satan were persistent. Four times they sent messages of like import, but received the same answer.

Finding this plan unsuccessful, they then had resort to a more dangerous stratagem. Sanballat sent to Nehemiah a messenger bearing an open letter wherein was written: "It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel; for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together." Had the reports mentioned been actually circulated, there would have been cause for apprehension; for they would soon have been carried to the ears of the king, whom a slight suspicion might provoke to the severest measures. But Nehemiah was convinced that the letter was wholly false, written to arouse his fears, and draw him into some snare prepared by his enemies. This conclusion was strengthened by the fact that the letter was sent open, evidently that the contents might be read by the people, and thus intimidate them also.

He therefore promptly returned the answer "There are no such things done as thou sayest; but thou feignest them out of thine own heart." He is not ignorant of Satan's devices, and he feels assured that all these attempts are made for the purpose of weakening the hands of the builders, that their work may not be accomplished. He turns to the Source of strength, with the prayer, "Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands."

Satan had been defeated again and again; and now with deeper malice and greater cunning, he proceeded to devise a still more subtle and dangerous snare for the servant of God. Sanballat and his companions were moved to hire men, professing to be friends of Nehemiah, to give him evil counsel as the word of the Lord. The principal person engaged in this nefarious work was one Shemaiah, who had previously been held in good repute by Nehemiah. This man shut himself up in a chamber near the sanctuary, as if fearing that his life was in danger, and thither Nehemiah went to consult with him as one who was especially favored of God. The temple was at this time protected

by walls and gates, while the gates of the city were not yet set up. This deceiver therefore professed great concern for Nehemiah's safety, and counseled him to seek shelter in the temple: "Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple; for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee." The hero's fearless answer was, "Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in."

Had Nehemiah followed that treacherous counsel, he would have sacrificed his reputation for courage, and faith in God, and would have appeared cowardly and contemptible. The alarm would have spread among the people, each would have sought his own safety, and the city would have been left unprotected, to fall a prey to their enemies. That one unwise move would have been a virtual surrender of all that had been gained.

Nehemiah was not long in penetrating the true character and object of his counselor; "And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me; for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me."

In view of the important work that Nehemiah had undertaken, together with the integrity of his character, and the confidence in God which he professed to feel, it would be highly inconsistent for him to hide himself as though in fear. The preservation of life itself would not be a sufficient excuse for such a course. The infamous counsel given him was seconded by more than one man of high reputation, who, while professing to be his friend, was secretly in league with his enemies. Women also, while pretending to have received great light from God, basely sold themselves to serve the cause of the heathen. Nehemiah prays that God will mark their evil designs, and reward them according to their deeds.

Despite all the plots of enemies, open and secret, the work of building went steadily forward, the wall rose to the proper height, and in about two months after Nehemiah's arrival at Jerusalem, the holy city was girded round with its defenses, and the builders could walk upon its walls, and look forth upon their astonished adversaries. Says Nehemiah, "When all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God."

Yet the striking evidence that the hand of the Lord was with Nehemiah was not sufficient to restrain discontent, rebellion, and treachery. "In those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them. For there were many in Judah sworn unto him because he was the son-in-law of Shechaniah." Here are seen the evil results of intermarriage with idolaters. In this union, Satan had gained the victory. A family of Judah had connected themselves with the enemies of God, and the relation had proved a snare to the people. Many others also united in marriage with the heathen. These, like the mixed multitude that came up with Israel from Egypt, were a source of constant trouble. They were not whole-hearted in the service of God. When his work demanded a sacrifice, they were ready to violate their own solemn oaths of co-operation and support. All this had tended to weaken and discourage those who sought to build up the cause of God.

Some who had been foremost in plotting mischief against the Jews, and endeavoring by every possible means to cause their ruin, now professed great desire to be on friendly terms with them. Some of the nobles of Judah who had become entangled in idolatrous marriages, had held traitorous correspondence with Tobiah, and had taken oath to serve him. They now presumed to represent this agent of Satan as a man of ability, wisdom, and foresight, and urged that an alliance with him would be highly advantageous to the Jews. At the same time they betrayed to him Nehemiah's plans and movements. Thus the work of God was laid open to his enemies, and opportunity was given them not only to misconstrue Nehemiah's words and acts, and circulate false reports concerning him, but to lay plans to counteract his efforts and hinder his work. Yet this man, who had so boldly stood in defense of the oppressed, did not exercise the authority with which he was invested, and bring to punishment those traitors in the camp. Calmly and unselfishly he went forward in the service of his people, never dreaming of slackening his efforts though they should be repaid only with ingratitude and treachery.

The whole power and policy of Satan have always been aimed at those who are zealously seeking to advance the cause and work of God. Though often baffled, he as often renews his assaults. But it is when he works in secret that he is most to be feared. The advocates of unpopular truth must expect opposition from its open enemies; this is often fierce and cruel, but it is far less dangerous than the secret enmity of those who profess to be serving God while at heart they are servants of Satan. While apparently uniting in the work of God, many are connected with his foe; and if in any way crossed in their plans, or reprov'd for their sins, they court the favor of the enemies of truth, and open to them all the plans of God's servants and the workings of this cause. Thus they place every advantage in the hands of those who use all their knowledge to hinder the work of God and injure his people. Thus these men of two minds and two purposes pretend to serve God, and then go over to the enemy and serve him, as best suits their inclination.

Every device which the prince of darkness can suggest, will be employed to induce God's servants to form a compromise with the agents of Satan. Repeated solicitations will come in, to call us from duty; but, like Nehemiah, we should steadfastly reply, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down." We have no time to seek the favor of the world, or even to defend ourselves from their misrepresentation and calumny. We have no time to lose in self-vindication. We should keep steadily at our work, and let that refute the falsehoods which malice may coin to our injury. Slanders will be multiplied if we stop to answer them. Should we allow our enemies to gain our friendship and sympathy, and thereby allure us from our post of duty; should we by any unguarded act, expose the cause of God to reproach, and thus weaken the hands of the workers, we should bring upon our characters a stain not easily removed, and place a serious obstacle in the way of our own future usefulness.

Those temptations are most dangerous which come from the professed servants of God, and from our friends. When persons who are uniting with the world, yet claiming great piety and love, counsel the faithful workers for God to be less zealous and more conservative, our answer must be an appeal to the word of God. When they plead for union with those who have been our determined opposers, we should fear and shun them as decidedly as did Nehemiah. Those who would lead away from the old landmarks to form a connection with the ungodly, cannot be sent of Heaven. Whatever may have been their former position, their present course tends to unsettle the faith of God's people.

Such counselors are prompted by Satan. They are time-servers. The testimonies, reproofs, and warnings of God's servants are unpalatable to them, being a reproof to their worldly, pleasure-loving propensities. We should shun this class as resolutely as did Nehemiah.

When plied with the arguments and suggestions of such advisers, it would be well for us each to inquire, "Should I, who am a Christian, a child of God; one called to be the light of the world, a preacher of righteousness; who have so often expressed my confidence in the truth and the way in which the Lord has led us,—should I unite my influence with those who bitterly oppose the work of God? Should I, a steward of the mysteries of God, open to his worst enemies the counsels of his people? Would not such a course embolden the wicked in their opposition to the truth of God and to his covenant-keeping people? Would not such concession prevent me from opening my lips in exhortation, warning, or entreaty, in my own family or in the church of God? If Paul or Peter were placed in similar circumstances, would he thus betray a sacred trust? Would not even men of the world despise me? Would they not scorn to be diverted from their life-work by difficulties or perils?"

Satan will work by any and every means which he can employ to discourage the active servants of God. If the shepherd can be beguiled from his duty, then the way is clear for wolves to scatter and devour the sheep.

Every success of the truth discourages the enemies of God; and they are sometimes forced to acknowledge that it is his work, while they hate it the more on that very account. False brethren will continue to increase. Those to whom God has sent warnings and reproofs, but who, rejecting the Heaven-sent message, give heed to the counsel of his enemies, are the severest trial to his faithful servants. "They that forsake the law, praise the wicked."

January 10, 1884

Nehemiah Causes the People to Be Instructed in the Law of God

While Nehemiah labored diligently to restore the material defenses of Jerusalem, he did not forget that the God of Israel was their only sure defense, and that only in obedience to his commandments would they be secure. He therefore gave diligent attention to the instruction of the people in the law of God.

At the time of the feast of trumpets, when many were gathered at the holy city, the people assembled in the street that was before the water gate; "and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday." "And the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law." "And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands; and they bowed their heads, and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground." Certain of the priests and Levites united with Ezra in explaining to the people the principles of the divine law. "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."

The scene was one of mournful interest. The wall of Jerusalem had been rebuilt, and the gates set up; thus far a great victory had been achieved; but a large part of the city was still in ruins. On a

pulpit of wood, erected in one of the broadest streets, and surrounded on every hand by the sad reminders of Judah's departed glory, stood Ezra, now an aged man. At his right and left were gathered his brother Levites, who were consecrated to the service of God, and whose presence lent dignity and solemnity to the occasion. With heavy hearts they thought upon the days of their fathers, when the royal psalmist had sung: "Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces." "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King."

Looking down from the elevated platform, the eye swept over a sea of heads. From all the surrounding country the children of the covenant had assembled; and as one man they were listening, intent and reverent, to hear once more the words of the Most High. But even here the evidence of their sin was apparent. In their mingling with other nations, the Hebrew language had become corrupted, and therefore great care was necessary on the part of the speakers to explain the law in the language of the people, and so present it that it might be understood by all.

As the law of God was read and explained, the people were convinced of their guilt and danger, and with tender consciences and penitential tears they mourned because of their transgressions. But as this day was a festival, a day of holy convocation, a day which the Lord had commanded to be kept with joy and gladness, they were bidden by their teachers to restrain their grief, and to rejoice in view of the great mercy of God toward them. "For," said Nehemiah, "this day is holy unto our Lord; neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Accordingly, after the earlier part of the day had been devoted to religious exercises, the people spent the remainder in gratefully recounting the blessings of God, and enjoying the bounties which he had granted them, remembering also to send portions to the poor who had nothing to prepare. And there was great rejoicing, because they understood the words of the law which had been declared to them.

The work of reading and expounding the law to the people was continued upon the following day. The solemn services of the day of atonement were performed at the time appointed,—on the tenth day of the seventh month,—according to the command of God. And from the fifteenth to the twenty-second of the same month the people and their rulers kept once more the feast of tabernacles.

It was published "in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written. So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God." "And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness. Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he [Ezra] read in the book of the law of God."

When this festival was past, one day only having intervened, the children of Israel kept a solemn fast. This was held not merely at the command of the rulers, but by the desire of the people. As they had from day to day listened to the words of the law, they had been deeply convicted of their own transgressions, and also of the sins of their nation in past generations. They saw that it was because

of their departure from God that his protecting care had been withdrawn from them, and they had been scattered in foreign lands. And they now determined to seek God's mercy, and to pledge themselves to walk hereafter in his commandments.

Before entering upon the services of the day, they carefully separated themselves from the heathen who were intermingled with them. This being done, "they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the Lord their God one-fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshiped the Lord their God."

The people prostrated themselves before the Lord, humbly confessing their sins and pleading for mercy and pardon, each for himself individually and for the entire congregation. Then their leaders encouraged them to believe that God, according to his promise, had heard their prayers. They showed them that they were not only to mourn and weep and repent of their transgressions, but to trust that God had pardoned them, and to evince their faith by recounting his mercies and praising him for his goodness. Said these teachers, "Stand up and bless the Lord your God forever and ever."

Then from the gathered throng, as they stood with hands outstretched toward heaven, arose the song of praise and adoration: "Blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all, and the host of Heaven worshipeth thee."

In this portion of sacred history is a precious lesson of faith for all who are convicted of sin, and weighed down with a sense of their unworthiness. When they compare their characters with God's great standard of right, they see themselves condemned as transgressors. There is no power in law to free them from their guilt. But as they confess their sins, they can find pardon through Christ. From him flows the cleansing stream that can wash away the stains of sin. When the sinner has come to Christ with contrition of soul, confessing his transgressions, it is then his duty to appropriate to himself the Saviour's promise of pardon to the repentant and believing. He who seeks to find goodness and cause for rejoicing in himself, will always be in despair; but he who looks to Jesus, the author and finisher of his faith, can say with confidence, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Following the song of praise, the leaders of the congregation presented the history of Israel, showing God's great benefits and their ingratitude. Tracing the record from the days of Abraham, they called attention to God's design to preserve his name upon the earth by preserving for himself a people pure amid the general corruption; they recounted the mighty manifestations of his power in their deliverance from bondage in Egypt, and showed also how backsliding and apostasy had caused the blessing of the Lord to be withdrawn from Israel.

Then the whole congregation entered into a covenant to keep all the commandments of God; and that the transaction might be as effectual as possible, this covenant was written out, and those who were thoroughly in earnest in the work of reformation, affixed their names and seals. They wished to preserve for future reference a memorial of the obligation they had just taken upon themselves, as a reminder of duty and a barrier against temptation. Thus it was that the people took a solemn oath to "walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes." The oath taken also included a promise not to intermarry with "the people of the land." This had often been done by the

people; and sometimes the rulers, as Solomon and Ahab, had formed such unions; and these marriages, by introducing idolatry, had resulted in the ruin of thousands.

The Lord had strictly forbidden the intermarrying of his people with other nations. This would prevent the Hebrews from marrying idolaters, and thus forming connections with heathen families. The reason which God assigned for prohibiting those marriages was, "They will turn away thy son from following me." But the heathen were less guilty than are the impenitent in this age, who, having the light of the gospel, persistently refuse to accept it. Those among ancient Israel who ventured to disregard the divine prohibition, did it at the sacrifice of religious principle. When those who now profess to be God's people join themselves in marriage with the ungodly, they form a tie uniting them to the world, and they will probably soon be one with them, notwithstanding their present profession.

Before the day of fasting ended, the people still further manifested their determination to return unto the Lord. With one accord, all pledged themselves to cease the desecration of the Sabbath. Nehemiah did not at this time, as at a later date, exercise his authority to prevent heathen traders from coming into Jerusalem on the Sabbath, for the sale of provisions and other articles; but to save the people from yielding to temptation, he engaged them, by a solemn covenant, not to transgress the Sabbath law by purchasing of those vendors, hoping that this would discourage them, and put an end to their traffic.

Provision was also made to support the public worship of God. A pledge was given by the congregation to contribute yearly a stated sum for the service of the sanctuary, as well as to bring the tithes and the "firstfruits of our ground, and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the Lord, also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as it is written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God."

The liberality of the Jews in their offerings for religious purposes might well be imitated by Christians. If tithes and offerings were required thousands of years ago, they are much more essential now. The labors of God's servants were then confined almost wholly to the land of Palestine; but the apostles and their successors were commissioned to preach the gospel throughout the world. The people of this dispensation are favored with greater light and blessing than were the Jews; therefore they are placed under even greater obligation to honor God and to advance his cause.

The efforts of Nehemiah to restore the worship of the true God had been crowned with success. If Israel would be true to the oath they had taken, a bright future was before them; for the Lord has always magnified his law before his people, pouring rich blessings upon them so long as they have been obedient. The history of God's ancient people is full of instruction for the church of today. While the Bible faithfully presents the result of their apostasy as a warning to all future generations, it portrays, as a worthy example, the deep humiliation and repentance, the earnest devotion and generous sacrifice, that marked their seasons of returning to the Lord. There is encouragement, too, in the record of God's willingness to receive his backsliding but repentant people. It would be a scene well-pleasing to God and angels, would his professed followers in this generation unite, as did Israel of old, in a solemn covenant to "observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes."

January 17, 1884

The Sabbath Reformation Under Nehemiah

Under the labors of Ezra and Nehemiah, the people of Judah had in the most solemn and public manner, pledged themselves to render obedience to the law of God. But when the influence of these teachers was for a time withdrawn, there were many who departed from the Lord. During the absence of Nehemiah from Jerusalem, idolaters not only gained a foot-hold in the city, but contaminated by their presence the very precincts of the temple. Certain families of Israel, having intermarried with the family of Tobiah the Ammonite, had brought about a friendship between this man, one of Judah's most bitter and determined enemies, and Eliashib the high priest. As a result of this unhallowed alliance, Tobiah had been permitted to occupy a commodious apartment connected with the temple, which had been devoted to the storing of various offerings brought for the service of God.

Thus not only was the temple of the Lord profaned, but his people were constantly exposed to the corrupting influence of this agent of Satan. Because of their cruelty and treachery toward Israel, the Ammonites and Moabites had by the word of the Lord been forever excluded from the congregation. And yet, in defiance of this solemn interdict, the high priest himself casts out the consecrated oblations from the chamber of God's house, to make a place for the most violent and treacherous of a proscribed people. Greater contempt for God could not have been manifested than was expressed in this favor conferred on this enemy of God and his truth.

When Nehemiah learned of this bold profanation, he promptly exercised his authority to expel the intruder. "It grieved me sore; therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber. Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers; and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat-offering and the frankincense."

Not only had the temple been profaned, but the offerings had been misapplied. This tended to discourage the liberality of the people. They lost their zeal and fervor in the cause of God, and were reluctant to pay their tithes. The treasuries of the Lord's house were but poorly supplied; and the singers and others employed in the temple service not receiving a sufficient support, many left the work of God to labor elsewhere for the maintenance of their families. Nehemiah promptly corrected these abuses. He gathered together those who had forsaken the service of the house of God, and caused the tithes and offerings to be restored. Faithful men were appointed to take charge of the means raised, confidence was restored, and all Judah brought their tithes to the treasuries of the Lord.

Another result of intercourse with idolaters was disregard of the Sabbath. Heathen merchants and traders from the surrounding country had been intent upon leading the children of Israel to engage in traffic upon the Sabbath. While there were some who would not be induced to sacrifice principle, and transgress the commandment of God, others were more easily influenced, and joined with the heathen in their endeavor to overcome the scruples of their more conscientious countrymen; and the idolaters boasted of the success that had attended their efforts. Many dared openly to violate the Sabbath. While some engaged in traffic with the heathen, others were treading in wine-presses, and others bringing in sheaves upon the Sabbath day.

Had the rulers exerted their influence and exercised their authority, this state of things might have been prevented; but their desire to advance their own secular interest led them to favor the ungodly. It is mingling our interest with the interest of unbelievers that leads to apostasy and the ruin of the soul.

Nehemiah rebuked them for their shameful neglect of duty, which was largely responsible for the fast-spreading apostasy. "What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day?" he sternly demanded. "Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath." He gave command that "when it began to be dark before the Sabbath," the city gates should be shut, and that they should not be opened till the Sabbath was past; and, having more confidence in his own servants than in those the magistrates of Jerusalem might appoint, he stationed them at the gate to see that his orders were enforced.

The merchants were not disposed to abandon their purpose; and several times they lodged without the gates of the city, hoping to find opportunity for traffic, either with citizens or country people. Upon being informed of this, Nehemiah warned them that they would be punished if they continued this practice. He also directed the Levites to guard the gates, knowing that on account of their higher position they would command greater respect than the common people; while from their close connection with the service of God, it was reasonable to expect that they would be more zealous in enforcing obedience to his law.

By the observance of the Sabbath the Israelites were to be distinguished from all other nations as the worshipers of the true God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. The Sabbath was the divinely-appointed memorial of the creative work, and the day upon which it was to be celebrated was not left indefinite. It was not any day which men might choose and no day in particular, but the very day in which the Creator rested, that was sanctified and hallowed. On this day God would come very near to his obedient, commandment-loving people.

God places a very high estimate upon his law. Moses and Joshua commanded that it be read publicly at stated periods, that all the people might be familiar with its precepts, and reduce them to practice. If they did this, they had the exalted privilege of being counted as sons and daughters of the Most High, and might confide in him as dear children. In Nehemiah's day, the adversary of souls, working through the children of disobedience, and taking advantage of the unfaithfulness of men in holy office, was fast lulling the nation to forgetfulness of God's law, the very sin which had provoked his wrath against their fathers; and for a time it seemed that all the care, labor, and expense involved in rebuilding the defenses of Jerusalem would be lost.

David prayed, "It is time for thee, Lord, to work; for they have made void thy law." This prayer is no less pertinent at the present time. The world has gone astray from God, and its lawless state should strike terror to the heart, and lead all who are loyal to the great King to work for a reformation. The papal power has thought to change the law of God by substituting a spurious Sabbath for that of Jehovah; and all through the religious world the false Sabbath is revered, while the true one is trampled beneath unholy feet. But will the Lord degrade his law to meet the standard of finite man? Will he accept a day possessing no sanctity, in the place of his own Sabbath, which he has hallowed and blessed? No; it is on the law of God that the last great struggle of the controversy between Christ and his angels and Satan and his angels will come, and it will be decisive for all the world. This

is the hour of temptation to God's people; but Daniel saw them delivered out of it, every one whose name is written in the Lamb's book of life.

Men in responsible positions will not only ignore and despise the Sabbath themselves, but from the sacred desk, will urge upon the people the observance of the first day of the week, pleading tradition and custom in behalf of this man-made institution. They will point to calamities on land and sea—to the storms of wind, the floods, the earthquakes, the destruction by fire—as judgments indicating God's displeasure because Sunday is not sacredly observed. These calamities will increase more and more, one disaster will follow close upon the heels of another; and those who make void the law of God will point to the few who are keeping the Sabbath of the fourth commandment as the ones who are bringing wrath upon the world. This falsehood is Satan's device that he may ensnare the unwary.

We need Nehemiahs in 1884, who shall arouse the people to see how far from God they are because of the transgression of his law. Nehemiah was a reformer, a great man raised up for an important time. As he came in contact with evil and every kind of opposition, fresh courage and zeal were aroused. His energy and determination inspired the people of Jerusalem; and strength and courage took the place of feebleness and discouragement. His holy purpose, his high hope, his cheerful consecration to the work, were contagious. The people caught the enthusiasm of their leader, and in his sphere each man became a Nehemiah, and helped to make stronger the hand and heart of his neighbor. Here is a lesson for ministers of the present day. If they are listless, inactive, destitute of godly zeal, what can be expected of the people to whom they minister?

Man's personal accountability to God should command careful attention. The law can never pardon. Its province is not to save the transgressor, but to convict him. It is far-reaching, and all we do bears the stamp of its approval or condemnation. Men professing godliness often regard the secret sins of the soul very lightly; but it is the secret motives of the heart that determine the true character, and God will bring them into judgment. The dangers resulting from disobeying God and seeking the friendship of the world have not lessened with the lapse of time. There is earnest work to be done; and the faithful watchman, who is actuated by love to God and a desire to save sinners, will reap the reward of his labors; but the unfaithful watchman, whose influence tends to union with the world, will cause the ruin of many souls.

January 24, 1884

Nehemiah Separates Israel From Idolaters

Results of Marrying with the Ungodly

Another subject to which Nehemiah's attention was called on his return to Jerusalem, was the danger that threatened Israel from intermarriage and association with idolaters. "In those days," says Nehemiah, "saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab; and their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people." This assimilation to the language of the heathen was an indication of the inroads made by heathenism. In many families, children, trained by heathen mothers, were prattling around them in the tongue of the several idolatrous nations with whom the Israelites had intermarried. These children, as they grew up in the habits and customs of

heathenism, became idolaters of the most dangerous class, because they were connected with the people of God.

These unlawful alliances caused great confusion; for some who entered into them were persons in high position, rulers of the people and men connected with service of God, to whom, in the absence of Nehemiah, the people had a right to look for counsel and correct example. God had carefully excluded the heathen from uniting with his faithful worshipers; but the divinely erected barriers had been broken down, and as a consequence of mingling and intermarrying with other nations, the Israel of God were fast losing their peculiar, holy character. Nehemiah knew that ruin was before the nation if this evil were not put away, and he reasoned with these men on the subject. He firmly and fearlessly declared, "Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves." He presented the case of Solomon, and reminded them that among many nations there had arisen no king like this man, whom God had favored, and to whom he had given great wisdom. But the idolatrous women whom he connected with his house by marriage, led his heart astray from God, and his example had a corrupting influence on all Israel. The commands and threatenings of the Lord, and the fearful judgments visited upon Israel in past generations, aroused the consciences of the people. The strongest and most endearing ties that bound them to idolaters were broken. Not only were future marriages with the heathen forbidden, but marriages already formed were dissolved.

Some men in sacred office pleaded for their heathen wives, declaring that they could not bring themselves to separate from them. Nehemiah replied, with solemn sternness, "Shall we then hearken unto you, to do all this great evil to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives?"

A grandson of the high priest, having married a daughter of the notorious Sanballat, was not only removed from office; but promptly banished from Israel. "Remember them, O my God," exclaimed Nehemiah, "because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites." He adds: "Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, and appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites, every one in his business." No respect was shown for rank or position. No distinction was made. Whoever among the priests and rulers refused to sever his connection with idolaters, was immediately separated from the service of the Lord.

How much anguish of soul this needed severity cost the faithful workers for God, the Judgment alone will reveal. Every advance step was gained only by fasting, humiliation, and prayer. There was a constant struggle with opposing elements.

Many who had married idolaters chose to go with them into exile; and, with those who had been expelled from the congregation, they joined the Samaritans, a heathen people who had combined with their idolatrous worship many of the customs of the Jews. Hither some who had occupied high positions in the work of God now found their way, and after a time they cast in their lot fully with them. Desiring to strengthen this alliance, the Samaritans promised to adopt more fully the Jewish faith and customs; and the apostates, determined to outdo their former brethren, erected a temple on Mount Gerizim, in opposition to the house of God at Jerusalem. This spurious religion continued to be a mixture of Judaism and heathenism; and their claims to be the people of God were the source of schism, emulation, and enmity between the two nations from generation to generation.

The servants of God today encounter difficulties very similar to those against which Nehemiah contended. Human nature is still the same. And Satan is as active, earnest, and persevering now as at any period in the past. Nay, rather, the word of God declares that his power and enmity increase as we near the close of time. The greatest danger of God's ancient people arose from their inclination to disregard his direct requirements and to follow, instead, their own desires. Such is the sin and danger of his people at the present time. The indolence, backsliding, and degeneracy in our churches may be traced, in a great degree, to the lax sentiments which have been coming in as a result of conformity to the world. The Sabbath is not as sacredly regarded as it should be. Improper marriages, with their train of evils, have dragged down some of the most useful men to apostasy and ruin.

Before contracting marriage, every wise person will consider the matter in all its bearings: "Will the relation I am about to form lead Heavenward, or toward perdition? Will it bring in sacred and devotional influences, or the corrupting influence of the world.?"

In the existing state of religious declension, there is crying need of earnest, faithful Nehemiahs and Ezras,—men who will not shun to call sin by its right name, and who will not shrink from vindicating the honor of God. Those upon whom God has laid the burden of his work are not to hold their peace, and cover prevailing evils with a cloak of false charity. Men of courage and energy are needed to expose fashionable sins. Iniquity must not be palliated and excused. Those who lead the church of God to follow the customs and practices of the world, are not to be lauded and exalted. No regard for family or position will hinder the faithful servants of Christ from guarding the interests of his people. God is no respecter of persons. Great light and special privileges bring increased responsibility. When those who have been favored or honored of God, commit sin, their influence goes very far to encourage others in transgression. And if, by their example, the faith of another is weakened, and moral and religious principle is broken down, the wrath of God will surely come upon those betrayers of their sacred trust.

Severity to a few will often prove mercy to many. Yet we must be careful to manifest the spirit of Christ, and not our own hasty, impetuous disposition. We must rebuke sin, because we love God, and love the souls for whom Christ died.

Ezra and Nehemiah repeatedly humbled themselves before God, confessing the sins of their people, and entreating pardon as if they themselves were the offenders. Patiently they toiled and prayed and suffered, because of the disaffection of those who should have joined with them, but whose sympathies were more frequently with their adversaries. That which rendered their work most difficult and trying was not the open hostility of the heathen without, but the secret opposition of traitors in the camp, and even among the priests and rulers. By lending their talents and influence to the service of evil-workers, these men of divided hearts increased tenfold the burden of God's faithful servants. They furnished the Lord's enemies with material to use in their warfare upon his people. Evil passions and rebellious wills were ever at war with the plain and direct requirements of God.

The spirit of true reform will be met in our day as in ancient times. Those who are zealous for the honor of God, and who will not countenance sin either in ministers or people, need not expect rest or pleasure in this life. Untiring vigilance must be the watchword of all who guard the interests of Christ's church. During Nehemiah's absence from Jerusalem, evils were introduced which threatened

to pervert the nation. The same dangers exist in our time. If those who have the oversight of the church leave their charge, unconsecrated ones, claiming to believe the truth but having no connection with God, will take advantage of their absence to do much harm. The restraint being removed from these self-seeking and turbulent spirits, their peculiar traits of character are made prominent, and by their hints, insinuations, and deceptive charges, they create doubt, unbelief, and dissension among the Lord's people. Such forget that spiritual things are spiritually discerned. They judge of the character and motives of God's servants according to their own ignorance of truth and the ways of righteousness. Their example, words, and influence weaken the force of God's requirements, and divide and scatter the church of Christ.

The word of God abounds in sharp and striking contrasts. Sin and holiness are placed side by side, that, beholding, we may hate and shun the one, and love and embrace the other. The pages that describe the hatred, falsehood, and treachery of a Sanballat or a Tobiah, describe also the nobility, devotion, and self-sacrifice of a Nehemiah or an Ezra. We are left free to copy either, as we choose. The fearful results of transgressing God's commandments are placed over against the blessings resulting from obedience thereto. We ourselves are to decide whether we will suffer the one or enjoy the other. The law of God remains unchanged. Like himself, it is pure, perfect, and eternal. It is not enough to profess to be keepers of that law. The question is, Are we carrying out its principles in our daily life? "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people." Saith the voice of Wisdom: "Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it."

January 31, 1884

Parental Responsibility

Parents are in a great degree responsible for the mold given to the characters of their children. They should aim at symmetry and proportion. There are few well-balanced minds, because parents are wickedly negligent of their duty to stimulate weak traits and repress strong ones. They do not remember that they are under the most solemn obligation to watch the tendencies of each child; that it is their duty to train their children to right habits and right ways of thinking.

Sometimes parents wait for the Lord to do the very work that he has given them to do. Instead of restraining and controlling their children as they should, they pet and indulge them, and gratify their whims and desires. When these children go out from their early homes, it is with characters deformed by selfishness, with ungoverned appetites, with strong self-will; they are destitute of courtesy or respect for their parents, and do not love religious truth or the worship of God. They have grown up with traits that are a life-long curse to themselves, and are liable to be reproduced in others. Home is made anything but happy, if the evil weeds of dissension, selfishness, envy, passion, and sullen stubbornness are left to flourish in the neglected garden of the soul.

Children imitate their parents; hence great care should be taken to give them correct models. Parents should show no partiality, but should treat all their children with tenderness, remembering that they are the purchase of Christ's blood. Parents who are kind and polite at home, while at the same time they are firm and decided, will see the same traits manifested in their children. If they are upright, honest, and honorable, their children will be quite likely to resemble them in these

particulars. If they reverence and worship God, their children trained in the same way, will not forget to serve him also.

It is often the case that parents are not careful to surround their children with right influences. In choosing a home, they think more of their worldly interests than of the moral and social atmosphere; and the children form associations that are unfavorable to the development of piety and the formation of right character. Then parents allow the world to engross their time, strength, and thought; and when the Sabbath comes, it finds them so utterly exhausted that they have naught to render to God on his holy day, no sweet piety to grace the home, and make the Sabbath a delight to their children. They are seldom visited by a minister; for they have placed themselves out of the reach of religious privileges. An apathy steals over the soul. The children are contaminated by evil communications, and the tenderness of soul they once felt dies away and is forgotten.

Parents who denounce the Canaanites for offering their children to Moloch, what are you doing? You are making a most costly offering to your mammon god; and then, when your children grow up unloved and unlovely in character, when they show decided impiety and tendency to infidelity, you blame the faith you profess because it was unable to save them. You are reaping that which you have sown,—the result of your selfish love of the world and neglect of the means of grace. You moved your families into places of temptation, and the ark of God, your glory and defense, you did not consider essential; and the Lord has not worked a miracle to deliver your children from temptation.

You who profess to love God, take Jesus with you wherever you go; and, like the patriarchs of old, erect an altar to the Lord wherever you pitch your tent. A reformation in this respect is needed,—a reformation that shall be deep and broad. Parents need to reform; ministers need to reform. They need God in their households. They need to build the waste places of Zion; to set up her gates, and make strong her walls for a defense of the people.

There is earnest work to be done in this age, and parents should educate their children to share in it. The words of Mordecai to Esther may apply to the men and youth of today: “Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Young men should be gaining solidity of character, that they may be fitted for usefulness. Daniel and Joseph were youth of firm principle, whom God could use to carry out his purposes. Mark their history, and see how God wrought for them. Joseph met with a variety of experiences,—experiences that tested his courage and uprightness to the fullest extent. After being sold into Egypt, he was at first favored, and intrusted with great responsibilities; but suddenly, without any fault on his part, he was unjustly accused and cast into prison. But he is not discouraged. He trusts in God; and the purpose of his heart, the purity of his motive, is made manifest. The eye of God is upon him, a divine hand leads him, and soon we see him come forth from prison to share the throne of Egypt.

Joseph's checkered life is not an accident; it is ordered of Providence. But how was he enabled to make such a record of firmness of character, uprightness, and wisdom? It was the result of careful training in his early years. He had consulted duty rather than inclination; and the purity and simple trust of the boy bore fruit in the deeds of the man. The most brilliant talents are of no value unless they are improved; industrious habits and force of character must be gained by cultivation. A high tone of moral character and fine mental qualities are not the result of accident. God gives

opportunities; success depends upon the use made of them. The openings of Providence must be quickly discerned and eagerly seized upon.

Young men, if you would be strong, if you would have the integrity and wisdom of a Joseph or a Daniel, study the Scriptures. Parents, if you would educate your children to serve God and do good in the world, make the Bible your text-book. It exposes the wiles of Satan. It is the great elevator of the race, the reprover and corrector of moral evils, the detector which enables us to distinguish between the true and the false. Whatever else is taught in the home or at school, the Bible, as the great educator, should stand first. If it is given this place, God is honored, and he will work for you in the conversion of your children. There is a rich mine of truth and beauty in this holy book, and parents have themselves to blame if they do not make it intensely interesting to their children.

To many, education means a knowledge of books; but “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” The true object of education is to restore the image of God in the soul. The first and most precious knowledge is the knowledge of Christ; and wise parents will keep this fact ever before the minds of their children. Should a limb be broken or fractured, parents will try every means that love or wisdom can suggest to restore the affected member to comeliness and soundness. This is right, it is their duty; but the Lord requires that still greater tact, patience, and persevering effort be employed to remedy blemishes of the soul. That father is unworthy of the name who is not to his children a Christian teacher, ruler, and friend, binding them to his heart by the strong ties of sanctified love,—a love which has its foundation in duty faithfully performed.

Parents have a great and responsible work to do, and they may well inquire, “Who is sufficient for these things?” But God has promised to give wisdom to those that ask in faith, and he will do just as he said he would. He is pleased with the faith that takes him at his word. The mother of Augustine prayed for her son's conversion. She saw no evidence that the Spirit of God was impressing his heart, but she was not discouraged. She laid her finger upon the texts, presenting before God his own words, and pleaded as only a mother can. Her deep humiliation, her earnest importunities, her unwavering faith, prevailed, and the Lord gave her the desire of her heart. Today he is just as ready to listen to the petitions of his people. “His hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear;” and if Christian parents seek him earnestly, he will fill their mouths with arguments, and, for his name's sake, will work mightily in their behalf in the conversion of their children.

February 7, 1884

The Christian Rule in Deal

“Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.... He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.”

The psalmist here describes some of the characteristics of those whom God accepts, and who will be permitted to join in his worship in the heavenly courts.

The first is, “He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness.” The very first step in the path to life is to keep the mind stayed on God, to have his fear continually before the eyes. A single departure from moral integrity blunts the conscience, and opens the door to the next temptation.

“He that walketh uprightly walketh surely; but he that perverteth his way shall be known.” We are commanded to love God supremely, and our neighbor as ourselves; but the daily experience of life shows that this law is disregarded. Uprightness in deal and moral integrity will secure the favor of God, and make a man a blessing to himself and to society; but amid the varied temptations that assail one whichever way he may turn, it is impossible to keep a clear conscience and the approval of Heaven without divine aid and a principle to love honesty for the sake of the right.

A character that is approved of God and man is to be preferred to wealth. The foundation should be laid broad and deep, resting on the rock Christ Jesus. There are too many who profess to work from the true foundation, whose loose dealing shows them to be building on sliding sand; but the great tempest will sweep away their foundation, and they will have no refuge.

Many plead that unless they are sharp, and watch to advantage themselves, they will meet with loss. Their unscrupulous neighbors, who take selfish advantages, are prospered; while they, although trying to deal strictly in accordance with Bible principles, are not so highly favored. Do these persons see the future? Or are their eyes too dim to see, through the miasma-laden fogs of worldliness, that honor and integrity are not rewarded in the coin of this world? Will God reward virtue with mere worldly success? He has their names graven on the palms of his hands, as heirs to enduring honors, riches that are imperishable. What did that dishonest man gain by his worldly policy? How high a price did he pay for his success? He has sacrificed his noble manhood, and has started on the road that leads to perdition. He may be converted; he may see the wickedness of his injustice to his fellow-men, and, as far as possible, make restitution; but the scars of a wounded conscience will ever remain.

What a lesson we have in the course pursued by Abraham! The tidings come that Lot and his family are prisoners. Abraham's affection for his nephew is awakened; and he determines that he shall be rescued. He gathers an army in haste, and soon overtakes the enemy. The Lord aids, and a victory is gained. The scene is one to inflame the worst passions of the heart. The field is strewn with dead bodies, and the groans of the dying mingle with the voice of triumph. The rich spoils of the enemy lie scattered in profusion, and, according to the usage of war, a large share falls to Abraham. The king of Sodom begs for his subjects, but freely yields the goods. How many would have taken advantage of this opportunity to secure a rich booty, regardless of the claims of justice or the rights of others! But what a noble, unselfish disposition does Abraham manifest on this occasion! What a rebuke to such mercenary spirits is his example!

Abraham regards the claims of justice and humanity. He obeys the rule, “As ye would that others should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.” He says to the king of Sodom: “I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of Heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich.” This is an example worthy of imitation; it illustrates the Christian maxim, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

He that “speaketh the truth in his heart.” Some, when their feet once diverge from the right path, go on and on in moral degradation. The fact may be concealed from every one else, but the man himself knows that he is no longer walking uprightly. His advertisements are deceptive; he is exacting in his deal with his workmen. He clutches his coin with a miserly grasp; for has he not sacrificed everything that was worth living for to obtain it? Others, in their eager desire for gain,

practice secret fraud, act a lie; and they do not see that their course is sinful if they are not detected. But God reads men's hearts as an open book, and the record of their deeds will be made manifest before all men. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Some success may seem to attend this dishonest policy for a time; but will it pay? Will you part with rectitude and a clear conscience for a little worldly wealth?

"He that putteth not out his money to usury." Exacting usury is directly opposed to God's rule as given in Exodus 22:21-26: "Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in anywise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless. If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as a usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury. If thou at all take thy neighbor's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down." Deuteronomy 23:19, 20: "Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of anything that is lent upon usury. Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it."

Thus God commanded his people not to take advantage of the necessities of the poor, to enrich themselves by impoverishing their poorer brethren. Of Gentiles they might take usury; but they were not permitted to be exorbitant or oppressive. God is the rightful king of the universe. And he inquires of Israel, "What nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" Today he might make the same challenge. The laws he gave to his ancient people were wiser, better, and more humane than those of the most civilized nations of the earth. The laws of the nations bear marks of the infirmities and passions of the unrenewed heart; but God's laws bear the stamp of the divine, and if they are obeyed, they will lead to a tender regard for the rights and privileges of others. The Lord appeals to man's compassion for his fellow-man. His watchful care is over all the interests of his children, and he declares he will undertake the cause of the afflicted and the oppressed. If they cry unto him, he says, "I will hear, for I am gracious."

A man of means, if he possesses strict integrity, and loves and fears God, may be a benefactor to the poor. He can help them, and take no more interest than can be mercifully exacted. He thus meets with no loss himself, and his unfortunate neighbor is greatly benefited, for he is saved from the hands of the dishonest schemer. The principles of the Golden Rule are not to be lost sight of for a moment in any business transaction. Every man who lends money at ten or twelve per cent. interest is a robber in the sight of God. Although the laws of man may justify him, the law of God condemns him. He is dealing unjustly; and God will reward him according to his deeds. God never designed that one man should prey upon another. He jealously guards the rights of his children, and in the books of Heaven great loss is set down on the side of the unjust dealer.

In the Holy Scriptures fearful denunciations are pronounced against the sin of covetousness. "No covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." The psalmist says, "The wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth." Paul ranks covetous men with idolaters, adulterers, thieves, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners, none of whom shall inherit the kingdom of God. These are the fruits of a corrupt tree,

and God is dishonored by them. We are not to make the customs and maxims of the world our criterion. Reforms must take place; all injustice must be put away.

We are commanded to “search the Scriptures.” The whole word of God is our rule of action. We are to carry out its principles in our daily lives; there is no surer mark of Christianity than this. We must carry out the great principles of justice and mercy in our intercourse with one another. We must be daily cultivating those qualities that will fit us for the society of Heaven. If we do these things, God becomes our surety, and promises to bless all that we undertake; and we “shall never be moved.”

February 28, 1884

The Creation Sabbath

When God created the earth and placed man upon it, he divided time into seven periods. Six he gave to man for his own use, to employ in secular business; one he reserved for himself. Having rested on the seventh day, he blessed and sanctified it. Henceforth, the seventh day was to be regarded as the Lord's rest-day, and to be sacredly observed as the memorial of his creative work. It was not the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, or sixth day that was sanctified, or set apart to a holy use, neither was it a seventh part of time and no day in particular; but it was the seventh day, the day upon which God had rested. We are every day to think of God and live as in his sight; but when the six day's work is done, we are to “remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,”—to cease from labor and devote the day exclusively to meditation and worship.

When the law was given at Sinai, the Sabbath was placed in the midst of moral precepts, in the very bosom of the decalogue. But the Sabbath institution was not then made known for the first time. The fourth commandment places its origin at creation. The Creator's rest-day was hallowed by Adam in holy Eden, and by men of God throughout the patriarchal ages. During Israel's long bondage in Egypt, under taskmasters that knew not God, they could not keep the Sabbath; therefore the Lord brought them out where they could remember his holy day.

Before they came to Sinai, they understood the Sabbath to be obligatory upon them. After the giving of the manna, the people, of their own accord, gathered a double quantity on the sixth day in preparation for the Sabbath. And Moses, upon being consulted by the rulers, declared, “This is that which the Lord hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord.” On the seventh day he bade them eat that which they had provided. “For,” said he, “today is a Sabbath unto the Lord; today ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none.” When some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, they found no manna. Then the Lord said unto Moses, “How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.”

A threefold miracle was wrought in honor of the Sabbath, even before the law was given on Sinai. A double quantity of manna fell on the sixth day, none upon the Sabbath, and the portion needed for the Sabbath was preserved sweet and pure, when if any were kept over at any other time, it became unfit for food. Here is conclusive evidence that the Sabbath was instituted at creation, when the foundations of the earth were laid, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God

shouted for joy. And its sacredness remains unchanged, and will so remain even to the close of time. From the creation, every precept of the divine law has been obligatory on man, and has been observed by those who fear the Lord. The doctrine that God's law has been abolished is one of Satan's devices to compass the ruin of the race.

The prophet Isaiah, looking forward to the gospel dispensation, sets forth in the most impressive manner the obligation of the Sabbath, and the blessings attending its observance: "Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice; for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil. Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people; neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant, even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters. I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off."

Under the Mosaic law, strangers and eunuchs were excluded from the full enjoyment of the privileges granted to Israel. But the prophet declares that a time is coming when these restrictions will cease. The holy oracles were especially committed to the Jews; not to be an Israelite was not to belong to the favored people of God. The Jews had come more and more to regard themselves as superior by divine right to every other people upon the earth; yet they had not been careful to maintain their separate and holy character by rendering obedience to all the commandments of God. Now the prophet declares that the stranger who will love and obey God shall enjoy the privileges that have belonged exclusively to the chosen people. Hitherto, circumcision and a strict observance of the ceremonial law had been the conditions upon which Gentiles could be admitted to the congregation of Israel; but these distinctions were to be abolished by the gospel. "Every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant, even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people. The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, besides those that are gathered unto him."

Again, after rebuking the selfishness, violence, and oppression of Israel, and exhorting them to works of righteousness and mercy, he declares: "And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places; thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable, and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

The first part of the chapter brings to view a people who apparently delight in the service of God; they seek him daily, "as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God." Yet their lives are not right before the Lord; for he commands his prophet, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their

sins." He declares that if they will return unto the Lord with all the heart, they shall be called repairers of the breach, the restorers of paths to dwell in. Then he distinctly shows them what this breach is. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath,"—for they had been trampling it under their feet as a thing despised,—“then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

This prophecy reaches down the centuries to the time when the man of sin attempted to make void one of the precepts of God's law, to trample under foot the original Sabbath of Jehovah, and in its stead exalt one of his own creation. And when the Christian world set aside God's holy Sabbath, and in its place accept a common working day, unsanctioned by a single “Thus saith the Lord,” they are encouraging infidelity, and virtually acknowledging the supremacy of that power by whose authority alone the change has been effected. The rejection of the Sabbath has led to the rejection of the whole law, and thousands of professed Christians now boldly declare it void.

The law of ten commandments, which has been so lightly disregarded, is the foundation of many generations; and no man or body of men has been authorized to set aside, or vary in the slightest particular, one of the ten precepts of Jehovah. God spoke this law from Sinai in awful grandeur, in the hearing of all Israel, and he wrote it with his own fingers upon tables of stone, not for his chosen people only, but for all men, to the close of time. Christ himself declares that while the heavens and the earth remain, not one jot or tittle shall pass from this holy law.

There were two institutions founded in Eden that were not lost in the fall,—the Sabbath and the marriage relation. These were carried by man beyond the gates of paradise. He who loves and observes the Sabbath, and maintains the purity of the marriage institution, thereby proves himself the friend of man and the friend of God. He who by precept or example lessens the obligation of these sacred institutions is the enemy of both God and man, and is using his influence and his God-given talents to bring in a state of confusion and moral corruption.

March 6, 1884

The Christian Pathway

Christ promises, “He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” The way is plain; the will of God is manifest. We are not to live in doubt and uncertainty, and to rest satisfied while groping our way without a guide. Jesus does not, after giving us general directions, leave us to guess the way amid by-paths and dangerous passes. He leads us in a straight path; and while we follow him, our footsteps will not slide. It was Jesus that led ancient Israel, though the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night concealed him from their view; and in this important period of the world's history, he will as manifestly lead his people. The path is no uncertain one. The way is marked out, and every step is ordered of the Lord.

God has ample light and grace to bestow upon all them that fear him. Especially will he help his people in these last days, when Satan's devices are so abundant, so deceptive, and so corrupting. To those who will walk in the truth, the God of truth will give grace according to their needs. He will fill their hearts with peace, and courage, and confidence. But mercy and truth are promised only to the

contrite and obedient. God has said that justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne; and those who are disobedient and rebellious will not escape the visitation of his just anger.

We cannot afford to separate ourselves from Jesus for a single hour. Without him we are in danger of being overcome of Satan, who is ever watching to suggest doubt, unbelief, and error. The world is flooded with error; it meets us on every hand. It is taught from the sacred desk, and lurks in theology, in literature, in philosophy, in science. Error perverts the judgment and opens the door to temptation, and through its influence Satan seeks to turn hearts from the truth; but an intelligent love for the truth sanctifies the receiver, and keeps him from the enemy's deceptive snares.

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." 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 are too willing to believe their teachers without careful thought and prayerful investigation of God's word. They 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 in those things wherein they are willing to be deceived. Our Saviour declared to the Pharisees, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." And in his conversation with Nicodemus he said, "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." 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,—"rich, and increased with goods, and in need of nothing."

But earthly prosperity is no evidence of the favor of God. Christ and his apostles teach us, both by precept and example, that 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." 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. "These are they that came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Many are not growing strong, because they do not take God at his word. They are conforming to the world. Every day they pitch their tents nearer to Egypt, when they should encamp a day's march nearer the heavenly Canaan. We need individually to ask strength and grace from Heaven, that we may resist the temptation to assimilate to the world. We cannot afford to be divided in heart and purpose, first serving God, and then yielding to temptations and paying homage to the world. Many of us have grown gray in the service of Christ, in pushing the triumphs of his cross. We have fought

the battles of the Lord too long, and endured too much, to permit Satan to gain the victory over us. The voice of our Leader is commanding "Go forward," and we should obey, saying, as did Caleb, "If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land."

If we commit the keeping of our souls to God in the exercise of living faith, his promises will not fail us; for they have no limit but our faith. "All things are possible to him that believeth." We may make or mar our own happiness. Many pet and excuse the defects in their characters; but these must all be remedied. Every deviation from the right is sin, and sin must be put away. We cannot afford to walk carelessly before our brethren or before the world.

Many confess their sins again and again, but do not put them away by genuine repentance. Unless we have a firm purpose and the aid of the grace of God, strong resolutions and vigilant watchfulness will be vain and powerless when temptations assail the soul; and under such circumstances some give up in despair, fearing that they must ever remain the slaves of sin. These have not a living faith in Jesus. We cannot trust in ourselves; if we do, we shall fail. Jesus has spoiled the powers of darkness; and it is through faith in his might that we shall be made strong. He will lift up a standard against Satan in behalf of every trusting, believing soul. We have the assurance that his grace is sufficient for us, and that we shall not be tempted above that we are able to bear. This is our only hope.

The apostle says, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." When the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Christian church at Pentecost, great wisdom and grace rested upon the whole body of believers. This blessing was given in answer to earnest, persevering prayer; and today God is just as willing to listen to the petitions of his people. "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it."

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." When these fruits appear in the life, a telling influence will be exerted upon the world. The truly converted man will cease aspiring to be thought great. He will not seek for worldly honor, nor for luxury, ease, or wealth; neither will he be sensitive to reproach or neglect. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Self is no longer the supreme object of love; family and friends are no longer the boundary. His heart is enlarged. Jesus has the first place in his affections; he loves Christians, because he sees in them the image of his Master, and all mankind with a love that prompts him to do them good. This is the fruit growing on the true Vine, more precious in the sight of God than all the wealth and learning of earth's great men.

The unparalleled exhibition of love that was made on Calvary shows how God estimates souls. If we have this love in our hearts, we shall seek to win sinners to Jesus, that for them this great sacrifice may not have been made in vain. The language of the heart will be, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." We shall say with the psalmist, "I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation." We shall rejoice to speak of the wisdom and goodness of God as shown in the way he has led his people; for we shall have proved that "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

March 13, 1884

Science and Revelation

“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.” The mightiest intellects of earth cannot comprehend God. If he reveals himself at all to men, it is by veiling himself in mystery. His ways are past finding out. Men must be ever searching, ever learning; and yet there is an infinity beyond. Could they fully understand the purposes, wisdom, love, and character of God, they would not believe in him as an infinite being, and trust him with the interests of their souls. If they could fathom him, he would no longer stand supreme.

There are men who think they have made wonderful discoveries in science. They quote the opinions of learned men as though they considered them infallible, and teach the deductions of science as truths that cannot be controverted. And the word of God, which is given as a lamp to the feet of the world-weary traveler, is judged by this standard, and pronounced wanting. The scientific research in which these men have indulged has proved a snare to them. It has clouded their minds, and they have drifted into skepticism. They have a consciousness of power; and instead of looking to the Source of all wisdom, they triumph in the smattering of knowledge they may have gained. They have exalted their human wisdom in opposition to the wisdom of the great and mighty God, and have dared to enter into controversy with him. The word of inspiration pronounces these men “fools.”

God has permitted a flood of light to be poured upon the world in discoveries in science and art; but when professedly scientific men lecture and write upon these subjects from a merely human standpoint, they will assuredly come to wrong conclusions. The greatest minds, if not guided by the word of God in their research, become bewildered in their attempts to investigate the relations of science and revelation. The Creator and his works are beyond their comprehension; and because they cannot explain these by natural laws, Bible history is considered unreliable. Those who doubt the reliability of the records of the Old and New Testaments, will be led to go a step farther, and doubt the existence of God; and then, having let go their anchor, they are left to beat about upon the rocks of infidelity. Moses wrote under the guidance of the Spirit of God, and a correct theory of geology will never claim discoveries that cannot be reconciled with his statements. The idea that many stumble over, that God did not create matter when he brought the world into existence, limits the power of the Holy One of Israel.

Many, when they find themselves incapable of measuring the Creator and his works by their own imperfect knowledge of science, doubt the existence of God and attribute infinite power to nature. These persons have lost the simplicity of faith, and are removed far from God in mind and spirit. There should be a settled faith in the divinity of God's holy word. The Bible is not to be tested by men's ideas of science, but science is to be brought to the test of this unerring standard. When the Bible makes statements of facts in nature, science may be compared with the written word, and a correct understanding of both will always prove them to be in harmony. One does not contradict the other. All truth, whether in nature or revelation, agrees. Scientific research will open to the minds of the really wise vast fields of thought and information. They will see God in his works, and will praise him. He will be to them first and best, and the mind will be centered upon him. Skeptics, who read the Bible for the sake of caviling, through ignorance claim to find decided contradictions between science and revelation. But man's measurement of God will never be correct. The mind unenlightened by God's Spirit will ever be in darkness in regard to his power.

Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. Those who have no vital union with God are swayed one way and another; they put men's opinions in the front, and God's word in the background. They grasp human assertions, that judgment against sin is contrary to God's benevolent character, and, while dwelling upon infinite benevolence, try to forget that there is such a thing as infinite justice.

When we have right views of the power, greatness, and majesty of God, and of the weakness of man, we shall despise the assumptions of wisdom made by earth's so-called great men, who have none of Heaven's nobility in their characters. There is nothing for which men should be praised or exalted. There is no reason why the opinions of the learned should be trusted, when they are disposed to measure divine things by their own perverted conceptions. Those who serve God are the only ones whose opinion and example it is safe to follow. A sanctified heart quickens and intensifies the mental powers. A living faith in God imparts energy; it gives calmness and repose of spirit, and strength and nobility of character.

Men of science think that with their enlarged conceptions they can comprehend the wisdom of God, that which he has done or can do. The idea largely prevails that he is bounded and restricted by his own laws. Men either deny and ignore his existence, or think to explain everything, even the operations of his Spirit upon the human heart, by natural laws; and they no longer reverence his name or fear his power. While they think they are gaining everything, they are chasing bubbles, and losing precious opportunities to become acquainted with God. They do not believe in the supernatural, not realizing that the Author of nature's laws can work above those laws. They deny the claims of God, and neglect the interests of their own souls; but his existence, his character, his laws, are facts that the reasoning of men of the highest attainments cannot overthrow.

The pen of inspiration thus describes the power and majesty of God: "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? ... Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.... It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in."

Nature is a power, but the God of nature is unlimited in power. His works interpret his character. Those who judge him from his handiworks, and not from the suppositions of great men, will see his presence in everything. They behold his smile in the glad sunshine, and his love and care for man in the rich fields of autumn. Even the adornments of the earth, as seen in the grass of living green, the lovely flowers of every hue, and the lofty and varied trees of the forest, testify to the tender, fatherly care of our God, and to his desire to make his children happy.

The power of the great God will be exerted in behalf of those that fear him. Listen to the words of the prophet: "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait

upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”

In the word of God many queries are raised that the most profound scholars can never answer. Attention is called to these subjects to show us how many things there are, even among the common things of every-day life, that finite minds, with all their boasted wisdom, can never fully comprehend.

All the systems of philosophy devised by men have led to confusion and shame when God has not been recognized and honored. To lose faith in God is terrible. Prosperity cannot be a great blessing to nations or individuals, when once faith in his word is lost. Nothing is truly great but that which is eternal in its tendencies. Truth, justice, mercy, purity, and the love of God, are imperishable. When men possess these qualities, they are brought into close relationship to God, and are candidates for the highest exaltation to which the race can aspire. They will disregard human praise, and will be superior to disappointment, weariness, the strife of tongues, and contentions for supremacy.

He whose soul is imbued with the Spirit of God will learn the lesson of confiding trust. Taking the written word as his counselor and guide, he will find in science an aid to understand God, but he will not become exalted, till, in his blind self-conceit, he is a fool in his ideas of God.

March 20, 1884

Science and the Bible in Education

The foundation of all right education is a knowledge of God. Many parents who make great sacrifices to educate their children, seem to think that a well-trained intellect is more essential than a knowledge of God and his truth. They neglect to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and act as though they supposed this important part of education would come naturally, as a matter of course. But the first and most important lesson to be impressed upon young minds is the duty of regulating the life by the principles of the word of God.

Parents and teachers should make God first. The influence of his Spirit purifies the heart and stimulates the intellect. If the fear of God is made the basis of education, the result will be a well-developed and symmetrical character, one that is neither dwarfed nor one-sided. Care should be taken to keep constantly before the mind the fact that we are dependent on God, and that we owe him willing obedience, a life-time of loving service. The true object of education is to fit us for this service by developing and bringing into active exercise every faculty that we possess. Satan desires to defeat this object. He is the great enemy of God, and it is his constant aim to lead souls away from their allegiance to the King of Heaven. He would have minds so trained that men and women will exert their influence on the side of error and moral corruption, instead of using their talents in the service of God, to save souls and bless society. His object is effectually gained, when, by perverting their ideas of education, he succeeds in enlisting parents and teachers on his side; for a wrong education often starts the mind on the road to infidelity.

The conclusions which learned men have reached as the result of their scientific investigations are carefully taught and fully explained; while the impression is distinctly given that if these learned men are correct, the Bible cannot be. These philosophers would make us believe that man, the crowning work of creation, came by slow degrees from the savage state, and that farther back, he was evolved

from the race of brutes. They are so intent upon excluding God from the sovereignty of the universe, that they demean man, and defraud him of the dignity of his origin. Nature is exalted above the God of nature; she is idolized, while her Creator is buried up and concealed from sight by science falsely so-called.

Cold philosophical speculations, and scientific research in which God is not acknowledged, are a positive injury. The thorns of skepticism are disguised; they are concealed and made attractive by the bloom and verdure of science and philosophy. Skepticism is attractive to the human mind. The young see an independence in it that captivates the imagination, and they are deceived. Satan triumphs; it is altogether as he meant it should be. He nourishes every seed of doubt that is sown in young hearts. He causes it to grow and bear fruit, and soon a plentiful harvest of infidelity is reaped. Teachers who sow these doubts do not lead the mind through the mist of unbelief to faith in the inspired word. But ignorance of God, of his might, his infinity, and his majesty, is the real reason that there is an infidel in the world.

Many teach that matter possesses vital power. They hold that certain properties are imparted to matter, and it is then left to act through its own inherent power; and that the operations of nature are carried on in harmony with fixed laws, that God himself cannot interfere with. This is false science, and is sustained by nothing in the word of God. Nature is not self-acting; she is the servant of her Creator. God does not annul his laws nor work contrary to them; but he is continually using them as his instruments. Nature testifies of an intelligence, a presence, an active agency, that works in, and through, and above her laws. There is in nature the continual working of the Father and the Son. Said Christ, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

God has finished his creative work, but his energy is still exerted in upholding the objects of his creation. It is not because the mechanism that has once been set in motion continues its work by its own inherent energy that the pulse beats and breath follows breath; but every breath, every pulsation of the heart, is an evidence of the all-pervading care of Him in whom we live and have our being. It is not because of inherent power that year by year the earth produces her bounties and continues her motion around the sun. The hand of God guides the planets, and keeps them in position in their orderly march through the heavens. It is through his power that vegetation flourishes, that the leaves appear and the flowers bloom. His word controls the elements, and by him the valleys are made fruitful. He covers the heavens with clouds, and prepares rain for the earth; he "maketh grass to grow upon the mountains." "He giveth snow like wool; he scattereth the hoar frost like ashes." "When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures."

Parents and teachers should aim to impress minds with the beauty of truth. They should realize that the safety of the young depends upon combining religious culture with general education, that they may escape the snare of unsanctified knowledge. Who and what are the men of learning, that the minds and characters of the young should be moulded by their ideas? They are not connected with the great Source of wisdom; and if they do not actually deny God, they at least lose sight of his direct agency in the operations of nature. But his care is over all the works of his hands. Nothing is too great to be directed by him; nothing is too small to escape his notice.

God is the foundation of everything. All true science is in harmony with his works; all true education leads to obedience to his government. Science opens new wonders to our view; she soars high and explores new depths; but she brings nothing from her research that conflicts with divine revelation. Ignorance may seek to support false views of God by appeals to science; but the book of nature and the written word do not disagree; each sheds light on the other. Rightly understood, they make us acquainted with God and his character by teaching us something of the wise and beneficent laws through which he works. We are thus led to adore his holy name, and to have an intelligent trust in his word.

The Bible should be read every day. It is the correct standard of right and wrong and of moral principle. A life of devotion to God is the best shield for the young against the temptations to which they are exposed while acquiring an education. The first consideration should be to honor God; the second to be faithful to humanity, performing the duties and meeting the trials that each day brings, and bearing its burdens with firmness and courage. Earnest and untiring effort, united with strong purpose and entire trust in God, will help in every emergency, and will qualify for a useful life. Such a life is a series of triumphs, not always seen and understood, but reaching far into the future, when we shall see as we are seen and know as we are known.

If we work in harmony with the Spirit of God, we shall see of his salvation. The education begun here will not be completed in this life; it will be going forward through all eternity,—progressing ever, never completed. Day by day the wonderful works of God, the evidences of his miraculous power in creating and sustaining the universe, will open before the mind in new beauty and grandeur. In the light that shines from the throne, mysteries will disappear, and the soul will be filled with astonishment at the simplicity of the things that were never before comprehended.

March 27, 1884

Erroneous Doctrines Dangerous

Says the apostle Jude, “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” The apostles and their co-laborers in the early Christian church were constantly obliged to meet heresies, which were brought in by false teachers in the very bosom of the church. These teachers are represented not as coming openly, but creeping in unawares, with the gliding motion of a serpent. They followed their own pernicious ways, but were not satisfied without drawing away others with them. They had no connected chain of truth, but taught a disjointed medley of ideas, supported by a passage of Scripture here and another there. These disconnected scriptures were woven together into a tissue of falsehood that would strike the fancy, and would deceive those who had not, by searching the Scriptures for themselves, become established in the truth for that time.

Satan worked through these false teachers. Under a profession of regard for the truth, they concealed base purposes, for their hearts were corrupt. Had they come disclaiming faith in Christ, they would have been rejected at once; but professing to believe in him, they gained the confidence of some, and without shame or conscience perverted the truth to suit their own unsanctified hearts. And when once these deluded souls had departed from the old landmarks of faith, they had let go their anchor, and were tossed about like the waves of the sea. These lying prophets are described in

the word of God; their deeds are recorded in the register of Heaven. Their hearts and their deceptive, wicked works were not understood by men; but the Lord saw them; he read their hearts as an open book, and knew that their very thoughts and purposes were corrupt.

False teachers are just as active in our day as they were in the days of the apostles. Satan has many agents, and they are ready to present any and every kind of theory to deceive souls,—heresies prepared to suit the varied tastes and capacities of those whom he would ruin. There are cheap fallacies for those who are easily led into error, and who desire something new, odd, or fanciful, which they cannot explain intelligently, or even understand themselves. A mysterious, disconnected set of ideas is more in accordance with their minds than the plain truth, which has a “Thus saith the Lord” for its foundation. He has other heresies,—intellectual poisons,—which he has concocted for another class of minds in this age of skepticism and proud reasoning. These sophistries have a bewitching power over minds, and thousands are deceived by them.

One class have a theory that there is no personal devil, and that Christ had no existence before he came to this earth; and they try to maintain these absurd theories by wresting scriptures from their true meaning. The utter folly of human wisdom in matters of religious faith is thus made manifest. The heart that is not sanctified, and imbued with the spirit of Christ, is perverse in its interpretation of the inspired word, turning the truth of God into senseless falsehood; and some who have not searched the Scriptures with humble hearts allow these wild speculations to unsettle their faith; they accept them in place of the plainly revealed will of God.

Satan assails another class with arguments that present a greater show of plausibility. Science and nature are exalted. Men consider themselves wiser than the word of God, wiser even than God; and instead of planting their feet on the immovable foundation, and bringing everything to the test of God's word, they test that word by their own ideas of science and nature, and if it seems not to agree with their scientific ideas, it is discarded as unworthy of credence. Thus the great standard by which to test doctrines and character is set aside for human standards. This is as Satan designed it should be. Some say, “It is no matter what we believe, if we are only honest.” But the law and the testimony remain valid, and we are to seek unto them.

The law of God is the great moral standard by which character is to be judged. It is the expression of his will, and must be obeyed from the heart. Its holy principles must underlie our course of action in all our business relations. Those who belittle their profession of faith by conformity to the world, show that they despise the riches of the grace of Christ. They cry. “The grace of Christ! we are not saved by works, but by Christ;” but they continue in sin,—continue to transgress the law of God. They act as though they considered it their privilege to live in sin that grace may abound. But every indulgence in sin weakens the soul; it welcomes Satan to come in and control the mind, making the individual his effectual servant.

In these days of delusion, every one who is established in the truth will have to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. Every variety of error will be brought out in the mysterious working of Satan, which would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect, and turn them from the truth. There will be human wisdom to meet,—the wisdom of learned men, who, as were the Pharisees, are teachers of the law of God, but do not obey the law themselves. There will be human ignorance and folly to meet in disconnected theories arrayed in new and fantastic dress,—theories that it will be all the more difficult to meet because there is no reason in them.

There will be false dreams and false visions, which have some truth, but lead away from the original faith. The Lord has given men a rule by which to detect them: "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." If they belittle the law of God, if they pay no heed to his will as revealed in the testimonies of his Spirit, they are deceivers. They are controlled by impulse and impressions, which they believe to be from the Holy Spirit, and consider more reliable than the inspired word. They claim that every thought and feeling is an impression of the Spirit; and when they are reasoned with out of the Scriptures, they declare that they have something more reliable. But while they think that they are led by the Spirit of God, they are in reality following an imagination wrought upon by Satan.

Their character was described and their doom denounced by the ancient prophets. It was ordained of old that those who unsettle faith in the word of God should bear the condemnation of God.

Jude says, "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not." This will be the sure fate of all the characters described by Jude, who depart from God, and lead others away from the truth. Although the Lord gave Israel the greatest evidences of his favor, and upon condition of obedience, the rich promise that they should be to him a peculiar people, a royal nation, yet because of their unbelief and disobedience he could not fulfill the promise. Because of their transgressions, he removed his restraining power over their enemies, the ungodly nations around them, and did not protect them as he had done.

Some profess Christianity year after year, and in some things appear to serve God, and yet they are far from him. They give loose rein to appetite and passion, and follow their own unsanctified inclinations, loving pleasure and the applause of men more than God or his truth. But God reads the secrets of the heart. Base thoughts lead to base actions. Self-righteousness, pride, and licentiousness are far-reaching, deep, and almost universal. These are the sins for which God destroyed the inhabitants of the old world by a flood of water, and they are corrupting the churches in these last days. They are the hidden rocks upon which are wrecked thousands and tens of thousands who profess godliness. Only those who are closely connected with God will escape the devices of Satan and the prevailing moral corruptions of this age.

The character is revealed by the works, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts. Those who would put God out of their knowledge will show a want of principle. Every man will show which master he is serving with the strength of his intellect, his skill, and his ability. The servant of Christ will watch unto prayer; he will be devoted, humble, meek and lowly in heart, seeking to know and do the will of God. Whereas he was once the servant of sin, he has, through the grace of God, become transformed in mind and character. He will love the day of Christ's appearing; for he will be able to say with Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

April 3, 1884

Man's Obligation to God

To each of us God has committed sacred trusts, for which he holds us accountable. He designs that man shall be so educated as to develop his mental and moral powers, that he may have a well-

balanced mind and a symmetrical character. But education alone will not prepare him to answer the object of his creation. He needs the grace of God, and divine aid awaits his demand. Divine power united with human effort will enable him to do good and glorify his Creator.

Few appreciate the value of man, and the glory that would redound to God were he to cultivate and preserve purity, nobility, and integrity of character. The value that God sets upon man is shown in the price that has been paid for his redemption; his love is expressed in that he withheld not his beloved Son, but gave him to die for a sinful race. Angels could not, by any sacrifice that they could make, accomplish the work of man's redemption. It was only through the suffering and death of Christ that he could be restored to the favor of God. For our sakes, He who knew no sin was made an offering for sin. He was afflicted, insulted, oppressed. Arraigned as a criminal, he suffered shame, insult, mockery, and pain.

Christ bore all this to rescue man from the hopeless state into which he had been brought by his disobedience of the law of God; for sin is the transgression of the law, and death is its penalty. He did not suffer to do away with the law, or to lessen its force, but that its claims might be met, and the sinner be spared. Through his perfect obedience, the law was exalted and made honorable.

Christ will elevate man, and give him rich and glorious possessions, if he will respect the claims of God's law; but if he chooses the service of Satan, and will ruin his hope of Heaven by his stubborn sinfulness, he must lose these blessings. He will have a place with associates similar in character to himself,—with those defiled by sin, who consider it a virtue, an evidence of smartness, to doubt God's word and be ranked among skeptics. To choose to be a sinner is to refuse to stand before the throne of God washed from the defilement of sin; it is to refuse the riches of eternal glory; it is to refuse to be a joint-heir with Christ to the immortal inheritance, and to be exalted to an equality with the heavenly angels;—it is to reject all these, and to choose instead the sure consequence of sin, the sinner's fixed doom.

Those who might become co-laborers with Christ, and do good service in advancing the interests of his kingdom, but who use their talents and influence to tear down instead of to build up, are like noted rebels; their prominence, the value of the talent they use in the service of Satan, increases their guilt and makes their punishment sure. These will feel the wrath of God. They will experience what Christ suffered in saving men from the penalty of the broken law. The value of man and the measure of his accountability can be known only by the cross of Calvary. He who presents himself to the sinner as the One strong to deliver, will prove himself mighty to execute wrath and judgment upon every unrepenting son of Adam. He who holds the worlds in position, who weighs the hills in scales, and the mountains in a balance, who taketh up the isles as a very little thing, will show himself mighty to avenge his unrequited mercy and spurned love. Those who flatter themselves that God is too merciful to punish the sinner, have only to look to Calvary to make assurance doubly sure that vengeance will be visited upon every transgressor of his righteous law.

The penalty for breaking the law of God is proportionate to the price paid to redeem its transgressors. What unutterable bliss is prepared for those who will be saved through Christ, and what depths of woe for those who despise and reject his great salvation! Whatever of a worldly nature men esteem valuable sinks into insignificance when viewed in this light, and how great appears our obligation to use in the service of God all the talents that he has intrusted to our keeping.

Science is too limited to comprehend the atonement; the mysterious and wonderful plan of redemption is so far-reaching that philosophy cannot explain it; it will ever remain a mystery that the most profound reason cannot fathom. If it could be explained by finite wisdom, it would lose its sacredness and dignity. It is a mystery that One equal with the eternal Father should so abase himself as to suffer the cruel death of the cross to ransom man; and it is a mystery that God so loved the world as to permit his Son to make this great sacrifice. The Holy Spirit exalts and glorifies the Saviour. It is his office to present Christ, the great salvation that we have through him, and the sacred, elevated purity of his righteousness. Says Christ, "He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." The Spirit of truth is the only effectual teacher of divine truth; those who are taught of him have entered the school of Christ. How must God esteem the race, that he gave his Son to die for them, and appoints his Spirit to be man's teacher and continual guide. Satan understands this, and he lays his plans to mar and wound man, the workmanship of God, and to prevent him from enjoying the happiness that this great rebel lost through his disobedience and malice.

Since his fall from Heaven, it has been Satan's only joy and constant employment to thwart the plan of God by preventing the salvation of perishing men. He has carried on this work with marked success, and will continue it until Christ shall bring his career to an end. He has tried to induce men to aid him in treading the honor of God into the dust, and many have become co-laborers with him, and have encouraged his rebellion. Those who do this, who glory in their skepticism, and lead others to despise the law of Jehovah, place themselves in the ranks of the enemies of Christ, and use their influence to destroy rather than to save souls. They second Satan in his efforts to undermine the law of God by assuring the sinner that he will be saved while transgressing that law. They serve Satan, and will share his terrible fate.

The short space of time allotted to men here is exceedingly valuable. Now, while probation lingers, God proposes to unite his strength with the weakness of finite man. We should so educate ourselves that we can serve him intelligently. Those who have cherished skepticism may, by proper discipline of the mind, learn to cherish faith. Those who truly love God will desire so to improve the talents that he has given them, that they may be a blessing to others. And by and by the gates of Heaven will be thrown wide open to admit them, and from the lips of the King of glory the benediction will fall upon their ear like richest music, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Thus the redeemed will be welcomed to the mansions that Jesus is preparing for them. There their companions will not be the vile of earth,—liars, idolaters, the impure, or the unbelieving; but they will associate with those who have overcome Satan and his devices, and through divine aid have formed perfect characters. Every sinful tendency, every imperfection that afflicts them here, has been removed by the blood of Christ; and the excellence and brightness of his glory, far exceeding the brightness of the sun in its meridian splendor, is imparted to them. And the moral beauty, the perfection of his character, shines through them, in worth far exceeding this outward splendor. They are without fault around the great white throne, sharing the dignity and privileges of the angels.

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him." In view of the glorious inheritance which may be his, "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" He may be poor; yet he possesses in himself a wealth and dignity that the world could never bestow. The soul redeemed and cleansed from sin, with all its noble powers dedicated to the service of God, is of surpassing worth; and there is joy in Heaven, in

the presence of God and holy angels, over one sinner that repents,—a joy that is expressed in songs of holy triumph.

April 10, 1884

The Training of Children

We are living in an unfortunate age for children. A heavy current is setting downward, and more than childhood's strength and experience is needed to press against this current, and not be borne down to moral ruin. But parents can do much; they should help their children. The mother's work commences with the infant. She should subdue the will and temper of her child, and bring it into subjection, teach it to obey. Every mother should take time to reason with her children, to correct their errors, and patiently teach them the right way.

As the child grows older, relax not the hand. Christian parents should so instruct their children that they may become children of God. The entire religious experience is influenced by the instructions received, and the character formed in childhood. If the will is not then subdued and made to yield to the will of the parents, it will be a difficult task to learn the lesson in after years. Parents who neglect this important work, commit a great error, and sin against their children and against God.

If parents would succeed in the government of their children, they must have perfect control of themselves. They must learn to control their words and the very expression of the countenance. They should not suffer the tone of the voice to be disturbed or agitated with excitement or passion. Then they can have a decided influence over their children. Impatience in the parents excites impatience in the children. Passion manifested by the parents creates passion in the children, and stirs up the evils of their nature. Some parents correct their children severely in a spirit of impatience, and often in passion. Such corrections produce no good results. In seeking to correct one evil they create two. Continual censuring and whipping hardens children, and weans their affections from their parents. First reason with your children, clearly point out their wrongs, and impress upon them that they have not only sinned against you, but against God. With your heart full of pity and sorrow for your erring children, pray with them before correcting them. Then they will see that you do not punish them because they have put you to inconvenience, or because you wish to vent your displeasure upon them, but from a sense of duty, for their good; and they will love and respect you.

Parents, every time you lose self-control, and speak and act impatiently, you sin against God. The recording angels writes every impatient, fretful word you utter to your children; every unguarded word spoken before them, carelessly or in jest, every word that is not chaste and elevated, he marks as a spot against your Christian character. Speak kindly to your children. Remember how sensitive you are, how little you can bear to be blamed, and do not lay upon them that which you cannot bear; for they are weaker than you, and cannot endure as much. The fruits of self-control, thoughtfulness, and pains-taking on your part will be a hundred-fold.

Let your pleasant, cheerful words ever be like sunbeams in your family. You have no right to bring a gloomy cloud over the happiness of your children by fault-finding, or severe censure for trifling mistakes. Actual wrong should be made to appear just as sinful as it is, and a firm, decided course should be pursued to prevent its recurrence; yet children should not be left in a hopeless state of

mind, but with a degree of courage that they can improve, and gain your confidence and approval. Children may wish to do right, they may purpose in their hearts to be obedient; but they need help and encouragement. Parents should better qualify themselves to discharge their duty to their children. Some do not understand their children; they are not really acquainted with them. If parents would enter more fully into the feelings of their children, and draw out what is in their hearts, it would have a beneficial influence upon them.

Children would be saved many evils if they would become more familiar with their parents. Parents should encourage their children to confide in them, to be open and frank, to come to them with their difficulties, their little daily annoyances, and when they are perplexed as to what course is right, to lay the matter before their parents, and ask their advice. Who are so well calculated to see and point out their dangers as godly parents? Who can understand the peculiar temperaments of their children as well as they? The mother who has watched every turn of mind from infancy, and is acquainted with the natural disposition, is best prepared to counsel her children.

Children should very early be taught to be useful, to help themselves and to help others. Let the tax upon their strength be very light at first, and increase it a little every day, until they can do a proper amount of work each day without becoming excessively weary. Children who are petted and waited upon, always expect it; and if their expectations are not met, they are disappointed. This same disposition will be seen through their whole lives; they will be helpless, leaning upon others for aid, expecting others to favor them and yield to them. And if they are opposed, even after they have grown to manhood and womanhood, they think themselves abused; and thus they worry their way through the world, hardly able to bear their own weight, often murmuring and fretting because everything does not suit them.

The mistaken parents who are thus teaching their children lessons which will prove ruinous to them, are also planting thorns for their own feet. They think that by gratifying the wishes of their children, and letting them follow their own inclinations, they can gain their love. What an error! Children thus indulged grow up unrestrained in their desires, unyielding in their dispositions, selfish, exacting, and overbearing, a curse to themselves and to all around them. Many daughters can, without remorse of conscience, see their mothers toiling, cooking, washing, or ironing, while they sit in the parlor and read stories, knit edging, crochet, or embroider. Their hearts are as unfeeling as a stone. But where does this wrong originate? Who are the ones usually most to blame in this matter? The poor, deceived parents. They overlook the future good of their children, and in their mistaken fondness, let them sit in idleness, or do that which is of but little account, which requires no exercise of the mind or muscles, and then excuse their indolent daughters because they are weakly. What has made them weakly? In many cases it has been the wrong course of the parents. A proper amount of exercise about the house would improve both mind and body.

Mothers should take their daughters with them into the kitchen, and patiently educate them. Their constitution will be better for such labor; their muscles will gain tone and strength, and their meditations will be more healthy and elevated at the close of the day. They may be weary, but how sweet is rest after a proper amount of labor. Sleep, nature's sweet restorer, invigorates the tired body, and prepares it for the next day's duties. Do not intimate to your children that it is no matter whether they do anything or not. Teach them that their help is needed, that their time is of value, and that you depend on their labor. Much sin results from idleness. Active hands and minds do not

find time to heed every temptation which the enemy suggests; but idle hands and brains are all ready for Satan to control. When not properly occupied, the mind dwells upon improper things.

To a great extent, parents hold in their own hands the future happiness of their children. They sow the seed which will spring up and bear fruit either for good or evil. Upon them rests the important work of forming the character of these children. The instructions given in childhood, will follow them all through life. Parents can train their sons and daughters for happiness or for misery. They should deal faithfully with the souls committed to their trust. They should not encourage in their children pride, extravagance, or love of show. They should not teach them, or suffer them to learn, little pranks which appear cunning in small children, but which must be corrected when they are older. The habits first formed are not easily forgotten.

Parents, you should commence to discipline the minds of your children while very young, to the end that they may be Christians. Let all your efforts be for their salvation. Act as though they were placed in your care to be fitted as precious jewels to shine in the kingdom of God. Beware how you lull them to sleep over the pit of destruction, with the mistaken thought that they are not old enough to be accountable, not old enough to repent of their sins and serve God.

There are many precious promises on record for those who seek their Saviour early. Ecclesiastes 12:1: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." Proverbs 8:17: "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me." The great Shepherd of Israel is still saying, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of Heaven." Teach your children that youth is the best time to seek the Lord. Then the burdens of life are not heavy upon them, and their young minds are not harassed with care, and while so free they should devote the best of their strength to God.

April 17, 1884

Important Duties in Home Life

The people of God are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. They should study the life of Christ, and his example and teaching should affect their life and character. They honor him by manifesting the fruits of the Spirit in their every-day life. If the doors of the house and heart are opened to Jesus, if he is welcomed as an honored guest, he will work for the family. The sweet influence of his presence will pervade the home, and check all impatience and selfishness. But many professed Christians drive Christ from their homes by an impatient, fretful spirit. Sometimes when fatigued by labor or oppressed with care, parents do not maintain a calm spirit, but manifest a lack of forbearance that displeases God, and brings a cloud over the family. Parents, when you feel fretful, you should not commit so great a sin as to poison the whole family with this dangerous irritability. At such times, set a double watch over yourselves, and resolve that none but pleasant, cheerful words shall escape your lips. By thus exercising self-control, you will grow stronger. Your nervous system will not be so sensitive.

The mother can and should do much toward controlling her nerves and mind when depressed; even when she is sick, she can, if she only schools herself, be pleasant and cheerful, and can bear more noise than she would once have thought possible. She should not make her children feel her

infirmities, and cloud their young, sensitive minds by her depression of spirits, making them feel that the mother's room is the most dismal place in the world. The mind and nerves gain tone and strength by the exercise of the will. The power of the will in many cases will prove a potent soother of the nerves. Jesus knows our infirmities, and has himself shared our experience in all things but in sin; therefore he has prepared for us a path suited to our strength and capacity.

Sometimes everything seems to go wrong in the family circle. There is fretfulness all around, and all seem very miserable and unhappy. The parents lay the blame upon their poor children, and think them very disobedient and unruly, the worst children in the world, when the cause of the disturbance is in themselves. God requires them to exercise self-control. They should realize that when they yield to impatience and fretfulness, they cause others to suffer. Those around them are affected by the spirit they manifest, and if they in their turn act out the same spirit, the evil is increased.

Instead of pleasantly asking their children to do what they wish done, parents often order them in a scolding tone, and at the same time administer a censure or a reproach which the children have not merited. Parents, this course pursued toward your children destroys their cheerfulness and their ambition to please you. They do your bidding, not from love, but because they dare not do otherwise. Their heart is not in the matter. It is drudgery instead of a pleasure, and this often leads them to forget to follow out all your directions, which increases your irritation; and makes it still worse for the children. The fault-finding is repeated, their bad conduct is arrayed before them in glowing colors, until they become discouraged, and are not particular whether they please or not. A spirit of "I don't care" seizes them; and they seek that pleasure and enjoyment away from home, away from their parents, which they do not find at home. They mingle with street company, and are soon as bad as the worst.

Upon whom rests this great sin? If home had been made attractive, if the parents had manifested affection for their children, if they had wisely sought innocent enjoyment for them, and taught them the lesson of cheerful obedience, they would have touched an answering chord in their young hearts, and willing feet and hands and hearts would have carried out their wishes. By speaking kindly to their children, and praising them when they try to do right, parents may encourage their efforts, make them very happy, and throw around the family circle a charm which will chase away every dark shadow, and bring cheerful sunlight in. Mutual kindness and forbearance will make home a paradise, and attract holy angels into the family circle; but they will flee from a house where there are unpleasant words, fretfulness, and strife. Unkindness, complaining, and anger shut Jesus from the dwelling.

Some parents fail to give their children a religious education, and also neglect their school education. Neither should be neglected. Children's minds will be active; and if they are not engaged in physical labor, or occupied with study, they will be exposed to evil influences. It is a sin for parents to allow their children to grow up in ignorance. They should supply them with useful and interesting books, and should teach them to have hours for labor and hours for study and reading. Parents should aim to elevate the minds of their children, and to improve their mental faculties. The mind left to itself, uncultivated, is generally low, sensual, and corrupt. Satan improves his opportunity, and educates idle minds.

Parents should faithfully instruct their children, not leaving them to gather up their education as best they can. They should not be suffered to learn good and evil indiscriminately, with the idea that at some future time the good will predominate, and the evil lose its influence. The evil will increase faster than the good. It is possible that the evil may be eradicated after many years; but who will venture this? Time is short. It is easier and much safer to sow clean and good seed in the hearts of your children, than to pluck up the weeds afterward. Parents should redouble their efforts for the salvation of their children. The reason why the youth of the present age are not more religiously inclined is that their education is defective. In the present state of things in society, it is no easy task for parents to restrain their children, and instruct them according to the Bible rule of right. When they would train their children in harmony with the precepts of the word of God, and, like Abraham of old, command their households after them, the children think their parents overcareful and unnecessarily exacting.

It is not the exercise of true love toward children that permits in them the indulgence of passion, or allows disobedience of parental authority to go unpunished. "Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined." Both parents should co-operate in the training, government, and education of their children. With firmness, not in a harsh manner, but with determined purpose, both should let their children know that they must obey. The father should not be like a child, moved merely by impulse. He is bound to his family by sacred, holy ties. He is the lawmaker, illustrating in his own manly bearing the sterner virtues,—energy, integrity, honesty, and industry. He is in one sense the priest of the household, laying upon the altar of God the morning and evening sacrifice, while the wife and children unite in prayer and praise. In such a household Jesus will love to tarry.

We can have the salvation of God in our families, but we must believe for it, live for it, and have a continual, abiding faith and trust in God. We must subdue a hasty temper, and control our words; and in so doing we shall gain great victories. Unless we control our words and temper, we are slaves to Satan. All jangling, and unpleasant, impatient, fretful words are an offering presented to his Satanic majesty. And it is a costly offering, more costly than any sacrifice we can make for God; for it destroys the peace and happiness of whole families, destroys health, and is eventually the cause of forfeiting an eternal life of happiness. The restraint which God's word imposes upon us is for our own interest. It increases the happiness of our families, and of all around us. It refines our taste, sanctifies our judgment, and brings peace of mind, and in the end, everlasting life. Under this holy restraint we shall increase in grace and humility, and it will become easy to speak right. The natural, passionate temper will be held in subjection. An indwelling Saviour will strengthen us every hour. Ministering angels will linger in our dwellings, and with joy carry Heavenward the tidings of our advance in the divine life, and the recording angel will make a cheerful, happy record.

May 1, 1884

Dangers and Duties of the Young

In these days, persecution and reproach for Christ's sake are scarcely known. Very little self-denial and sacrifice are necessary in order to put on a form of godliness, and have the name upon the church-book; but to live in such a manner that our ways will be pleasing to God, and our names registered in the book of life, will require watchfulness and prayer, sacrifice and self-denial. Very few of the youth know what experimental religion is. They have not a fixed principle to serve God. They sink under every cloud; they have no power of endurance. They appear to serve God; they make

now and then a formal prayer, and are called Christians; but they do not grow in grace. They are not led to search their own hearts diligently, and to count the cost of becoming a Christian. As a result, they profess to be Christians without sufficiently trying their motives.

The young are often urged to speak or pray in meeting; they are urged to die to self. At every step of the Christian way, they are urged. Such religion is worth nothing. Let the heart be changed, and it will not be such drudgery to serve God. The love of dress and pride of appearance will be gone. The apostle John exhorts, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." Then he adds the warning, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." It is an alarming fact that the love of the world predominates in the minds of the young, and the things that are in the world, and for this reason the love of God finds no room in their hearts. God is dishonored by the frivolity and fashion, and empty, vain talking and laughing that characterize the life of the youth generally. There will be no place for these things in the heart renewed by the grace of God; but there will be an earnest, anxious seeking for the Christian graces, the fruits of the Spirit of God.

Words and acts testify plainly what is in the heart. If vanity and pride, love of self and love of dress, fill the heart, the conversation will be upon the dress, the fashions, and the appearance, but not on Christ or the kingdom of Heaven. If envious feelings dwell in the heart, they will be manifested in words and acts. Those who measure themselves by others, and make no higher attainments, are feeding on husks, and will remain spiritual dwarfs.

Many have their hearts filled with the love of self. They are not aware that the great heavenly Artist is taking cognizance of every act, every word; that their deportment, and even the thoughts and intents of the heart, stand faithfully delineated; and that old and young will have the faithful picture presented to them in all its deformity at the execution of the judgment. Those vain, frivolous words are all written in the book. Those false words are written. Those deceptive acts, whose motives were concealed from human eyes, but discerned by the all-seeing eye of Jehovah, are all written in living characters. Every selfish act will be exposed.

Solemn responsibilities rest upon the young, which they lightly regard. They should heed the injunction of the inspired word, "Obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right." "Honor thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and thou mayst live long on the earth." They should honor their parents by cheerful, loving obedience, and by doing what they can to make home happy. Often they would like to do this in their own way, by introducing amusements that lead away from God. They urge that they need something to enliven and divert the mind; and sometimes music is introduced into the home as a means of supplying this need. Music, when not abused, is a great blessing. God is glorified by songs of praise from a pure heart filled with love and devotion to him. But when put to a wrong use, it is a terrible curse. It excites, but does not impart that strength and courage which can be found only at the throne of grace. Frivolous songs and the popular sheet music of the day, which often seem congenial to their tastes, lead the mind from God.

Many seek after pleasures that prove bitter in the end. They love worldly society, where they receive praise and flattery that gratifies vanity, and fosters pride and self-esteem. They are led to believe that with such advantages and attractions as they possess, it is really a great pity for them to come out from the world and be separate. But the pleasures of earth will have an end, and that which is

sown must also be reaped. Young friends, are your personal attraction, abilities, or talents too valuable to be devoted to God and used in his service?

“Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.” Young friends, when you are restless and unhappy, it is because you have strayed from this path of peace. You are trying to find out of Christ that happiness that is found only in him. In him are no disappointed hopes. Prayer,—oh, how is this precious privilege neglected! The reading of the word of God prepares the mind for prayer. One great reason that you have so little disposition to pray is that you have unfitted yourselves for this sacred duty by reading fascinating stories, which have excited the imagination and aroused unholy passions. The word of God becomes distasteful; the hour of prayer is forgotten. And yet to have the consciousness that the eyes of the Lord are upon us, and his ears open to our prayers, is a satisfaction indeed. To know that we have a never-failing Friend in whom we can confide all the secrets of the soul, is a privilege which words can never express.

The consciousness of right-doing is the best medicine for diseased bodies and minds. The special blessing of God resting upon the receiver is health and strength. Those whose moral faculties are clouded by disease are not the ones to rightly represent the Christian life or the beauties of holiness. They are too often in the fire of fanaticism, or the water of cold indifference or stolid gloom. The words of Christ are of more worth than the opinions of all the physicians in the universe: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” This is the first great object,—the kingdom of Heaven, the righteousness of Christ. Other objects to be attained should be secondary.

Perhaps some will inquire how they are to know that they are accepted of God. The answer is, Study his word prayerfully. Lay it not aside for any other book. This holy book convinces of sin. It plainly reveals the way of salvation. It brings to view a bright and glorious reward. It reveals to you a complete Saviour, and teaches you that through his boundless mercy alone can you expect salvation. The hope of eternal life is not to be received upon slight grounds. It is a subject to be settled between God and your own soul,—settled for eternity. A supposed hope, and nothing more, will prove your ruin. Since you are to stand or fall by the word of God, it is to that word you must look for the testimony in your case. There you can see what is required in order to become a Christian. Compare your life with that of your Master, who made so great a sacrifice that you might be saved. Do not neglect secret prayer. Plead as earnestly as you would if your mortal life were at stake. Remain before God until unutterable longings for salvation are begotten within you, and the sweet evidence is obtained of pardoned sin. Do not lay off your armor or leave the battle-field until you have obtained the victory, and can triumph in your Redeemer.

Young friends, if found in the way of righteousness, you can exert a mighty influence. Ministers, or church-members advanced in years, cannot have one-half the influence on your young associates that you are capable of exerting; and you ought to feel that a responsibility rests upon you to do all you can for their salvation. Those who have themselves tasted the sweets of redeeming love will not, cannot rest, until all with whom they associate are made acquainted with the plan of salvation. You should inquire, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? How can I honor and glorify thy name upon the earth?” Souls are perishing all around us; what are you doing to win them to Christ? Oh, that you would use your powers of mind in seeking to so approach sinners that you may win even one soul to the path of righteousness! What a thought! One soul to praise God through eternity!

One soul to enjoy happiness and everlasting life! One gem in your crown to shine forever and ever! But more than one may be won from sin to holiness, and the reward is rich in the kingdom of Heaven. Says the Lord by the prophet, "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever."

May 8, 1884

Satan's Devices

[Remarks in the six o'clock

morning meeting at Oakland, Cal.' April 20, 1884]

The great controversy between Christ and Satan, that has been carried on for almost six thousand years, is soon to close. And yet how few have their attention called to this matter, how few realize that we are living amid the closing scenes of earth's history! Satan is working diligently, binding his sheaves preparatory to gathering in his harvest. He is uniting the elements of his kingdom for the final struggle. Since his fall, he has been the great adversary of God and man, and has shown a masterly activity in trying to defeat our Saviour's efforts in our behalf. He thinks that because so many readily yield to his temptations and believe his lies, he may yet gain some advantage over Christ, who left the royal courts of Heaven that he might defeat this wily foe on his own battle-field, and open a way whereby man might escape from his cruel power.

He is called in the Bible, Satan, Beelzebub, the serpent, the deceiver, a liar, the accuser of the brethren, the prince of the power of the air, the prince of darkness, and the god of this world. Frightful names, infernal agencies! This fallen spirit, so malignant and subtle, is walking about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. When there is no special effort made to resist his power, when profound indifference prevails in the church and in the world, he is not concerned; for he is in no danger of losing those whom he is leading captive at his will. But when the attention is called to eternal things, and souls are inquiring, "What shall I do to be saved?" he is on the ground, seeking to match his power against the power of Christ, and doubling his efforts to counteract the influences of the Holy Spirit. Angels of God, with Jesus at their head, are present to press back the powers of darkness; but no one is forced to accept Jesus, and no one can be compelled by Satan's power to reject him.

Satan is at your side when you least suspect it, watching to find a weak spot in your armor, where he can introduce his darts, and wound your soul by betraying you into sin. He has access to minds that are open to receive his suggestions, and by long experience he has learned how to apply his temptations to the best advantage. His first effort is to keep as many minds as possible in a state of careless indifference. He will invent every imaginable excuse to keep people away from meetings where they might receive benefit from hearing the truth. He will especially work to make of none effect these morning meetings, where the Spirit of God is at work; and when he cannot keep persons away, his next effort will be to fill the mind with unimportant matters, thus preventing them from treasuring up the truths they hear.

This work Satan is engaged in at every meeting. He has different temptations prepared for different minds, and souls are continually yielding to his suggestions. He will adopt any means by which he may gain control of the thoughts and purposes of the heart. He will work to divert the mind from

Heaven and heavenly things by the absorbing cares of this life. He will produce temporary indisposition to keep you away from meetings where testimonies from Heaven will be borne, and your hearts would be impressed with the deep movings of the Spirit of God. If you attend the meetings, and your heart is impressed, he will tempt you to engage in unprofitable conversation on trivial things, so that you will forget the words spoken.

Circumstances will arise to divert the mind. Visitors, relatives, or worldly friends, or some temporal matter, will engage the attention; and then “cometh the devil, and taketh the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.” These friends will make demands upon your time and strength, and thus God is robbed of the service due him. Yet you flatter yourselves that you cannot do otherwise; for how can you displease your friends? God will not bring a curse upon you for thus robbing him, but your own course of action brings its sure result. But however alluring Satan's temptations, however natural and unavoidable they may seem to the mind that is not clear and sharp in spiritual discernment, you must not be lulled to carnal security. However dear your friends may be, if they lead you away from God they are emissaries of Satan, who works through the children of disobedience, speaks through human organs.

God will not work a miracle to change natural causes which you can control. If you place yourself and family in the current of the world, you and your children will be borne downward by it. Be wise and discriminating in regard to spiritual advantages, and gather about yourselves and your children correct influences. We may have a beautiful and fertile country; but surrounding influences may be weaving a spell upon our souls that will sink us to perdition, and our children may be lost to the cause of God because we did not place them where they would cultivate a love for divine things. We may save our own souls, as did Lot when he fled from Sodom; but the habits and customs with which we have become familiar may cling to us, and we may find that we have assimilated to them more than we were aware. This is a risk that we cannot afford to run. We might better lose every worldly advantage than to lose Jesus, or dishonor him by our careless inattention to his requirements. It is best to obey God at any sacrifice.

Another way that Satan comes in between God and your soul is to lead you to criticise the defects of your brethren and sisters, to watch their mistakes and talk about them. You think it is right to grieve over their errors; but the enemy takes advantage here, and hurls his poisoned darts through the defective places in your armor. You let bitterness into your soul, then jealousy and evil-surmising, and you do not realize it. Your heart becomes hardened against your brethren, and you speak evil of them. You do not know that you are doing the work of Satan, but you are; and you are growing spiritually weaker and weaker, and darker and darker.

The right course for you to pursue is marked out in the Bible, and you should follow it strictly. Go to your brother, and with your heart filled with tender, pitying love,—just such love as inspired Jesus in his efforts to save a fallen race,—tell him his fault between you and him alone. If you fail, do not let this depress you. It will do you harm, and not good, to let your mind dwell upon the mistakes and errors of others. Learn from their weakness to be strong yourself. Avoid their failures. Because Jesus is grieved by their faults, try the harder to honor him yourself by a well-ordered life and godly conversation. If you think your neighbor or brother is defective in character, make him a special subject of prayer; but do not lift up your soul unto vanity by saying, “I am not like him. In contrast

with him, I am righteous." This is not obeying the injunction of the apostle to esteem others better than yourself.

By beholding we become changed. If you allow your mind to dwell upon the imperfections and moral deformities of others, you will be changed into the same image. You will become deformed in character, and mentally one-sided and unbalanced. Let the mind dwell upon the perfect life of Christ. If the thoughts are centered upon him, and the conversation is on heavenly themes, you will be "changed into the same image from glory to glory." You will become "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

The way to eternal life is a battle and a march. The great adversary of souls is continually seeking to insinuate himself between you and the Source of your strength. If you allow your mind to be taken up with worldly cares, he will manage to have these cares so varied in character, and press so continually upon you, that you can find no time for the spiritual and the eternal. Worldly acquaintances introduce subjects that are of the greatest importance to them; you listen and are attracted, and these things of minor consequence absorb the mind and affections. You give time and attention, skill and inventive faculties, to outward ornamentation, to the neglect of the inward adorning of the soul. Time is worse than lost which should be devoted to the searching of the Scriptures and to earnest prayer for divine guidance; you rob your own souls of grace and power, and others of the light that should be reflected through you to the world.

But few know the real power of religion. They do not appreciate its refining and elevating influence on the character; they do not partake of its joys nor enter into its spirit. We need constant communion with Jesus just as much as we need daily food to nourish the body. If there is a moment when we are in no danger of being deceived by the enemy, then for that moment we may dispense with divine aid. If there is any moment when we are not dependent on God for our breath, then there is a time when we need not obey the injunctions of his word.

We should be sanctified by the truth. The conscience and the understanding, the words, the deeds, and the thoughts, should be controlled by truth, and not error. The principle of truth and righteousness implanted in the heart, will be revealed in the life, and especially in the family circle. God estimates a man by what he is in the bosom of his family. Fix the mind on things that are pure and holy. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think of these things." And the life will be clothed with the beauty of holiness even here; but who shall tell what it will be, when the great controversy between sin and righteousness is forever closed, and we appear in "the beauty of the Lord our God"?

May 15, 1884

Prevailing Prayer

[Remarks in the 9 o'clock morning meeting at Oakland, Cal., April 20, 1884.]

"Watch ye therefore, and pray always," is the injunction of Christ to his disciples. Again we read in the inspired word, "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

God has made it our duty to pray. The riches of the universe belong to him. He has all temporal and spiritual treasures at his command, and can supply every want from his abundant fullness. We receive our breath from him; every temporal blessing that we enjoy is his gift. We are dependent upon him not only for temporal blessings, but for grace and strength to keep us from falling under the power of temptation. We daily need the Bread of Life to give us spiritual strength and vigor, just as much as we need food to sustain our physical strength and give us firm muscles. We are compassed with weakness and infirmities, doubts and temptations; but we can come to Jesus in our need, and he will not turn us away empty. We must accustom ourselves to seek divine guidance through prayer; we must learn to trust in Him from whom our help cometh. Our desires should be unto God; our souls should go out after him, and their attitude should always be that of supplication.

The reason that we do not realize greater help is because there is lack of earnest, fervent devotion. Jesus reproved the Pharisees for drawing near to God with their mouth, and honoring him with their lips, while their hearts were far from him. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." We must have a deep, earnest sense of our needs. We must feel our weakness and our dependence upon God, and come to him with contrition of soul and brokenness of heart. Our petitions must be offered in perfect submission; every desire must be brought into harmony with the will of God, and his will must be done in us. We must not pray in a doubting, half-hearted manner, but with full assurance of faith. When we come to him in this manner, Jesus will listen to our prayers, and will answer them; but if we regard iniquity in our hearts, if we cherish any darling sin, we may be assured that no blessing will be given in response to our prayers.

One sister said this morning that she did not have the experience she desired. She tried to do her duty as far as she could understand it, but she did not experience the joy and peace that others seemed to have. This sister does not believe the word of God. What has faith to do with feeling? Faith takes God at his word, with or without feeling. It "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." We can believe our fellow-men, and can we not trust the word of God? When we go to him for wisdom or grace, we are not to look to ourselves to see if he has given us a special feeling as an assurance that he has fulfilled his word. Feeling is no criterion. Great evils have resulted when Christians have followed feeling. Satan can give feelings and impressions, and those who take these as their guides will surely be led astray. How do I know that Jesus hears my prayer? I know it by his promise. He says he will hear the needy when they cry unto him, and I believe his word. He has never said to the "seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain."

If we walk in the light as Christ is in the light, we may come to the throne of grace with holy boldness. We may present the promises of God in living faith, and urge our petitions. Although we are weak, and erring, and unworthy, "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities." But too often our prayers are molded by coldness and backsliding. Those who do not deny self and lift the cross of Christ, will have no courage to approach a heart-searching God. We must learn to watch unto prayer, and to be importunate. When we have offered our petition once, we must not then abandon it, but say, as did Jacob when he wrestled all night with the angel, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me," and like him we shall prevail. In the public assembly of God's people, prayers should not be offered that are suitable only to secret communion with him. We should pray understandingly and intelligently, and every day we should know better how to offer appropriate and prevailing prayers.

Jesus invites, "Come unto me, all ye that labor 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 of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." This is no doubtful, uncertain promise, but a positive one. If we come to him, we shall not be disappointed. Yet how unwilling we seem to accept the gracious invitation. When in trouble, we too often go for help to our brethren, who are no wiser nor stronger than ourselves; but if we would go to Jesus, if we would take our troubles to him in prayer, we should find rest, and peace, and courage. The wisdom that God gives is unerring; his strength is sufficient for all our needs. Let us lay our burdens at the feet of Jesus, and, according to his promise, he will take the weary load, and encircle us in the arms of his love.

"I am meek and lowly in heart." There is a beautiful blending of tenderness and lowliness, majesty and humility, in the character of Christ. He who was the mightiest one that ever trod the earth, was also the most pure and sinless, and was the meekest of all. In the cluster of graces upon which he pronounces a blessing, meekness and poverty of spirit stand foremost; and among all his traits of character he selected this for the peculiar study and imitation of his disciples. "Learn of me," he says; "for I am meek and lowly in heart." And the inspired apostle Paul also, in exhorting his Corinthian brethren to manifest in their lives the fruits of the Spirit, beseeches them by the "meekness and gentleness of Christ." From the mountain summit, the tempter presented before our Saviour the kingdoms of the world in all their glory, making the sight as alluring and enchanting as possible; but none of these things moved the divine Son of God. Beneath all the glitter and pomp of earth, he saw misery, sorrow, and remorse,—suffering which earthly prosperity is powerless to alleviate; and he spurned the temptation and the tempter.

There are many who are surrounded with clouds of darkness. They try to do something themselves, some great and good work which will win the favor of God and make them happy, but they neglect the very work that they should do. But the path of happiness is the path of obedience. We should in no case blind our eyes to our true condition, and then pray in a loose, general manner. Prayers of this kind rise no higher than the petitioner's head, and bring no answer of mercy, because they are dictated by no sense of need. Says the apostle, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." Inquire into the character of your thoughts, purposes, temper, words, and deeds. Compare your experience with the declarations of Scripture, and see whether you are gathering with Christ or scattering abroad. See if your life testifies that you are in the faith.

As you discover your sinfulness, do not be discouraged; for Jesus has invited you to come to him. No humble suppliant was ever spurned from his presence. His patience is unwearied. The waves of mercy, beaten back by hearts hard as rocks, only return with a stronger tide of subduing, inexpressible love. Then shall we not closely examine our own hearts, and see if the soul-temple is not defiled by sins that are unrepented of? Shall we not cease to criticise the faults of others, while the deformity of our own characters is left uncorrected? "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." It will deceive you if you let it, and will lead you to think that you are spiritually much better than you are.

We are here in a world of doubt and skepticism. The law of God is made void, unbelief seems to be in the very air we breathe; and to resist all these influences, and battle successfully against the powers of darkness, requires strong faith and earnest prayer. But amid all these opposing influences, we may repose in God with perfect confidence. I once read of an eagle that had left her home in the

Alps, and clouds dark and heavy intervened between her and her home in the towering cliffs. She seemed bewildered, and with loud screams flew first one way and then another against the overhanging clouds. Suddenly, with a shrill scream of determination, she darted upward through the dense clouds into the clear sky above. The clouds were beneath her, and she was again in her mountain home. And so may we rise above the clouds of skepticism, and dwell in the clear sunshine of God's presence.

We should search the Scriptures daily; for the word of God is our unerring guide. We must not, for the sake of worldly advantage, place ourselves under wrong influences; for by so doing we are entering into temptation. Are we choosing to remain near some central point of evil? Then let us test our motives thoroughly, lest Satan obtain advantage over us. If this is our post of duty, and we are letting our light shine, we may be safe; for when temptation meets us in the path of duty, it is our privilege to lean more heavily upon God.

The Christian has duties to do in the world, and God holds him responsible for their faithful performance. He is not to confine himself in monastic walls, nor to avoid all association with worldlings. It is true that his principles will be put to the severest test, and he will be pained by what his eyes see and his ears hear. But he must not, by becoming familiar with these sights and sounds, learn to love them. By association with the world, we incline to catch the spirit of the world, and to adopt their customs, tastes, and preferences. But we are commanded, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." Never let the world say that worldlings and Christ's followers are alike in their tastes and pursuits; for God has drawn a line between his people and the world. This line of demarkation is broad and deep and clear; it is not so blended with the world that it is not discernible. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." "By their fruits ye shall know them."

It is only by watching unto prayer, and the exercise of living faith, that the Christian can preserve his integrity in the midst of the temptations that Satan brings to bear upon him. But "whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Talk to your heart constantly the language of faith: "Jesus said he would receive me, and I believe his word. I will praise him; I will glorify his name." Satan will be close by your side to suggest that you do not feel any joy. Answer him, "'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.' I have everything to be glad of; for I am a child of God. I am trusting in Jesus. The law of God is in my heart; none of my steps shall slide."

May 22, 1884

Faith the Christian's Victory

[Remarks in the 6 o'clock morning meeting at Oakland, Cal., April 21, 1884.]

These are precious opportunities that we are enjoying. Jesus is present with us today; for he has promised, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." His presence insures a blessing; but blessings do not always consist in a happy flight of feeling. The greatest blessing we can have is a correct knowledge of ourselves, that we may see our defects of character, and by divine grace remedy them.

We can never graduate in the school of Christ, but we should make continual advancement. We should never be satisfied with our present position and attainments. Like the apostle, we should "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," and day by day grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. Are we doing this? Are we nearer to God today than we were a year ago? What a change there would be in our religious experience, what a transformation in our characters, if day by day we carried out the principle that we are not our own, but that our time and talents belong to God, and every faculty should be used to do his will and advance his glory. If we spent all our spare moments in work for the Redeemer, in searching the Scriptures, and in pleading with God to be imbued with his Spirit, what precious victories we should gain for Jesus!

We should study the Bible more that we may become familiar with the promises of God; then when Satan comes in, flooding the soul with his temptations, as he surely will, we may meet him with, "It is written." We may be shut in by the promises of God, which will be as a wall of fire about us. We want to know how to exercise faith. Faith "is the gift of God," but the power to exercise it is ours. If faith lies dormant, it is no advantage to us; but in exercise, it holds all blessings in its grasp. It is the hand by which the soul takes hold of the strength of the Infinite. It is the medium by which human hearts, renewed by the grace of Christ, are made to beat in harmony with the great Heart of love. Faith plants itself on the promises of God, and claims them as surety that he will do just as he said he would. Jesus comes to the sinful, helpless, needy soul, and says, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Believe; claim the promises, and praise God that you do receive the things you have asked of him, and when your need is greatest, you will experience his blessing and receive special help.

Many know so little of faith that when they have asked God for his help and blessing, they look to themselves to see if their prayer is answered; and if they have a happy flight of feeling, they are satisfied. This is not faith, but unbelief. We should trust God, whether we experience any change of feeling or not. We cannot expect to be very joyful and hopeful while we look to ourselves; for we must think of self as sinful. A large class of the professed Christian world are watching their feelings; but feeling is an unsafe guide, and those who depend upon it are in danger of imbibing heresy. Satan can move upon our feelings, and he can so arrange surrounding circumstances as to make our feelings changeable. Victory in God is not feeling, but faith. It is the faith that will not yield although there are seeming impossibilities to be encountered.

If I were to promise one of you a book tomorrow morning, what kind of respect would you show me if you were to respond by saying, "I wish I could believe you; but I will not believe until I have the book in my hand. When I get the book, I will believe." Would that be trusting my word? Oh, no! When you have the book in your possession, it is sight, and not faith at all. But this is just the way we treat our heavenly Father. We insult and dishonor him by our distrust, and are kept at a distance from him, and deprived of the rich blessings within our reach, by our wicked unbelief and ingratitude. We may have daily victories; but we lose the most precious gifts that Heaven can bestow because we will not take God at his word. When I am sick and afflicted, and ask for help, I do not sit in my room and wait for this help to come to me. I go forward in the path of humble obedience, expecting the Lord to answer my prayers, and sustain and bless me in doing the work that duty requires. Although all may seem dark, I place myself in the channel of light. What have I to do with feelings of darkness and discouragement? What have I to be troubled about? Faith can penetrate the darkest cloud. God has promised, and he will not fail me. It is no difficult, mysterious

problem to believe. We take Jesus at his word; we come to him with all our burdens and our soul needs, and, according to his promise, find in him a helper and a strong deliverer.

There is a deep, rich, and full experience for us individually to gain. We shall every one of us be tested and tried. We have a rough pathway before us; but Jesus has traveled this way, and he knows just how to help us. Faith lightens our burdens and relieves our weariness by the anticipation of Heaven at our journey's end. Faith rejoices in hope, and is patient in affliction. Faith waxes strong and valiant in conflict, and conquers in the great fight of temptation. We must have a living faith,—a faith that will hold the soul in the hour of trial; for everything that can be shaken will be. In summer there is no noticeable difference between evergreens and other trees; but when the blasts of winter come, the evergreens are fresh and green, while other trees are stripped of their foliage. Just so it is with professed Christians. When no particular test is brought to bear upon them, we may not be able to distinguish between the true Christian and the hypocrite; but in times of trial and temptation the difference is easily discerned, for the source of the Christian's strength is made manifest. There are two classes of builders. One class are building on a foundation of sliding sand; the other, on the eternal Rock, and the winds blow and the tempests beat against this foundation in vain.

The inquiry in many hearts is, How shall I find happiness? We are not to make it our object to live for happiness, but we shall surely find it in the path of humble obedience. Paul was happy. He affirms repeatedly that notwithstanding the sufferings, conflicts, and trials that he was called to bear, he enjoyed great consolation. He says, "I am filled with comfort; I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation." All the energies of the chiefest of the apostles were bent to a preparation for the future, immortal life; and when the time of his departure was at hand, he could exclaim in holy triumph, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day." And the shout of victory of this warrior of faith has come sounding down the ages to our time.

It is one thing to profess the truth, but it is a very different thing to live it out. Many who profess to be keeping the commandments of God are deceiving their own souls. They have no union with Christ, and do not make the truth practical. In their homes, selfishness is interwoven with their daily life. There is manifested a want of refinement, an uncourteous, unkind selfishness. The religion of Jesus should be carried into the home circle, the work-shop, and all the business transactions. The genuine Christian will show in his life the fruits of the Spirit. The love of Jesus will flow out naturally in words and deeds of kindness. Those who yield themselves to the heavenly power, which alone can quell tumultuous passion, will be as angels of peace and blessing in the home circle.

Has the truth sanctified the receiver? Is he purer, nobler, better, for believing it? The words and deeds are the fruit which testifies whether the mind of God dwells in us, and we are guided by his law. We shall surely deceive ourselves if we think that because we hold certain Bible doctrines firmly, we actually possess the blessings which these doctrines were designed to bestow. The intellect may accept truth in its noblest form; but if this truth exerts no influence on the life and character, it is of no practical value. On the contrary, it proves a delusion if it quiets the conscience while it does not sanctify the soul. A theory of truth may be a beautiful covering to hide the deformity of a carnal heart. This was the sin of Chorazin and Bethsaida, which called forth the denunciation of Christ: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works

had been done in Tyre and Sidon which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.”

Jesus is coming. Great and important events are just before us. Are we ready, waiting and watching? Have we on the wedding garment, the robe of Christ's righteousness? Now is the time to secure this wedding garment. We must make no delay, but open the door of our hearts to the Saviour, who has long stood knocking for admittance. We must be in sympathy with Christ, and, as soldiers of the cross, make personal, interested efforts for the salvation of souls. What a privilege is ours that we may become co-laborers with Christ, and that our efforts may be accepted of God. We may join the conquering army if we will, and may share in its conflicts and its triumphs; but if we refuse, they will move on to final victory, and leave us behind. We each have an account to render at the bar of God, and it is essential for us to cultivate spiritually, to think often of Jesus, and to keep faith alive. Let us ever remember that God sees us. We may say with the psalmist, “I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.” The whole life should be moulded after the divine Pattern, and then we shall see the King in his beauty, and live in his presence through the ceaseless ages of eternity.

May 29, 1884

The Christian's Hope

[Remarks in the 9 o'clock morning meeting at Oakland, Cal., April 21, 1884.]

“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.”

This world is a training-school, and the great object of life should be to obtain a fitness for those glorious mansions that Jesus has gone to prepare. Let us remember that this 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. Each case must bear individual inspection. Each of us must be tested, and found without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

We are living in the great antitypical day of atonement. Jesus is now in the heavenly sanctuary, making reconciliation for the sins of his people, and the judgment of the righteous dead has been going on almost forty years. How soon the cases of the living will come in review before this tribunal we know not; but we do know that we are living in the closing scenes of earth's history, standing, as it were, on the very borders of the eternal world. It is important that each of us inquire, How stands my case in the courts of Heaven? Will my sins be blotted out? Am I defective in character, and so blinded to these defects by the customs and opinions of the world, that sin does not appear to me to be as exceedingly offensive to God as it really is? It is no time now to allow our minds to be absorbed with the things of earth, while we give only occasional thoughts to God, and make but slight preparation for the country to which we are journeying.

In the typical day of atonement, every man was required to afflict his soul before God. He was not to afflict the souls of others, but the work was between God and his own soul. The same work of self-examination and humiliation is required of each of us now; and I entreat you to make thorough work

for eternity. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near." Precious, golden moments which should be spent in seeking the inward adorning of a meek and quiet spirit, are frittered away in adorning the dress, and in other trifling matters not at all essential to comfort.

We should choose the society most favorable to our spiritual advancement, and avail ourselves of every help within our reach; for Satan will oppose many hindrances to make our progress toward Heaven as difficult as possible. We may be placed in trying positions, for many cannot have their surroundings what they would; but we should not voluntarily expose ourselves to influences that are unfavorable to the formation of Christian character. When duty calls us to do this, we should be doubly watchful and prayerful, that, through the grace of Christ, we may stand uncorrupted. Lot chose Sodom as a place of residence, because he looked more to the temporal advantages he would gain than to the moral influences that would surround himself and his family. What did he gain so far as the things of this world are concerned? His possessions were destroyed, part of his children perished in the destruction of that wicked city, his wife was turned to a pillar of salt by the way, and he himself was saved so as by fire. Nor did the evil results of his selfish choice end here; but the moral corruption of the place was so interwoven with the character of his children that they could not distinguish between good and evil, sin and righteousness.

It will not answer to follow our own judgment and inclination in choosing our surroundings. We should seek counsel of God, and let him lead. We drive holy angels from our homes, and displease God, when we place ourselves and families in an atmosphere of unbelief. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate," is his command; and he will not alter his word to suit the convenience of any. Many fail to realize that their physical and mental powers are not their own, to be devoted exclusively to their selfish interest in the accumulation of property. They place themselves in positions favorable for worldly gain, and as a consequence amass wealth; but it is at the expense of their eternal interests. Had they exercised true wisdom, they would have gained less earthly substance, but made sure of a title to the immortal inheritance. Like Lot, they may be stripped of their earthly treasure, and barely save their own souls. Their life-work is lost; their lives are a miserable failure. They are not rich toward God. They have not laid up treasure in the bank of Heaven. Instead, they have laid up treasure on earth, just the thing that Jesus warned them not to do; and their heart is on their treasure, just as he told them it would be. Let us be willing to become pilgrims and strangers here, that we may gain a better country, even a heavenly.

The way of the cross is an onward, upward path. As you advance, seeking the things that are above, you will necessarily leave in the distance the things that belong to the world. The conduct and disposition must be in harmony with God's requirements. We can reach this standard; for he would not enjoin upon us an impossible task. When tempted to speak harshly or impatiently, resist the suggestion of the adversary. Do not gratify him by speaking his words, or manifesting the spirit which pleases him. The truth that commends itself to your conscience will consume and destroy, or it will sanctify and transform the soul. The word of God is our guide and counselor. We must have it in our heart; for the heart is the mainspring of action. By becoming familiar with the words of life, we shall be able to use them skillfully in our warfare against Satan. While the hands are engaged in labor, the soul may receive rich comfort from the promises of God.

"Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price." Your physical and mental powers belong to God, and should be used in his service. There are souls to save; there is earnest work to be done for the

Master; and half-hearted, indolent efforts will not be accepted. As faithful servants, we should inquire, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Send me any way, with any message of mercy thou shalt choose." No longer rob God of the service that belongs to him, but yield your powers to be controlled by his spirit. You need the transforming grace of Christ; you need his fashioning hand laid upon you, that your wills, and even your thoughts, may be brought into subjection to the will of God.

We must learn to pray without ceasing. Wherever we are, our thoughts may be a prayer to God. Nehemiah, standing before the idolatrous king, was of a sad countenance as he thought of the city of his fathers' sepulchers lying waste. And when the king, learning the cause of his sadness, asked him, "For what dost thou make request?" he did not venture to reply until he had first darted a petition to the living God, the God of wisdom and grace. Nehemiah felt that he had a sacred trust to fulfill which required help from the king, and everything depended upon addressing him in a right manner and striking the right chord. In that brief prayer, Nehemiah pressed into the presence of the King of kings, and enlisted on his side a power that can turn hearts as the rivers of water are turned. And he says, "The king granted me according to the good hand of my God upon me." The Lord moved upon the heart of the king, and Nehemiah received greater favors than he had dared to hope for.

Nehemiah could not thus readily have found access to God, had he not been accustomed to prayer, and to dependence upon divine strength. We have the same source of help. In the affairs of daily life, in business transactions, and when brought into unexpected difficulties, we too may telegraph our silent petitions to the God of Heaven, and receive aid. All Heaven is interested in our welfare; every provision has been made for us to gain strength. We have everything to make us thankful and glad. Then let us not talk of our weakness and discouragements, but build one another up by our words of courage and faith.

We are living in an important and eventful age. We are almost home. Soon the many mansions that our Saviour has gone to prepare, will burst upon our sight. Let us shake off the stupor that oppresses us. Let us study the Bible more, that we may know for ourselves the great landmarks we are passing. We need deeper draughts from the well of Bethlehem, that we may refresh our own souls and refresh others. We should be more earnest and persevering to save those with whom we associate. This work rests not alone upon ministers; every one who has named the name of Christ should be a co-laborer with him. Why do we not show the unconverted that we love them? Why do not our tongues speak in words of affectionate entreaty to win them to Christ? Why do we not oftener speak words of praise and gratitude to God for the rich and abundant promises he has left on record in his word? We may now have in our hearts joy and peace that is unspeakable and full of glory; and soon, at the coming of Christ, the prize that lies at the end of the Christian race will be ours to enjoy throughout ceaseless ages.

June 5, 1884

Importance of Cherishing Light

[Remarks in the 6 o'clock morning meeting at Oakland, Cal., April 22, 1884.]

Jesus said to his disciples: "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods

came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.”

In this text is shown the difference between the doers of Christ's word and those who are merely idle hearers. Jesus taught by symbols. He illustrated his lessons by familiar objects in nature, that whenever his hearers should see these objects, the lesson might be suggested to their minds. The lily of the valley, the grass of the field, the springing grain, the singing birds, and even the homely scenes in a fisherman's life, became silent but impressive preachers of the word of life. A high standard was kept before the disciples. They were taught that a pure faith would purify and ennoble them; and that unless their righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, they should in no case enter the kingdom of Heaven.

Peter, John and Judas are representative men, types of two classes of hearers. They each had the privilege of associating with Christ and learning of him; but how different were the characters they developed! Peter and John were doers of the word, and their lives were molded by the instructions of the Master. Judas also heard his teachings on the very points where he was deficient. The leading traits in the character of Judas were covetousness and self-esteem. Jesus knew of his dishonest practices, and understood the danger to which he was exposed; yet notwithstanding his defects, he was chosen as one of the twelve who were to be intimately associated with the world's Redeemer. Jesus would give this erring one every opportunity to reform. The light should shine upon his heart; he should see the contrast between truth and error, and decide intelligently between them. Jesus did not openly rebuke him, but gave lessons that he might apply to his own case if he sincerely wished to reform. Selfishness, covetousness, and dishonesty were presented in their true character, so that he could see how offensive these traits were in the sight of God.

When the teachings of Christ reproved Peter and John, they were careful to reform. The transforming grace of God was in their hearts. Their minds expanded, and day by day they grew more like the divine Teacher. Judas, on the contrary, was proud, self-sufficient, and independent. Although enjoying the exalted privilege of being closely connected with Christ, the words of life found no lodgment in his heart; and he went on from one degree of unbelief to another until his character was firmly fixed in the wrong direction. He might have had the wisdom that comes from above to guide him into all truth; but he rejected the counsel of God, and the evil he had cherished gained an overmastering influence, bringing soul and body into subjection to the cruel power of Satan.

Judas had excellent traits of character, and might have been a great blessing to the church had he been steadfast, and resisted temptation; but he was treasurer, and this position gave him an opportunity to practice dishonesty. Had he been humble and teachable, he would have set about the work of reform when his conscience was awakened, and he saw the sinfulness of his course. But he sinned against light and knowledge; and instead of being softened and subdued by the lessons of Christ, his heart became harder and more unimpressible.

We may learn an important lesson from the experience of Judas. We may be called disciples of Christ; we may hold our religious convictions firmly, and be able to present clear, connected arguments in their support; and yet, like Judas, we may hold the truth in unrighteousness. If we

would be sanctified through the truth, we must hold it in the love and fear of God. It is a duty we owe to ourselves to cultivate self-reliance and independence of character; but these traits must be blended with meekness and humility. When we trust to our own wisdom and judgment, as a large number do, we are in the sure path to shame and confusion of face. It is only through divine grace that we can overcome the defects in our character; but unless we make continued efforts to subdue them, they will become stronger, as in the case of Judas. Every indulgence in sin prepares the way for renewed and excessive indulgence, until at last the tempter has full control of the mind.

After God has shown individuals their sins and given them grace to overcome, and his Spirit has been long striving with them, he will not work a miracle to prevent the sure result of resisting that Spirit and persisting in a wrong course. There is a boundary to his grace and mercy; and when this boundary is passed, the aid of his Spirit, so wickedly refused and insulted, is withdrawn, and the soul is given over to the worst of tyrants,—the power of a perverted will. If we are closely connected with sacred things, and yet do not realize their importance, the heart will become so hard that the most earnest appeals will not move it to contrition. We must cherish every ray of light. We must work intelligently to form our characters after the divine model, continually striving, with all the powers God has given us, to reach the high standard set before us in his word.

Testimonies are borne in these meetings that the truth is precious, the truth is everything. So it is; but the truth is nothing to any of us unless we are sanctified through it. Has its influence made you better men and women? Has it improved your life and character? Unless the truth is accomplishing the object for which it is designed in transforming you into the image of Christ, it were better if you had never professed to believe it; for you will mislead others. The salvation of our own souls and the souls of those with whom we associate is of the first importance, while the things of this life are secondary; but Satan is ever scheming to reverse this order, and interpose the world between the soul and its eternal interests.

Many do not exalt the truth, but degrade it by their unchristian course. They neglect to improve the privilege given them to become acquainted with Christ and his love. This knowledge is a sure defense; but whatever tends to draw the mind from the love of Jesus, whether it be the deceitful heart within or an ensnaring world without, is of Satan, and will bring darkness and death.

Some who are present this morning must know that they have uncorrected faults which they are excusing and cherishing. Dear brethren and sisters, you cannot have a more favorable time to confess these faults one to another and pray one for another, than in this meeting. Jesus is present; but evil angels are here also to preoccupy the field. They will endeavor to gain an entrance to the heart by suggesting doubts, so that no permanent good impressions shall be made. Shall we allow them to have the victory? We see how it was with Judas. One neglect to heed the words of Christ prepared the way for another. The first neglect was a seed which produced its harvest in resistance to the Spirit of God; and with each admonition that he slighted, he became less inclined to appreciate and cherish the lessons that gave him a knowledge of himself.

God sends messages of instruction, of reproof, of warning. Do not flatter yourself that he does not denounce the particular sins that you love. Do not imagine that by some means you can enter into life without being free from moral pollution. If we would live with Jesus in the mansions that he has gone to prepare, we must be like him here in this world. We must be diligent to set our hearts in order. Let us greatly fear self-deception. Let us cover up nothing, but be true to our own souls. Let us

study to have the meekness and humility of Christ. An opportunity is now afforded us to become pure in heart and spotless in character. Though the enemy presses in his temptations, coming in upon us like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him. We may find a present help in Jesus; but we must seek this help through earnest, persevering prayer. In the closet, in the family circle, as we walk the streets, and while our hands engage in labor, we may pray, and the Lord will hear us.

There is no excuse for continuing in sin. No man is obliged to do evil, and be lost. Every one who perishes destroys his own soul. The provisions of grace are ample. Jesus is pleading in our behalf, and there is mercy for even the most guilty and sinful. Let us take hold of the strength of Jesus. He loves us with a love that is inexpressible; let us respond to that love.

June 12, 1884

Value of Cheerful Service

“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

The Lord looks with approval upon the works of his faithful servants. He says of the church of Ephesus, “I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience;” for my name's sake thou “hast labored, and hast not fainted.” But while he takes account of faithful service, he is no less exact to mark neglect of duty or its unwilling performance. It has always been the duty of God's chosen people to labor unselfishly; but some neglect the work they ought to do, and others are overburdened to make up for their deficiencies. If all would cheerfully do their part, they would be sustained; but those who complain and murmur at every step will receive neither help nor reward.

God was displeased with the children of Israel because they murmured against him, and against Moses, whom he had sent to be their deliverer. In a marvelous manner he brought them out from their bondage in the land of Egypt, that he might elevate and ennoble them, and make them a praise in the earth. But there were difficulties to be encountered, and weariness and privations to be endured. It was necessary for them to bear these hardships. God was bringing them from a state of degradation, and fitting them to occupy an honorable place among the nations, and to receive important and sacred trusts.

They did not consider that they were receiving everything that was of value. They forgot their bitter service in Egypt. They forgot the goodness and power of God displayed in their behalf in their deliverance from bondage. They forgot how their children were spared when the destroying angel passed over Egypt. They forgot the grand exhibition of divine power at the Red Sea, when Jehovah proclaimed, “Here shall thy proud waves be stayed,” and the waters were rolled together, forming a solid wall. They forgot that while they had crossed safely in the path that had been opened for them, the armies of their enemies, attempting to follow them, were overwhelmed by the waters of the sea. They only saw and felt their present inconveniences and trials; and instead of saying, “God has done great things for us; whereas we were slaves, he is making of us a great nation,” they talked of the hardness of the way, and wondered when their weary pilgrimage would end.

We are exhorted not to murmur as they murmured. But many whom God has permitted to become co-laborers with him, perhaps has even exalted to high positions of trust, forget that he is specially honoring them. They are weary, and they make themselves miserable by letting their minds constantly dwell upon their weariness. They torment themselves with fears, forebodings, morbid fancies, and borrowed troubles; and, forgetting the goodness and mercy of God, they pass many sad hours complaining of the trials they have to bear. They become so gloomy that no circumstances, however favorable, can make them happy, for the spirit of happiness is not in them.

God does not bind upon any one burdens so heavy that at every step he must complain of the load he is obliged to bear. It is the friction, and not the constant motion that wears the machinery. It is the continual worry, and not the work they do, that is killing these persons. They covet some blessing, either real or imaginary, which is just beyond their reach; but if they were to gain this cherished object, it would only excite a desire for something else. The present is clouded because they under-value the good that they enjoy. They look away from the honors they possess that they have not earned, and the love that they have not merited, and want to stand a little higher. They cherish the disagreeable, and by their thoughts and conversation, excite a nervous irritability which lies at the foundation of a diseased imagination and real suffering. God does not propose to work a miracle for this class. He is not pleased or glorified when his sons and daughters, members of the royal family, take this course; for they neither enjoy rest and peace in his love themselves nor permit others to do so.

Let none of us think that our work is greater and more taxing than any others are doing. This same work has been done in the past, and can be done again. God is not dependent on any of us; and as soon as we flatter ourselves that his work will not move forward without us, that our labor is of such consequence that it cannot be dispensed with, then he will show us our mistake and folly. He can work by few or by many. He can take men in humble positions, and educate them to become light-bearers in the world. Let us who are honored of God by having a connection with his work, feel our own littleness, and the great honor the Lord bestows upon us in accepting us as his co-laborers. "When one asked a noted philosopher what the great God was doing, he replied, 'His whole employment is to lift up the humble, and to cast down the proud.'"

Sometimes the spirit of fretting and complaining invades the domestic circle. The will may be crossed in little things which a person of a cheerful spirit would scarcely notice; but the fretter is annoyed and chafed as though he had suffered an aggravated grievance, and the passionate reproaches he utters against the person, who, he thinks, has committed some blunder, are scarcely less sinful than swearing. He does not consider that he makes more grievous mistakes every day. Men and women who fret and chafe will lose the affections of their friends, for they are forever stinging some one. Whatever their position, however exalted their profession, they can have no decided influence for good until they remedy this defect. They have complained long enough to test the matter, and prove that complaints do not make them any happier or their way any easier.

The complainer dwells in an atmosphere of gloom and doubt. Instead of healing difficulties, he irritates them; instead of repairing evils, he creates them. Those who have tact in governing their families or controlling the minds of men, are generally calm, prompt, resolute. They show no weak selfishness; but they have a strong, uncomplaining spirit, and are always ready to speak a kind, encouraging word.

Wherever in the providence of God we may be placed, whatever the work that is given us to do, God is honored by whole-hearted, cheerful service. He is pleased when we take up our work with gratitude, rejoicing that he has accounted us worthy to be co-laborers with him. None need be idlers; for all around us there is earnest work to be done. The Christian rule of service is, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." God will help those who are "not slothful in business," but "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;" and through faith and patience they will "inherit the promises."

There is peace and contentment in the service of Christ. As he was about to leave his disciples, he made them this parting promise,—a promise that has been fulfilled to his faithful ones through all the ages,—"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you." He invites, "Come unto me, all ye that labor 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." It is the want of this meekness and lowliness of heart that causes so much unrest and uneasiness, so much perplexity and fear, so many imaginary ills.

Make it a rule to refrain from fretting, and offer praise to God. We are not obliged to carry our burdens in our own strength. If we have Jesus for our helper, we may say with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." Jesus has promised, "My grace is sufficient for you." There is a transforming power in love. When the love of God rules in the heart, it brings all our powers into obedience to his will, and enlists them in willing, active service.

June 19, 1884

Faith the Christian's Privilege

Many who are sincerely seeking for holiness of heart and purity of life are perplexed and discouraged. They are constantly looking to themselves, and lamenting their lack of faith; and because of this lack, they feel that they cannot claim the blessing of God. These persons mistake feeling for faith. They look away from the simplicity of true faith, and thus bring great darkness upon their souls. Instead of thinking of self, they should train their minds to dwell upon the mercy and goodness of God. They should recount his promises, believing that he will fulfill his word. When we repent of our past transgressions of his law, and resolve to render obedience in the future, we should believe that God for Christ's sake accepts us, and forgives our sins.

At times a deep sense of our unworthiness will send a thrill of terror through the soul; but this is no evidence that God has changed toward us, or we toward him. We may not feel today the peace and joy which we felt yesterday; but by faith we should grasp the hand of Christ, and trust him as fully in the darkness as in the light. No effort should be made to rein the mind up to an intensity of emotion; but we should faithfully perform every duty, and then calmly rest in the promises of God.

Satan may whisper, "You are too great a sinner for Christ to save." But while you acknowledge that you are sinful and unworthy, meet the tempter with the cry, "By virtue of the atonement I claim Jesus as my Saviour. I trust not to my own merits, but to the precious blood of Christ, which cleanses me. This moment I hang my helpless soul on him."

Be not discouraged because your heart seems hard. Every obstacle, every internal foe, only increases your need of Christ. He came to take away the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh. Look to him for grace to overcome your special faults, to put away every darling sin.

If we would permit our minds to dwell more upon Christ and the heavenly world, we should find a powerful stimulus and support in our warfare against sin. By faith we may look upon the crowns laid up for those who shall overcome; we may listen to the exultant song of the redeemed: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power;" "for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." Pride and love of the world will lose their power as we contemplate the infinite love of Christ, and the glories of that better land so soon to be our home.

An unyielding trust, a firm reliance upon Christ, will bring peace and joy to the soul. But let none imagine that without earnest effort on their part they can retain 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 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 character of Christ should be often the subject of our thoughts and our conversation; and each day some time should be especially devoted to prayerful meditation upon these sacred themes.

Let none deceive themselves with the belief that God will accept and bless them while they are trampling upon one of his requirements. The willful commission of a known sin silences the witnessing voice of the Spirit, and separates the soul from God. Jesus cannot abide in the heart that disregards the divine law. God will honor those only who honor him.

"To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are." If we indulge anger, lust, covetousness, hatred, selfishness, or any other sin, we become servants of sin. "No man can serve two masters." If we serve sin, we cannot serve Christ. The Christian will feel the promptings of sin; but he will keep up a constant warfare against it. Here is where Christ's help is needed. Human weakness becomes united to divine strength, and faith exclaims, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Christian life must be a life of constant progression. Peter sets before us the successive steps, in these words: "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus." "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Here is a course by which we may be assured that we shall never fall. Those who are thus working upon the plan of addition in obtaining the Christian graces, have the assurance that God will work upon the plan of multiplication in granting them the gifts of his Spirit. Says Peter, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord."

Our Saviour claims all there is of us; he asks our first and holiest thoughts, our purest and most intense affection. His love is infinitely more tender and self-denying than a mother's love. The price paid for our ransom testifies to his estimation of the value of the human soul. Then what ingratitude do we manifest when we withhold from him our affections and our service. Is it too much to give ourselves, our time and talents, to Him who has sacrificed all for us? Can we choose the friendship of the world before the immortal honors which Christ proffers,—“to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne”?

The apostle Paul was highly honored of God; in holy vision he looked upon scenes whose glories he was not permitted to reveal. Yet this did not lead him to boastfulness or self-confidence. He realized the importance of constant watchfulness and self-denial. “I keep my body under,” he says, “and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”

Paul suffered for the truth's sake; and yet we hear no complaint from his lips. As he reviews his life of toil and care and sacrifice, he says, “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” The shout of victory from God's faithful servant comes down the line to our time: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Though Paul was at last confined in a Roman prison, shut away from the light and air of heaven, cut off from his active labors in the gospel field, and momentarily expecting to be condemned to death, he did not yield to doubt or despondency. From that gloomy dungeon came his dying testimony, full of a sublime faith and courage that has inspired the hearts of saints and martyrs in all succeeding ages: “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

The glorious reward that awaits this hero of faith,—a crown of righteousness, and eternal life in the presence of God,—may be won by each of us. Jesus and holy angels are waiting to give us the help we need. Every prayer sent up in faith from an honest heart will be heard, and the petitioner will have his request when he needs the blessing most. Sometimes we ask for things that are not for our own good or the glory of God. When this is so, our wise and good Father hears our prayers, but gives us nothing hurtful. He will guide our feet. By divine grace, all who will may climb the shining steps from earth to Heaven, and at last, “with songs and everlasting joy,” enter through the gates into the city of God.

June 26, 1884

Palm-Tree Christians

“The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree.” “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”

These texts describe the happy state of him whose soul is rooted and grounded in Christ. But there is always danger of being satisfied with a superficial work; there is always danger that souls will not anchor themselves in God, but be content to drift hither and thither, the sport of Satan's temptations. “Enter ye in at the strait gate,” says Christ, “for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” The work of the Spirit of God in the heart will develop true penitence, which will not end with confession, but will work a decided reformation in the daily life. There will be manifested an earnestness, a perseverance, and a determination that can be properly represented by agonizing. Many professed Christians greatly need just this experience.

Are you beginning to see the defects in your character? Do not feel helpless and discouraged. Look to Jesus, who knows your every weakness and pities your every infirmity. He came “not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” It is no disgrace to confess our sins and forsake them. The disgrace rests upon those who know their sins, but continue in them, and grieve the dear Saviour by their crooked paths. A knowledge of our wrongs should be more highly prized than a happy flight of feeling; for it is evidence that the Spirit of God is striving with us and that angels are round about us. Let the heart-searching work go forward; let it be deep and earnest, until every barrier is removed, and your heart is opened to welcome the messenger of pardon and peace, that has long been waiting to bring light and joy and gladness. In true contrition for sin, come to the foot of the cross, and there leave your burdens; come exercising repentance toward God because you have broken his law, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ to pardon your transgressions and reconcile you to the Father. Believe what God says; take his promises to your heart.

It is Christian's privilege to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree.” See the weary traveler toiling over the hot sands of the desert, with no shelter to protect him from the rays of a tropical sun. His water supply fails, and he has nothing to slake his burning thirst. His tongue becomes swollen; he staggers like a drunken man. Visions of home and friends pass before his mind, as he believes himself ready to perish in the terrible desert. Suddenly those in advance send forth a shout of joy. In the distance, looming up out of the dreary, sandy waste, is a palm tree, green and flourishing. Hope quickens his pulses. That which gives vigor and freshness to the palm tree, will cool the fevered pulses, and give life to those who are perishing with thirst.

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. The Christian is ever pointing his fellow-men to Jesus, who invites, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” This fountain never fails us; we may draw, and draw again.

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. Says Christ, "Ye are the light of the world." We must gather the divine rays from the Sun of Righteousness, and reflect them to the world. In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, we must show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Nothing but a deep personal experience will enable us to stand the test of the trials and temptations we shall meet in the Christian warfare. Too often we feel well when everything goes smoothly; but when doubts assail the soul, and Satan whispers his suggestions, our defense is gone, and we yield quickly to the arts of the tempter, with scarcely an effort to resist and repulse him. It is not enough to have good impulses. The soul must be barricaded by prayer and study of the Scriptures. Armed with these weapons, Jesus encountered our wily foe on the field of battle, and overcame him. We may all conquer in his strength; but it will not answer for us to suppose that we can dispense with his help. He says, "Without me ye can do nothing." But no truly humble soul who walks in the light as Christ is in the light, will be ensnared by Satan's deceptive devices.

All self-confidence, all boasting, all pride of talent, must be yielded, and the soul must fall broken on the Rock Christ Jesus. Those who have a proud spirit, and feel that they are capable of doing a great work, will be left to their own weak strength, to fall into grievous sins. They do not realize what a pure, virtuous, and holy character they must possess if they would stand without fault before the throne of God. Self must be crucified. There must be a thorough transformation of character. The clear, sharp testimony of living truth will separate the wheat from the chaff, the half-hearted from the humble and devoted.

There never was a time of greater danger to the church than the present, and many will not be true to their own souls. They will not be sanctified through the truth. They have lamps, but no oil in their vessels to replenish them, and their light goes out in darkness. Eli and his sons trusted to the ark, the symbol of the divine presence, while they were transgressing the holy law enshrined in the ark, and their sins were separating them from God. As a consequence of their presumption, both the sons of Eli were slain, and God permitted the ark to pass into the hands of the enemies of his people. Some in our day are making a similar mistake in trusting to their profession while they are transgressing the holy requirements of God's law. Such are asleep to their true condition.

The apostle Paul exhorts careless and unconcerned professors: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Christ, the True Witness, would break the slumbers of his ease-loving people. His voice is heard addressing them: "I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." I will not take your names into my lips, for you are unworthy. I am ashamed to call you brethren. "Be zealous therefore, and repent." "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."

Our only safety is in Christ. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Those who enter Heaven will not scale its walls by their own righteousness, nor will the gates be opened to them for costly offerings of gold and silver; but they will gain an entrance to the many mansions of the Father's house through the merits of the cross of Christ. Jesus is the ladder by which every soul must mount who would climb from earth to Heaven. But there is round after round of

painful ascent; for our characters must be brought into harmony with the law of God, and every advance step in this direction requires self-denial.

The prize before us will amply repay every effort that we make to gain it. "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." "As the days of a tree," says the Lord through his prophet, shall be "the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." As by an eye of faith we view the glories of that better land, the saints' everlasting inheritance, we rejoice, clinging to the merits of our crucified Redeemer. Love kindles in our hearts toward Him "who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all," and faith grasps the promise, "How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Thus Jesus becomes the medium of communication between Heaven and our souls, and holy angels are sent to minister unto us. And while these divine messengers are striving to lead sinners to plant their feet on the ladder that extends from earth to Heaven, let us be co-laborer's with them, and urge all who will to climb the shining way.

July 3, 1884

Business and Religion

"Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," is the exhortation of Paul to his Roman brethren. The first part of this injunction is quoted by many as an excuse for continually overtaxing their mental and physical powers in the pursuit of gain, while they entirely overlook the requirement to be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

No one has a right to load himself down with a multitude of cares. However lawful the business prosecuted may be of itself, however honorably it may be conducted, it must not be allowed to unduly absorb the mind and occupy the time. God will not accept a divided heart. His law requires supreme love to God, and unselfish love to our neighbor. If men and women allow mind and body to be so worn down by constant and excessive labor that this law is disregarded, they commit sin. They are serving other gods before the God of Heaven; for when some other object usurps the devotion that belongs to God, that object becomes an idol; and that to which is given the freshest hours of the day, the closest thought and study, the greatest skill, is that which is dearest and most valued.

There will be temptations to worldliness while society is in its present state,—while gold is power, and a man is measured by his wealth and position. Many are fascinated by these alluring temptations. They see that the possession of wealth and honor gives power and influence, and they would rather be ranked among those who enjoy the luxury and position that money gives, than among those who possess true godness and nobility of character.

There are many professed Christians who are selfish and grasping, and who love themselves better than they love God or their neighbor. Often they are even more grasping than those who make no pretensions to godliness. They appear before the world almost entirely in the character of business men, as speculators grasping for worldly gain. They are not known as humble, devoted, self-sacrificing Christians, true-hearted and kind in all the relations of life. The plainest and most positive injunctions of the word of God are deliberately set aside for worldly wisdom and maxims. They say, "God does not expect us to carry strict religious principles into our business affairs. Business is business, and religion is religion, reserved for the church and the Sabbath."

The man who takes this selfish course denies the faith, and strengthens and confirms the ungodly in their impenitence by making them believe that religion is all a pretense. His soul is laid a manacled victim on the altar of mammon. He does not seek "first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." and he cannot claim the promise that all things needful shall be added unto him.

Gold is not the standard of judging with God. Jesus asks, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Surely this is an exorbitant price to pay for the fleeting treasures of earth. Success here is terrible failure. He who judges correctly in the light of eternity, calls those who are rich in worldly possessions while they are not rich toward God, poor, wretched, blind, and miserable.

Sometimes the family is neglected. Parents do not deal faithfully with the souls committed to their trust. They do not take time to give their little ones the discipline they need to fit them to shine as jewels in the kingdom of God. Morning and evening, by earnest prayer and persevering faith, Christian parents should make a hedge about their children. They should patiently instruct them,—kindly and untiringly teach them how to live in order to please God.

Too often parents feel that they have no time for morning and evening prayer. In the morning the workmen must be hurried into the field, that the greatest amount of labor may be performed, and the service of God is not considered essential. They cannot spare a few minutes to be spent in thanksgiving to God for his abundant mercies,—for the blessed sunshine and the showers of rain, which cause vegetation to flourish, and for the guardianship of holy angels. They have no time to offer importunate prayer for divine help and guidance, and for the abiding presence of Jesus in the household. They go forth to labor as the ox or horse goes, without one thought of God or Heaven. They have souls so precious that rather than permit them to be hopelessly lost, the Son of God gave his life to ransom them from the power of the grave; but they have no more appreciation of his great goodness than have the beasts that perish.

Dear reader, will you not candidly and prayerfully consider how the moments are passing in your busy life? Remember that God requires your undivided affections, and that it is your duty to love your neighbor as yourself, and to labor unselfishly for his salvation. Your ability, tact, and talent should be employed to induce your fellow-men to enlist in the service of the Redeemer. Reckon up the hours spent in selfish pursuits when they should have been given to better purposes, and see how your account stands in Heaven. Deal honestly and truly with your soul. Have you not long been guilty of robbery toward God,—that God who constantly employs all the agencies of nature to work in your behalf, and who poured out to you all the treasures of Heaven in one gift, that of his own beloved Son?

There is no virtue in indolence. The idle are encompassed by as great perils as beset those that are overtaxed with care. While excessive labor destroys physical and mental vigor, do-nothings rust from inaction. "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," says the apostle. Here we shall find the straight, safe path, which escapes alike the entanglements of worldliness and the evils resulting from want of occupation.

Why will not men and women pursue a sensible course? They need employment, but should not permit themselves to become surfeited or drunken with the cares of this life. To be surfeited is to be in a feverish state, constantly anxious, hurried, unduly excited. The alcoholic draught deprives a man

of reason, so that his actions are wild, inconsistent, and unreasonable. The drunkard does not, with calm judgment, act with reference to his own best interest, neither does the man who, drunken with the spirit of the world, barter eternal interests for the things of time.

There are high and holy themes that should engage our attention. We are Christ's property, the purchase of his blood; and he has work for every one of us. All our skill and energy should not be devoted to worldly pursuits, so that we have no vigor, no clear, sharp intellect, to give to his service. The disobedient and ungrateful, who will not respond to his claims, will in no wise be excused because they did not enlist under his banner. It is the duty of all, by a well ordered life and a godly conversation, to present Christ to the world in his true character, as the self-denying, spotless Lamb of God.

Every one has a cherished object of pursuit. The lover of pleasure has an uneasy, restless, unsatisfied desire for enjoyment. He puts God out of his thoughts, and dismisses every duty that is not pleasant. He learns to depend on excitement, and is uneasy without it. His mind is ever on the stretch to invent new amusements and diversions. He drinks in iniquity, and poisons his soul by his unlawful pursuits.

The covetous man engages with his whole soul in his chosen enterprise. He may make a success of life so far as this world is able to judge. While many fail, perhaps are even beggared, he may amass wealth; but he is more to be pitied than the victims of his avarice, for he has lost his soul in an effort to grasp shadows.

The ambitious man seeks for position, honor, and power. He gains his object, and sinks into the grave. The world applauds him, and calls him a successful man; but, weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, he is pronounced wanting, and it is too late to redeem his failure. He has gratified vanity and chased illusions, and in the books of Heaven eternal loss is put down opposite his name.

Thus all have some engrossing object to absorb the mind, and often this cherished object is allowed to separate the soul from God. Jesus is acquainted with the desires of the human heart, and the Bible is given us to direct them into the proper channel. This holy word does not forbid activity; it does not leave men to lead aimless lives; it presents before them objects worthy of their best efforts. The Bible shows the pleasure-seeker the path of peace and joy; it directs the aspirations of the ambitious. If wealth is the object of desire, it unfolds treasures that will never disappoint,—unsearchable riches, imperishable as the throne of the Eternal.

The psalmist observed the righteous and the wicked. He saw the difference in their course of conduct, and in the principles that governed them. Of the worldling he says, "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." But of the righteous he says, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace."

July 17, 1884

"Walk in the Light"

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."
Ignorance is no excuse for error or sin, when there is every opportunity to know the will of God. A

man is traveling, and comes to a place where there are several roads, and a guide-board indicating where each one leads. If he disregards the guide-board, and takes whichever road seems to him to be right, he may be ever so sincere, but will in all probability find himself on the wrong road.

God's word is given us that we may become acquainted with its teachings. We there read that if we do his will, we shall know of the doctrine. Ignorance will not excuse young or old, or release them from the punishment due for the transgression of God's law, because there is in their hands a faithful presentation of that law and of its principles and its claims. It is not enough to have good intentions; it is not enough to do what a man thinks is right, or what the minister tells him is right. His soul's salvation is at stake, and he should search the Scriptures for himself. However strong may be his convictions, however confident he may be that the minister knows what is truth, this is not his foundation. He has a chart pointing out every waymark on the heavenward journey, and he ought not to guess at anything, but to know what is truth. He should search the Scriptures on bended knees; morning, noon, and night, prayer should ascend from secret places, and a continual prayer should arise from his heart that God will guide him into all truth.

The word of God gives men no liberty to set up a standard of righteousness of their own, as many do who claim to be without sin. They do not compare their characters with the great standard, the law of Jehovah. While they are holy, judged by their own imperfect standard, the Scriptures present them as sinful Pharisees, under the condemnation of the law of God, which they transgress daily. They walk after the imagination of their own heart, and follow their own devices. Yet many of these persons are sincere. They think they are right; for "there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Feeling is no criterion for any one; the assertions of men are no evidence of truth. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

Men present many theories and doctrines, and this is the reason that so many claim to be sinless while they are transgressors of the law. Should they look into God's great mirror, they would start back with horror. They would say with Paul, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Oh, how many forsake the "Fountain of living waters," and hew them out "cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." This is a correct representation of the spurious holiness so prevalent in the world today. But God's way is the humble way of penitence, faith, and obedience, and no human substitute will be accepted. "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." But all this vain boasting of holiness is not of God.

The Lord declared to ancient Israel, "Ye shall not do every man what is right in his own eyes;" but ye shall "observe and hear all these words which I command thee." And he promised them, "if thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and will give ear to his commandments," he "shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he swore unto thy fathers," and "thou shalt be blessed above all people."

Will you, dear reader, examine critically the reasons of your faith by the law and the testimony? Satan has many by-paths strewn with tempting flowers, that lead directly to the broad way to death and hell. Our only safety is in the path of obedience. Men cannot follow their own desires, and be right. They not only involve their own souls in ruin, but by their example they imperil others also.

God is exact to mark iniquity. Sins of thoughtlessness, negligence, forgetfulness, and even ignorance, have been visited by some of the most wonderfully marked manifestations of his displeasure. Many who have suffered terrible punishment for their sins, might have pleaded as plausibly as do those of today who fall into similar errors, that they meant no harm, and some would even say that they thought they were doing God service; but the light shone on them, and they disregarded it.

Let us look at some of the examples found in sacred history. Assisted by his sons, Aaron had offered the sacrifices that God required; and he lifted up his hands and blessed the people. All had been done as God commanded, and he accepted the sacrifice, and revealed his glory in a most remarkable manner; for fire came from the Lord, and consumed the offering upon the altar. The people looked upon this wonderful manifestation of divine power with awe and intense interest. They saw in it a token of his glory and his favor, and they raised a universal shout of praise and adoration, and fell on their faces, as if in the immediate presence of Jehovah.

As the prayers and praise of the people were ascending before God, two of the sons of Aaron took each his censer, and burned fragrant incense thereon, to arise as a sweet odor before God. But they had partaken too freely of wine, and used strange fire, contrary to the Lord's commandment. And the wrath of God was kindled against Nadab and Abihu for their disobedience, and a fire went out from the Lord, and devoured them in the sight of the people. By this judgment God designed to teach the people that they must approach him with reverence and awe, and in his own appointed manner. He is not pleased with partial obedience. It was not enough that in this solemn season of worship nearly everything was done as he commanded.

The Lord sent Samuel to King Saul with a special message. "Go," he said, "and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not, but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." Saul was faithful and zealous in performing a part of his commission. He smote the Amalekites with a great slaughter; but he took the proposition of the people before the command of God, and spared Agag, the king, and "the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good."

The Lord commanded Saul to "utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed." The Lord knew that this wicked nation would, if it were possible, blot out his people and his worship from the earth; and for this reason he had commanded that even the little children should be cut off. But Saul had spared the king, the most wicked and merciless of them all; one who had hated and destroyed the people of God, and whose influence had been strongest to promote idolatry.

Saul thought he had done all that was essential of that which the Lord commanded him to do. Perhaps he even flattered himself that he was more merciful than his Maker, as do some unbelievers in our day. He met Samuel with the salutation, "Blessed be thou of the Lord; I have performed the commandment of the Lord." But when the prophet asked what meant the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen which he heard, Saul was obliged to confess that the people had taken of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the Lord in Gilgal.

Did the Lord accept this justification of Saul's conduct? Was he pleased with this partial obedience, and willing to pass over the trifle that had been neglected out of so good a motive? Saul did what he

thought was best, and would not the Lord commend such excellent judgment? No. Said Samuel, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king."

These instances show how God looks upon his professed people when they obey part of his commandments while in other respects they follow a course of their own choosing. Let no one flatter himself that a part of God's requirements are nonessential. He has placed no command in his word that men may obey or disobey at will, and not suffer the consequences. If men choose any other path than that of strict obedience, they will find that "the end thereof are the ways of death."

July 24, 1884

"Walk in the Light"

(Concluded.)

Says the psalmist, "The law of the Lord is perfect." It is also changeless, the standard of righteousness, or right-doing, through all the ages. It is "the perfect law of liberty;" hence the happiness of man as well as the glory of God demand that it be respected and obeyed.

God has highly honored his holy law. The ark of the testament, containing the law engraven on tables of stone, was the symbol of his presence with his people. This sacred ark was interwoven with the national history of the Israelites as well as with their religious faith. It was with them in their wanderings in the wilderness; and when the people passed over Jordan to take possession of the promised land, by the command of God the ark was borne by the priests into the midst of the river, and there remained until all Israel had passed over in the path that through the favor of God had been opened for them. It was often borne by the armies of Israel as a token that God was with his people, and made their cause his own. When this was the case, their enemies were terrified; for they knew that nothing could stand before the mighty God of Israel. But if they transgressed that law, they forfeited the divine protection, and were delivered into the hands of their enemies.

In consequence of the wickedness of the people, and because they rashly carried the emblem of his presence into the camp when the Lord was not with them, God gave the children of Israel into the hands of their enemies, the Philistines, and the ark was taken. But the heathen were not permitted to regard the sacred ark of God as a common thing. Dagon, their god, was humbled before it; and in every city where the ark was taken, the people were sorely afflicted. And the Philistines said, "The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us; for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god."

"The Philistines called for the priests and diviners, saying, What shall we do to the ark of the Lord? Tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place." These men counseled the people not to send the ark away empty, but to return a trespass offering with it. Said they: "Ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice that mar the land; and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel; peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land. Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?"

Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch kine, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart." And the Philistines did so; and they put the ark in the new cart, with the jewels of gold for a trespass offering in a coffer beside it.

The kine came with a straight course to Bethshemesh on the borders of Israel, and the men of Bethshemesh offered them as an offering unto the Lord. But when the Israelites, from motives of idle curiosity, looked familiarly into the ark, fifty thousand of them were slain for their rashness. The ark was then taken to Kirjath-jearim, and remained many years in the house of Abinadab.

Then came King David, with thirty thousand chosen men of Israel, to bring it to his own city, with music and rejoicing, with great display and with signal honors. The ark was carried in a new cart; and when they came to a rough place in the road, Uzzah put forth his hand to steady it. God had commanded that no hand but that of a consecrated priest should touch the sacred repository of his law, and special ceremonies of purification and preparation were enjoined; but Uzzah touched it with sinful, unhallowed hand, and was slain before the Lord. "And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me?" And he left the ark in the house of Obed-edom; and the Lord blessed Obed-edom and all his household because of the ark.

Thus God guarded with jealous care the ark that contained his holy law, that all might be deeply impressed with the sacred character of that law. It is no wonder that as the people witnessed the judgments inflicted upon those who despised the law of God or treated it with disrespect, they exclaimed, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?" The law was ordained unto life, and is an expression of the love of God to man. To despise it is to despise its Author; for it partakes of the perfection of the divine character. To the transgressor it becomes, not a savor of life unto life, but of death unto death. Jesus magnified the law and made it honorable, by dying to satisfy its claims. He gave his life an offering for transgressions, that through his righteousness imputed to them, men might be reconciled to God, and escape the punishment due to disobedience.

And yet the law of God is almost universally despised and trampled upon, while human laws are exalted. There is a power that is called in the Scriptures the man of sin, that has thought to change this great standard of righteousness. He has torn the fourth commandment from the bosom of the decalogue, and in place of God's holy Sabbath has substituted one of his own invention. Those who accept this spurious Sabbath do great dishonor to the God of Heaven, and their offense is greatly exaggerated when they not only break the law themselves, but endeavor to lead others to disregard it also.

The Lord has specified that the seventh day is his Sabbath. "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." But a human institution has been made to take the place of the divine; another day has supplanted God's holy, sanctified rest-day. The Christian church accept this day in place of the one God has chosen, and present it to the world to be observed and revered. They thus show that they do not love the law of God, nor prize its righteous, restraining influence.

God has laid down the conditions of salvation. He requires that men keep his commandments as obedient children. The Holy Scriptures are full of lessons showing that God is satisfied with no partial obedience. He does not leave men to rely on their human judgment, and select that portion of his law which they choose to obey. They are required to have correct views of duty. They are not at

liberty to accept what ignorant, sinful, feeble man may suggest, believe, or urge upon them; but they must take God's word, and walk in accordance with his revealed will.

God has given men reason, and the noblest use to which the intellectual faculties can be put is the study of his word. And when through diligent and prayerful application the will of God has been discerned, nothing should be allowed to come in between God and the soul to swerve it from the path of strict obedience. No suggestions of propriety, no motives of expediency, no selfish desire for gain, no fear of loss, dishonor, or reproach, should be considered for a moment. God commands, and that is enough. The light shines, and it is our duty to walk in it. If men substitute human customs and traditions for the precepts of God's law, and proclaim to the world that that law, or any part of that law, is no longer in force, however honest they may be, they are under the condemnation of the law, and will perish as transgressors.

If you accept unpopular truth, ministers may say, "You are too particular. In order to have influence with the world, you must do as the world does." But such men are acting as mouth-piece for Satan. They are preaching a doctrine that pleases him well. No authority of church or State, no decrees of kings or emperors, no commands of bishops or priests, can absolve you from obedience to the law of God, or justify the least departure from his requirements. Finite reasoning must not take the place of simple trust; self-will must not lead us in a course of disobedience.

Do not let the words of men who profess to be wise in the Scriptures deter you from searching them for yourself, or keep you back from obeying the precepts of Jehovah. Do not harbor the thought that some of the things taught in the Bible are nonessential. "To the law and to the testimony" for proof. The problems of duty and destiny become clear only when studied in the light of God's revealed will. Amid the devices of Satan to which we are exposed, and the varied temptations that surround us, we have the sure promise of divine guidance. "Thy word," says David, "is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

July 31, 1884

The Vision at Bethel

[A sermon delivered at the Los Angeles, Cal., camp-meeting, May 10, 1884.]

"And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to Heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it

not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven." Genesis 28:10-17.

Jacob was not perfect in character. He sinned against his father, his brother, his own soul, and against God. Inspiration faithfully records the faults of good men, those who were distinguished by the favor of God; indeed, their faults are much more fully transcribed than their virtues. They were compassed with infirmities; they were assaulted by temptations, and were often overcome by them; but they were willing to learn in the school of Christ. Were these characters presented before us as faultless, it would tend to discourage us in our strivings after righteousness. We should not take pleasure in the faults of others; but it may give us courage to know that men of like passions with ourselves have fought the good fight of faith, and bruised Satan under their feet. The record of their lives may serve as a warning to us. It shows that God will by no means clear the guilty. He sees sin in his most favored ones, and he punishes them even more decidedly than those who have less light and responsibility. But in contrast with the sins and errors of humanity there is presented one perfect character,—that of the Son of God, who clothed his divinity with humanity, and walked a man among the children of men. He is our Pattern, pure, sinless, and undefiled.

Jacob obtained by fraud the blessing designed for his brother. God had promised him the birthright, and the promise would have been fulfilled in good time had he been willing to wait. But like many who now profess to be the children of God, he lacked faith, and thought he must do something himself, instead of submissively leaving the matter in the hands of the Lord. As a result, he was a fugitive from his father's house, hurrying for fear of his life from the rage of his brother, Esau.

As he pursued his lonely way, he was greatly cast down and discouraged. He feared that through his own rash course he had lost the blessing God designed to give him, and that his opportunity was gone forever; and Satan was ready to take advantage of his depression and press in his temptations. Yet God did not utterly forsake Jacob. His mercy was still extended to his erring, distrustful servant, although he would permit afflictions to come upon him until he should learn the lesson of patient submission. The Lord graciously and compassionately revealed just what Jacob needed, a Saviour. He had sinned; but his heart was filled with gratitude as he saw revealed a way by which he could be restored to the favor of God.

Wearied with his journey, the wanderer lay down upon the ground, with a stone for his pillow. And while he slept, the Lord gave him a vision. He beheld a ladder, bright and shining, whose base rested upon earth while the top reached to Heaven. Upon this ladder angels were ascending and descending, and above it was the Lord of glory, who addressed Jacob in words of wonderful encouragement. He assured Jacob that he was under divine guardianship in his absence from home, and that the land whereon he lay as an exile and a fugitive should be given to him and his posterity. The promise given to Abraham was solemnly renewed, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

The Lord knew the evil influences that would surround Jacob, and the perils to which he would be exposed; and the future was opened before him, that, fully understanding the divine purpose with reference to himself, he might be prepared to resist the temptations that would surely come to him alone amid idolaters and scheming men. There would be ever before him the high standard at which he must aim, and the knowledge that through him the purpose of God was reaching its accomplishment would be a constant guard and shield.

Jacob awoke with a solemn sense of the presence of God. "The Lord is in this place," said he, "and I knew it not." Through the Spirit of God, the plan of redemption was revealed to him, not fully, but such parts as it was essential for him to know. The time of Christ's first advent was yet far in the future; but God would not let his servant remain in ignorance of the fact that sinful man had been provided an Advocate with the Father.

Up to the time of man's rebellion against the government of God, there had been free communion between God and man. Heaven and earth had been connected by a path that the Lord loved to traverse. But the sin of Adam and Eve separated earth from Heaven. The curse of sin was upon the human race, and was so offensive to God that man could have no communion with his Maker, however much he might desire it. He could not climb the battlements of Heaven and enter the city of God; for there entereth into it nothing that defileth. The ladder represents Jesus, the appointed medium of communication. Had he not with his own merits bridged the gulf that sin had made, the ministering angels, ascending and descending on that ladder, would have held no communication with fallen man.

All this was revealed to Jacob in his dream. Although his mind at once grasped a part of the revelation, its great and mysterious truths were the study of his life-time, and unfolded to his understanding more and more. In his conversation with Nathanael, Jesus referred to this mystic ladder on which Jacob gazed with pleased wonder. Said he, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see Heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

It is our life-work to commence at the lowest round of the ladder, and step by step to ascend toward Heaven. There is earnest work in this, but we can gain eternal life in no other way. We must take up our daily duties. There must be self-sacrifice, self-denial, and walking in the humble path of obedience. Earnest battles must be fought with self and with the powers of darkness. We shall meet with strong temptations to go with the crowd, which is pressing downward; for by this means we can avoid being singular. But we must have a firm hold on Christ, and keep on climbing. To look back is to become dizzy; to let go is to perish. The eye of faith must be continually directed upward to discern a mighty helper in our tender heavenly Father.

We ascend by successive steps. When we let go of one round, it is to grasp another that is still higher. Thus the hand is constantly reaching upward for successive degrees of grace, and the feet are planted on one round after another, until finally an abundant entrance shall be administered to us into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

There is necessity for striving, and yet it will be of no avail unless we strive lawfully. To profess to climb up by Christ, and claim his righteousness, while living in disobedience to the law of God, is to continue in sin that grace may abound. It is to cry, Christ, Christ, and trust in him, while in daily rebellion against God. We must have repentance toward God, whose law we have broken, as well as faith in Christ, through whom our offenses are pardoned. Man lost paradise through the transgression of God's holy law, and he can regain it only through obedience to that law.

We have reason to rejoice that the world has not been left in solitary hopelessness. Jesus left the royal throne and his high command in Heaven, and became poor that we through his poverty might be made rich. He took upon himself our nature, that he might teach us how to live. In the steps

which the sinner must take in conversion,—repentance, faith, and baptism,—he led the way. He did not repent for himself, for he was sinless, but in behalf of man.

Jesus became “the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in.” He became an exile to earth to bring back the one lost, straying sheep, the one world ruined by sin. In him were combined the earthly and the heavenly, the human and the divine; otherwise, he could not be a Mediator whom the sinful could approach, and through whom they could be reconciled to their Maker. But now he encircles the race in arms of sympathy and love while he grasps the throne of the Infinite, thus uniting man in his weakness and helplessness with the Source of strength and power.

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.” 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 toilsome, 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.

And now the question for each one to settle is, 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.

The Lord showed Jacob the open heavens. He beheld earth linked with Heaven, and saw the bright array of angels and the majesty of Deity. A divine voice addressed the repenting, discouraged one in words of gracious assurance, and spoke to him of great things to come. And so, through the merits of our Redeemer, the Father looks upon us with tender compassion, and speaks to us hopefully the language of forgiveness and love.

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things that God hath prepared for them that love him.” The farther the Christian advances on the Heavenward way, the more clearly will he discern the nothingness of earthly things, while by an eye of faith he views the glories of the unseen, eternal world. We point you, dear fellow-traveler, to a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. But the hills to which we journey are not on earth,

and we might well despair of ever reaching them, were it not for the glorious ladder whose base is on earth while its top reaches the highest Heaven.

August 7, 1884

Family Prayer

If ever there was a time when every house should be a house of prayer, it is now. Infidelity and skepticism are prevailing. Iniquity abounds, and in consequence, the love of many waxes cold. Corruption flows in the vital currents of the soul, and rebellion against our heavenly Father breaks out in the life. Depravity spreads its loathsome canker over the entire heart. The moral powers, enslaved by sin, are under the tyranny of unholy appetites and passions. The soul is made the sport of Satan's temptations; and unless some mighty arm is stretched out to rescue him, man goes where the arch-rebel leads the way.

It is Satan's regular employment to work for the destruction of the race. Says the apostle Peter, "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Here Satan is represented as prowling about, hoping to find some poor soul off his guard, separated from God, that he may make his prey. And man in his pride is utterly helpless. He may well tremble at the awful power, cunning, and deception exercised by Satan over all who are not by faith holding fast the hand of Christ.

And yet in this time of fearful peril some who profess to be Christians have no family altar. They do not honor God in the home, nor teach their children to love and fear him. There are persons who attempt to teach the Bible who open their meetings without prayer; and there are not wanting some who profess to be followers of Jesus, and yet argue that there is nothing in the word of God that teaches the duty of vocal prayer. These things grieve me; for I know that continual watchfulness and unceasing prayer are necessary for every soul that would successfully resist the wiles of the great deceiver. Those who maintain such positions are not sincere Christians. There are many, who, like unruly children, have separated themselves so far from God that they feel under condemnation in approaching him. They cannot "come boldly unto the throne of grace," "lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." They have not clean hands; they have not pure hearts; they have no living connection with God. Theirs is a form of godliness without the power.

The idea that prayer is not essential is one of Satan's most successful devices to ruin souls. Prayer is addressing the mind to God, the Fountain of wisdom, the Source of strength and peace and happiness. Prayer includes acknowledgment of the divine perfections, gratitude for mercies received, penitential confession of sins, and earnest entreaty for the blessing of God, both for ourselves and for others. Jesus prayed to the Father with strong crying and tears. Paul exhorts believers to "pray without ceasing." "In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." "Pray one for another," says James. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." God has a right to command our devotions; his authority is sacred and unquestionable. We are under obligation to pray because he requires it; and in obeying his requirements we shall receive a gracious and precious reward.

I know of nothing that causes me so great sadness as a prayerless home. I do not feel safe in such a house for a single night; and were it not for the hope of helping the parents to realize their necessity

and their sad neglect, I would not remain. The children show the result of this neglect; for the fear of God is not before them. Parents should make a hedge about their children by prayer; they should pray with full faith that God will abide with them, and that holy angels will guard themselves and their children from Satan's cruel power.

In every family there should be order, and regular habits. There should be a fixed time to rise in the morning, a time for breakfast, and a time for prayer, either directly before or directly after the morning meal. How appropriate it is for parents to gather their children about them before their fast is broken, and direct their young minds to our heavenly Father, who bestows upon us the bounties of his providence. Let them thank God for protecting them during the night, and ask for help and grace and the watchcare of angels through the day. Man should not be as unmindful of God as the beasts of the field, that eat and drink, but render no tribute of prayer or grateful praise to their Maker. Beasts have no reason; but men should understand the great condescension of God to finite, sinful mortals.

Fathers and mothers, at least morning and evening lift up your hearts to God in humble supplication for yourselves and your children. Your dear ones are exposed to temptations and trials. There are frets and irritations that daily beset the path of old and young; and those who would live patient, loving, cheerful lives amid daily annoyances, must pray. This victory can be gained only by a resolute and unwavering purpose, constant watchfulness, and continual help from God.

The father, who is the priest of his household, should conduct the morning and evening worship. There is no reason why this should not be the most interesting and enjoyable exercise of the home-life, and God is dishonored when it is made dry and irksome. Let the seasons of family worship be short and spirited. Do not let your children or any member of your family dread them because of their tediousness or lack of interest. When a long chapter is read and explained and a long prayer offered, this precious service becomes wearisome, and it is a relief when it is over.

It should be the special object of the heads of the family to make the hour of worship intensely interesting. By a little thought, and careful preparation for this season, when we come into the presence of God, family worship can be made pleasant, and will be fraught with results that eternity alone will reveal. Let the father select a portion of Scripture that is interesting and easily understood; a few verses will be sufficient to furnish a lesson which may be studied and practiced through the day. Questions may be asked, a few earnest, interesting remarks made, or incident, short and to the point, may be brought in by way of illustration. At least a few verses of spirited song may be sung, and the prayer offered should be short and pointed. The one who leads in prayer should not pray about everything, but should express his needs in simple words, and praise God with thanksgiving.

Abraham, the friend of God, set us a worthy example. His was a life of prayer and humble obedience, and he was as a light in the world. Wherever he pitched his tent, close beside it was set up his altar, calling for the morning and evening sacrifice of each member of his family. When his tent was removed, the altar remained. The roving Canaanite, as he came across that altar, knew who had been there before him; and when he had pitched his tent, he repaired the altar, and worshiped the living God.

From Christian homes a similar light should shine forth. Love should be revealed in action. It should flow out in all home intercourse, showing itself in thoughtful kindness, in gentle, unselfish courtesy.

There are homes where these principles are carried out,—homes where God is worshiped and truest love reigns. From these homes morning and evening prayer comes up before God as sweet incense, and his mercies and blessings descend upon the suppliants like the morning dew.

We must have more religion. We need the strength and grace that are born of earnest prayer. This means of grace should be diligently used in order to gain spiritual muscle. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to him. It makes us realize more and more our great needs, and hence our obligation to God and our dependence upon him. It leads us to feel our own nothingness and the weakness of our judgment.

God has made earnest prayer the condition of the bestowal of his richest blessings. Prayer brings us nearer and nearer to Jesus. However fully we may have given ourselves to God at conversion, it is of no avail unless we renew our consecration in each separate duty as it presents itself. Dear reader, consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first business, even if you have to rise half an hour earlier in order to find time. Let your prayer be, "Take me, O Lord, as wholly thine. I lay all my plans at thy feet. Use me today in thy service. Whatever errand I may do, send me. Whatever I may say to honor thee, or lead souls to Christ, help me to say it."

This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself and your family to God for that day. Make no calculation for months or years; for they are not yours. One brief day is given you, and that one day work for yourself and your family as though it were your last. Surrender all your plans to God, to be carried out or given up, as his providence shall indicate. In this manner you may, day by day, be giving your life with its plans and purposes into the hands of God, accepting his plans instead of your own, no matter how much they may interfere with your arrangements nor how many pleasant projects may have to be abandoned. Thus the life will be moulded more and more after the divine Model; and "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

August 14, 1884

Striking Examples of Prayer

Prayer has been made the means of obtaining blessings that would not otherwise be received. The patriarchs were men of prayer, and God did great things for them. When Jacob left his father's house for a strange land, he prayed in humble contrition, and in the night season the Lord answered him through vision. He saw a ladder, bright and shining, its base resting on earth, and its topmost round reaching to the highest Heaven. At its top stood the God of Heaven in his glory, and angels were ascending and descending upon the mystic ladder. The Lord comforted the lonely wanderer with precious promises; and protecting angels were represented as stationed on each side of his path. Afterward, while on his return to his father's house, he wrestled with the Son of God all night, even till break of day, and prevailed. The assurance was given him, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men."

Joseph prayed, and he was preserved from sin amid influences that were calculated to lead him away from God. When tempted to leave the path of purity and uprightness, he said, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

Moses, who was much in prayer, was known as the meekest man on the face of the earth. For his meekness and humility he was honored of God, and he discharged with fidelity the high, noble, and sacred responsibilities intrusted to him. While leading the children of Israel through the wilderness, again and again it seemed that they must be exterminated on account of their murmuring and rebellion. But Moses went to the true Source of power; he laid the case before the Lord. He knew that Israel had provoked divine wrath, and were deserving of punishment; but he could not bear the thought of their being rejected of God.

Moses pleaded the words of God with an earnestness and sincerity which mortals have never equaled: "And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty.... Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now." And the Lord said, "I have pardoned according to thy word."

Here is an example of intelligent prayer,—an appeal to the reason and the sympathy of Jehovah; and Moses' prayer was answered, because God is reasonable and compassionate. The sorrows of his people touch his heart of love; and will he not hear our prevailing prayer? Will not our very urgency be regarded? His loving-kindness faileth not. As a kind Father, he does not mock the miseries of his children. And will he not avenge his own, who cry day and night unto him?

Daniel was a man of prayer; and God gave him wisdom and firmness to resist every influence that conspired to draw him into the snare of intemperance. Even in his youth he was a moral giant in the strength of the Mighty One. Afterward, when a decree was made that if for thirty days any one should ask a petition of any God or man, save of the king, he should be cast into a den of lions, Daniel, with firm, undaunted step, made his way to his chamber, and with his windows open prayed aloud three times a day, as he had done before. He was cast into the lions' den; but God sent holy angels to guard his servant.

In the prison at Philippi, while suffering from the cruel stripes they had received, their feet fast in the stocks, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praise to God; and angels were sent from Heaven to deliver them. The earth shook under the tread of these heavenly messengers, and the prison doors flew open, setting the prisoners free.

There are two kinds of prayer,—the prayer of form and the prayer of faith. The repetition of set, customary phrases when the heart feels no need of God, is formal prayer. "When ye pray," says Christ, "use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." We should be extremely careful in all our prayers to speak the wants of the heart, and to say only what we mean. All the flowery words at our command are not equivalent to one holy desire. The most eloquent prayers are but vain repetitions, if they do not express the true sentiments of the heart. But the prayer that comes from an earnest heart, when the simple wants of the soul are expressed just as we would ask an earthly friend for a favor, expecting that it would be granted—this is the prayer of faith. The publican who went up to the temple to pray is a good example of a sincere, devoted worshiper. He felt that he was a sinner, and his great need led to an outburst of passionate desire, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

In order to have spiritual life and energy, we must have actual intercourse with God. Our minds may be drawn out toward him; we may meditate upon his works, his mercies, his blessings; but this is not communing with him. To commune with God we must have something to say to him concerning our actual life. The long, black catalogue of our delinquencies is before the eye of the Infinite. The register is complete; none of our offenses are forgotten. But He who wrought wonderfully for his servants of old will listen to the prayer of faith and pardon our transgressions. He has promised, and he will fulfill his word. Then why should not the desires of our hearts go out after him, and the attitude of our souls ever be that of supplication?

“If ye abide in me,” says Christ, “and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” There are some who do not abide in Jesus, and his words do not abide in them, and these make little of prayer. They talk of praying in secret, but not in public nor in the family; but such ones seldom pray at all. Our Saviour taught his disciples: “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.” This was not said to forbid public prayer, but to warn the disciples against praying as the Pharisees did, in the corners of the streets and in the market places to be seen of men. Jesus prayed, sometimes alone, sometimes in the presence of his most intimate disciples, sometimes in the presence of the twelve, and sometimes in the presence of the Jews.

Jesus promised a special blessing on united prayer. After his death, the disciples often prayed together in the place where they assembled for worship; they also resorted to the temple at the hour of prayer. Paul exhorted the Ephesians to pray “always with all prayer.” He who loves to pray alone, as did Daniel, may be assured that in public prayer his motive is not to be heard of men.

Oh that we could impress on the minds of all the great willingness of God to help and strengthen every one who looks to him in trusting prayer. The oil and wine of consolation will be given to those who seek for it; the importunate soul will know him as the One who hears and answers prayer, the One who “comforteth those that are cast down.” He is a God over all the earth, exercising over the whole human family an unwearied and solicitous watchcare which nothing can escape. Every moment he grants audience to those who lay their wants and desires before him; and every moment he is ministering to the necessities of thousands who live upon his bounties, yet yield him no tribute of grateful praise, give no token that they realize their dependence upon him.

After we have offered our petitions, we are to answer them ourselves as far as possible, and not wait for God to do for us what we can do for ourselves. The help of God is held in reserve for all who demand it. Divine help is to be combined with human effort, aspiration, and energy. But we cannot reach the battlements of Heaven without climbing for ourselves. We cannot be borne up by the prayers of others when we ourselves neglect to pray, for God has made no such provision for us. Not even divine power can lift one soul to Heaven that is unwilling to put forth efforts in his own behalf. The unlovely traits in our characters are not removed, and replaced by traits that are pure and lovely, without some effort on our part.

As thus step by step we ascend the shining ladder that leads to the city of God, oh how many times we shall be discouraged, and come to weep at the feet of Jesus over our failures and our defeats. In our efforts to follow the copy set us by our Lord, we shall make crooked lines, and leave many a page blotted and blistered by our tears of repentance. Yet let us not cease our efforts. Heaven can be

attained by every one of us if we will strive lawfully, doing the will of Jesus and growing into his image. Temporary failure should make us lean more heavily on Christ, and we should press on with brave-heart, determined will, and unfaltering purpose.

We should be continually loosening our hold upon earth, and fastening it upon Heaven. Soon we must render an account to God for all the deeds done in the body. This accountability extends to our minutest acts, words, and thoughts, and even reaches to the unconscious influence that breathes out from our life like the fragrance from a flower. We must give an account, not only for what we have done both of evil and of good, but for what we might have done, but have neglected. Viewed in this light, life is a sacred trust. It is not mere play. Every moment of it is intensely real, fraught with eternal interests. Let us, then, realize our great need of Christ and our dependence upon him; and let us thank God that help has been laid upon One who is mighty to save.

August 21, 1884

Conditions of Prevailing Prayer

When Jesus was upon earth, he taught his disciples how to pray. He directed them to present their daily needs before God, and to cast all their care upon him. And the assurance he gave them that their petitions should be heard, is assurance also to us.

One of the first things necessary in order to have our prayers answered, is to feel our need of help from God. We may come to him just as we are, helpless, destitute, needy, and he will not send us empty away. The riches of the universe belong to God; his are all temporal and spiritual treasures. He can supply all our needs out of his abundant fullness. We receive our breath from him; every blessing in nature that we enjoy is an expression of his love. We are likewise dependent upon him for spiritual blessings, for grace and wisdom and strength to do the will of God. And he is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him than parents are to give good gifts to their children.

Our great need is itself an argument, and pleads most eloquently in our behalf. But the Lord is to be sought unto to do for us those things that we desire. Oh how shamefully has Jesus been treated! He is inviting, urging us to come to him and receive the very help we need; yet too often his invitations are slighted, his proffered aid refused.

We are sinful by nature, and so are commanded to be zealous and repent. If we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us; but the prayer of the penitent, contrite soul is always accepted. When all known wrongs are righted, we may believe that God will answer our petitions. We must do what we can on our part; but our own merit will never commend us to the favor of God. It is the worthiness of Jesus that will save us, his blood that will cleanse us.

Another element of prevailing prayer is faith. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Jesus said to his disciples, "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Jesus said to the man who brought to him his son that was grievously afflicted with an evil spirit, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." Christ commands and encourages the prayer of faith; do we take

him at his word? If we ask doubting and distrusting, that prayer is not of faith; and “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”

“Ask, and ye shall receive.” The assurance is broad and unlimited, and He is faithful who has promised. We sometimes fail in faith because Infinite Wisdom does not come to our terms. When for any reason we do not receive the very things we ask for at the time we ask, we are still to believe that the Lord hears, and that he will give us those things that are best for us. His own glory is a sufficient reason for sometimes withholding what we ask for, and answering our prayers in a manner that we did not expect. But we are to cling to the promise; for the time of answering will come, and we shall receive the blessings we need most.

We need to examine our hearts as a preparation for coming before God in prayer, that we may know what manner of spirit we are of. If we do not forgive those who have trespassed against us, our prayers for forgiveness will not be heard. “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” When as sinners we approach the mercy-seat, we cannot express the sentiment of this petition without forgiveness in our hearts for all who have done us an injury. Upon this petition Jesus makes a comment: “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

On another occasion Jesus enforced the duty of forgiveness still more earnestly. Peter asked, “How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?” In reply, Jesus related a parable of a certain king who forgave his servant a debt of ten thousand talents, but who revoked the pardon, and commanded this servant to be delivered to the tormentors, because in his dealings with his fellow-servants he did not carry out the same righteous principles that had been manifested in dealing with him. After he had received so great mercy, he would not, in his turn, forgive a small debt of a hundred pence, but, on the contrary, treated his debtor with great severity. Our Lord concludes in these impressive words: “So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.”

“Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.” We must cherish a kind, forbearing spirit. It is solemn mockery to engage in acts of religious worship with hearts full of envy, malice, and bitterness toward our fellow-men. The God who sees every action and understands every motive of the soul, a Being of infinite purity and exhaustless goodness, mercy, and truth, regards the prayers of such persons with abhorrence.

Persevering prayer has been made a condition of receiving. We must pray always if we would grow in faith and experience. We are to be instant in prayer,—“to continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.” Peter exhorts believers to be “sober, and watch unto prayer.” Paul directs: “In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” “But ye, beloved,” says Jude, “praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God.” Unceasing prayer is the unbroken union of the soul with God, so that life from God flows into our life, and from our life purity and holiness flow back to God.

There is necessity of diligence in prayer; let nothing hinder you. You will obtain the blessing you desire if you faint not. Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden him; you cannot weary him. He who numbers the hairs of your head, who notices the fall of a sparrow, is not indifferent to the wants of his people. “The Lord is very pitiful,

and of tender mercy." He is affected by our sorrows, and even by our utterance of them. Take everything to him that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for him to bear; for he holds up worlds; he rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing is too small for him to notice that in any way disturbs our peace. There is no chapter in our experience too dark for him to read; there is no perplexity too sore for him to unravel. No calamity can befall the least of his people, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere, contrite prayer escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which he takes no immediate interest. "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."

There is an individual work for each one to do. The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon earth to share the watchful care of our heavenly Father, not another soul for whom he gave his beloved Son. "Thou understandest my thought afar off," says the psalmist. "Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether." "Thou tellest my wanderings. Put thou my tears in thy bottle; are they not in thy book?" Here we have a representation of the unsearchable greatness of God, while we can but be impressed with his intimate knowledge of all our ways, and with the great tenderness expressed for the objects of his creation.

Jesus has given us his name, above every name. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name," says Christ, "that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments." "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." "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." "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." We have a string of precious pearls in the promises, if we will but comply with the conditions. But to pray in the name of Jesus is something more than a mere mention of that name at the beginning and ending of a prayer. It is to pray in the mind and Spirit of Jesus, while we work his works, believe his promises, and rely on his matchless grace.

God does not mean that any of us shall become hermits or monks, and retire from the world to devote ourselves to acts of worship. The life must be like Christ's life,—between the mountain and the multitude. He who does nothing but pray will soon cease to pray, or his prayers will become a formal routine. When men take themselves out of social life, away from the sphere of Christian duty and cross-bearing; when they cease to work earnestly for the Master, who worked earnestly for them, they lose the subject matter of prayer, and have no incentive to devotion. Their prayers become personal and selfish. They cannot pray in regard to the wants of humanity or the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom, pleading for strength wherewith to work.

Let us maintain the habit of close intercourse with God. Let us lay all parts of our lives open before him in gratitude for his long forbearance, penitence for sin, and earnest faith in the promises. The prayer of Jesus just before his crucifixion should be intensely interesting to us; let us read it, and enter into its spirit.

September 4, 1884

Immutability of the Law of God

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.”

What a contrast between the words of Christ, and the language of those who claim that he came to abrogate the law of God and to do away with the Old Testament. Our Saviour, who knew all things, understood the wiles of Satan, the snares by which he would seek to entrap the children of men, and so made this positive statement to meet the questioning doubts and the blind unbelief of all coming time.

But there is a law which was abolished, which Christ “took out of the way, nailing it to his cross.” Paul calls it “the law of commandments contained in ordinances.” This ceremonial law, given by God through Moses, with its sacrifices and ordinances, was to be binding upon the Hebrews until type met antitype in the death of Christ as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. Then all the sacrificial offerings and services were to be abolished. Paul and the other apostles labored to show this, and resolutely withstood those Judaizing teachers who declared that Christians should observe the ceremonial law.

Christ himself declares that he came not to destroy the law of ten precepts, which was spoken from Sinai. He says, “Verily I say unto you,”—making the assertion as emphatic as possible,—“Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.” Here he teaches not merely what the claims of God's law had been and were then, but that these claims should hold so long as the heavens and the earth remain. This testimony should forever settle the question. The law of God is as immutable as his throne. It will maintain its claims upon all mankind in all ages, unchanged by time or place or circumstances. The ritual system was of altogether a different character, and typified the death of Christ as a sacrifice for the broken precepts of the moral law.

“I am not come to destroy,” Christ says, “but to fulfill,”—“to magnify the law and make it honorable,” as Isaiah, hundreds of years before, had prophesied respecting the Messiah's work.

“To fulfill the law.” In his own life the Saviour gave the children of men an example of perfect obedience. In his teachings he made clear and distinct every precept of the divine law; he swept away the rubbish of erroneous tradition with which the Jews had encumbered it; he illustrated and enforced its principles, and showed in all its particulars the length and breadth and height and depth of the righteousness required by the law of God.

The Pharisees were dissatisfied with the teachings of Christ. The practical godliness which he enjoined condemned them. They desired him to dwell upon the external observances of the ceremonial law, and the customs and traditions of the fathers. But Jesus taught the spiritual nature of the law and made clear its far-reaching claims. Love to God and to men must live in the heart and control the life, as the spring of every thought and every action.

There is perfect harmony between the law of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. “I and my Father are one,” says the great Teacher. 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.

Says the great apostle, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid. Yea, we establish the law." And again he declares that the "law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Enjoining supreme love to God, and equal love to our fellow-men, it is indispensable alike to human happiness and the glory of God.

There are persons professing to be ministers of Christ, who declare with the utmost assurance that no man ever did or ever can keep the law of God. But, according to the Scriptures, Christ "took upon himself our nature," and "was made in fashion as a man." He was man's example, man's representative, and he declares, "I have kept my Father's commandments." The beloved disciple urges that every follower of Christ "ought himself also so to walk even as he walked." All who are in Christ will follow the example of Christ. All who justify the sinner in his transgression of God's law belong to that class of whom our Saviour said, "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven." They can have no part with Him who came to magnify the law and make it honorable. They are deceiving the people with their sophistry, saying to the sinner, "It shall be well with thee," when God has declared, "The soul that sinneth [transgresseth the law] it shall die."

The words of Christ are both explicit and comprehensive. "Whosoever"—minister or layman, wise or ignorant—"shall break one of these least commandments"—willfully or presumptuously, as did Adam and Eve—is included in the condemnation. Breaking one of the commandments makes man a commandment-breaker. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." No excuse can avail for him who strictly obeys nine of the precepts of God's law, but ventures to break one because it is for his profit or convenience to do so. God demands implicit obedience to all his requirements.

"And shall teach men so." This is a point worthy of careful consideration. 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."

The most fatal delusion of the Christian world in this generation is, that in pouring contempt on the law of God they think they are exalting Christ. What a position! It was Christ who spoke the law from Sinai. It was Christ who gave the law to Moses, engraven on tables of stone. It was his Father's law; and Christ says, "I and my Father are one." The Pharisees held the reverse of the modern position, but were in just as great an error. They rejected Christ, but exalted the law. And it makes little difference which position is taken, so long as we ignore the true one,—that faith in Christ must be accompanied by obedience to the law of God.

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." Paul makes 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." Thus Paul exalts the moral law. When this law is practically carried out in every-day 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 its 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.

September 11, 1884

An Address to the Young

[Remarks made in the 6 o'clock morning meeting in Oakland, Cal., Thursday, April 24, 1884.]

The spiritual welfare of the young is a subject in which all should feel a deep interest. Now, in the closing hours of probation, they should be obtaining an experience in the things of God. They need to be daily building up a firm, pure, symmetrical character, one that God can approve, or Satan will take advantage of their weakness to ruin them, and they will fall an easy prey to his temptations. For every young man who lacks faith and consecration, and is weak in moral power, Satan has temptations prepared. Perhaps there is a pleasing associate, who, like himself, thinks it manly to be entirely unconcerned in regard to his soul's salvation, and they strengthen each other in a wrong course.

Those who think they have no need of a Saviour, that they can do right and preserve a correct deportment without making Christ their strength, show the most deplorable weakness. Christ made provision for man's redemption; he laid out an expensive plan of salvation. Suppose that Adam, after his fall, had refused to comply with the conditions. Suppose he had said, "I am good; I do no harm to any one. I feel no need of a Saviour." Would he not then have remained in the disgrace of sin, a transgressor, a rebel against God? But every sinner who neglects the Saviour's mediation, by his own choice places himself in just this position. He is in the bondage of sin, subject to the most cruel tyrant that ever existed.

Cain tried this course of self-dependence. He felt, as many inexperienced youth now feel, that it would be an acknowledgment of weakness on his part to follow the plan marked out of God. He would come in his own merits. He would not bring the lamb, and mingle its blood with his offering; but he would be very generous, and would offer of his fruits, the products of his labor. He looked with scorn upon Abel, who felt that he could not approach God without a mediator. Abel followed the precise directions given by God. The result is well known. The Lord accepted the offering of Abel, presented in humility, and faith in the coming Lamb of God. His obedience was counted to him for righteousness. Cain, angry that his offering was rejected, killed his brother.

Cain and Abel represent two classes of men that have existed from generation to generation, and will continue to exist to the close of time. One availed himself of the promised sacrifice for sin; the other ventured to depend upon his own merits. His was the sacrifice of a sinner without the virtue of divine mediation, which is alone able to bring him into favor with God. It is only through the merits of Jesus that our transgressions of the law can be pardoned. Those who feel that they can be moral without divine help, who feel no need of the blood of Christ, are betrayed into grievous sins. If they do not gladly, gratefully, accept the cleansing blood, they are under condemnation. There is no other provision made whereby they can be released from sin's terrible thralldom. There must be repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the only way to secure excellence of character, the only path to divine favor.

The Lord assured Cain that if he did well, he should be accepted. But instead of heeding the counsel of God, he chose to take his own course, to follow the promptings of his sinful heart, and the result is before us. Let the youth consider that none of their ways or purposes are hidden from the eye of Jehovah. He is not ignorant of their self-will and self-sufficiency. He marks their course in despising the blood of the covenant that has been provided for their sanctification and redemption.

Young friends, wherever you are and whatever you do, remember, "Thou God seest me." No part of your conduct escapes observation. You cannot hide your ways from the Most High. Human laws, though sometimes severe, are often transgressed without detection, and hence with impunity. But it is not so with the law of God. The deepest midnight is no cover to the guilty one. He may think himself alone; but the very motives of his heart are open to divine inspection. Every action, every word, every thought, is as distinctly marked as though there were only one individual in the entire universe, and the attention of Heaven were centered on his deportment.

Says the patriarch Job, "When I consider, I am afraid of Him." The more we reflect, the more awful God appears. Surely you are not acquainted with him as you ought to be. If you had an abiding sense of his presence, you would fear to offend a just and holy God, and there would be a restraint upon wickedness. Consider that the Judge of all the earth, who is to decide your destiny for eternity, has an accurate knowledge of your daily life. How can you violate his precepts? How can you make light of his authority?

Those who are quieting a guilty conscience with the thought that they can change a course of evil when they choose, that they can trifle with the invitations of mercy, and yet be again and again impressed, take this course at their peril. They think that after doing despite to the Spirit of grace, after casting all their influence on the side of the great rebel, in a moment of terrible extremity, when danger compasses them about, they will change captains. But this is not so easily done. The experience, the education, the discipline, of a lifetime of sinful indulgence, has so thoroughly moulded the character that they cannot then receive the image of Jesus. A long life has given in its testimony. Had no light shone upon their pathway, had they not been warned, entreated, and prayed for by God's messengers, the case would be different. Mercy would interpose, and give them another opportunity to accept her overtures; but after light has been rejected and despised, the other opportunity does not always come.

There is a power in impenitence and rebellion which can be accounted for only on the supposition that it is supernatural. Satan imbues his willing subjects with his own spirit. He works through

deception; he promises them the desire of their heart; but they find no rest, no peace, no joy, in the path of transgression.

You who are slighting the offers of mercy, let consideration come in, and scatter the delusions which have gathered about your soul. Think of the long array of figures that is accumulating against you in the books of Heaven; for there is an unerring record kept of the impieties of nations, of families, of individuals. God may bear long while the account goes on, and calls to repentance and offers of pardon may be given; yet a time will come when the account will be full, and divine patience will be exercised no longer. Then the signal will be given for the wrath of offended justice to be poured out, for judgment to be executed.

The impenitent sometimes comfort themselves by saying of professed Christians, "I am as good as they are. They are no more self-denying, sober, or circumspect in their conduct than I am. They love pleasure and self-indulgence just as well as I do." These poor souls entrench themselves here, making the faults of Christians an excuse for their neglect of duty. But if they are so well acquainted with the life and character that Christians should develop, let them come over on the side of Christ, and give these stumbling-blocks a correct example. Come, you who accuse others, and show them how closely you can imitate the Pattern. Show them that you can walk firmly, making straight paths for your feet.

The sins and defects of others do not excuse any one; for the Lord has not given us an erring, human pattern. The spotless Son of God has been given as a model; and those who complain of bad examples in professed Christians, are the ones who should show better lives and purer examples. If they know so well what a Christian should be, they will be of those who knew their Master's will, and did it not; and they will be beaten with many stripes.

Martin Luther lived for years a life of severe exaction and penance, thinking he could thus purchase the favor of God. And when Christ was presented to him as the sinner's friend and advocate, a Saviour who so loved man that he gave his precious life to save him, the thought that this salvation was a free gift, not to be purchased by tedious journeys, long and rigorous fasts, or by scourging the body, seemed too great for him to comprehend. He need no longer invoke all the saints to plead with Christ in his behalf. How eagerly his thirsty soul drank in the precious draught! His hand tremblingly grasped the promises of God. He accepted Jesus as his Saviour, who would pardon and redeem his soul. He could exclaim:

"Thou art our wisdom, and we are never wise until thou art our teacher. Our ears are deaf to every voice but thine. The voice of the world and the voice of false teachers may fill the outward ear; but we must henceforth listen only to the voice that speaks within. Oh, come, thou precious Holy One, and with us ever stay. Let us become acquainted with thee, and hold thee ever in the strong embrace of perfect love. Thou art the only desire of my soul, the one altogether lovely. Without thee we could not enter Heaven."

We may have a similar experience, only richer and more abundant; for we have increased light. But many who ought to have gained a valuable Christian experience stand where they did years ago. Christ is not honored when his professed followers compare themselves among themselves, and excuse their defects because some one else has ventured to commit sin.

The young are apt to conclude that not much responsibility, care-taking, or burden-bearing is expected of them. But the obligation to reach the Bible standard rests upon every one. The light which shines in privileges and opportunities, in the ministry of the word, in counsels, warnings, and reproof, will perfect character or condemn the careless. The light is to be cherished by the young as well as by those who are older. Who will now take a position for God in contrast to the ease-loving and self-indulgent ones? Who will be light-bearers for God? The youth can do good work in laboring to save souls. They can reach their young associates when those who are older cannot, and God holds them accountable for the use they make of the talents intrusted to them. Let those who claim to be sons and daughters of God aim at a higher standard. Let them use every faculty God has given them. Let them glorify him by correctly representing the religion of the Bible.

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” Jesus wants the service of those who have the dew of youth upon them. He wants them to be heirs of immortality. They may grow up into a noble manhood and womanhood, notwithstanding the moral pollutions that abound, and that corrupt so many of the youth at an early age. There is no happiness or safety but in the fear of the Lord. Young friends, morning and evening let your prayers go up from unfeigned lips that the Holy Spirit may take possession of your hearts and keep you from the seductive influences of the world. Work for Jesus; stand up for Jesus; and he will stand up for you in the day of God's vengeance.

September 18, 1884

The True Object of Education

The true object of education should be constantly kept in view. God has intrusted to each one capacities and powers, that they may be returned to him enlarged and improved. His gifts are granted to us to be used to the utmost. He requires every one to attain the highest possible degree of usefulness. All the talents that we possess, whether of mental capacity, money, or influence, are of God, so that in dedicating them to his service we may say with David, “All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.”

Dear young friends, what is your aim in life? Are you ambitious for education that you may one day have a name and position in the world? Have you thoughts that you dare not express, that you may one day stand upon the summit of intellectual greatness; that you may sit in deliberative and legislative councils, and help to enact laws for the nation? There is nothing wrong in lofty aspirations. You may every one of you make your mark. You should be content with no mean attainments. Aim high, and spare no pains to reach the standard.

But remember that the “fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” and lies at the foundation of all true greatness. Integrity, unswerving integrity, is the principle that you need to carry with you into all the relations of life. Balanced by religious principle, you may climb to any height you please. We would be glad to see you rising to a noble elevation. Jesus loves the precious youth, and he is not pleased to see them grow up with uncultivated, undeveloped talents. They may become men and women of firm principle, fitted to be intrusted with high responsibilities, and to this end they may lawfully strain every nerve.

Let none commit so great a crime as to pervert their God-given powers to do evil and destroy others. There are gifted men who use their ability to spread moral ruin and corruption; but all such are

sowing seed which will produce a harvest that they will not care to reap. It is a fearful thing to scatter blight and woe instead of blessing in society. It is also a fearful thing to fold in a napkin the talent intrusted to us, and hide it away in the world; for this is casting away the crown of life. God claims our service. There are responsibilities for every one to bear; and we can fulfill life's grand mission only when these responsibilities are fully accepted, and faithfully and conscientiously discharged.

Says the wise man, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." But do not for a moment suppose that religion will make you sad and gloomy. Never lose sight of the fact that Jesus is a well-spring of joy. He takes no pleasure in the misery of human beings, but loves to see them happy. Religion will not block up the way to success; it does not obliterate or even weaken a single faculty. It in no way incapacitates you for the enjoyment of any real happiness; it is not designed to lessen your interest in life, or to make you indifferent to the claims of friends and society.

"The entrance of thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple," is the testimony of the psalmist. As an educating power the Bible is without a rival. The study of the Scriptures will ennoble every thought, feeling, and aspiration, as the study of no other book can. Nothing else will so impart freshness and vigor to all the faculties. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is trained to dwell. If occupied with commonplace matters only, it will become dwarfed and enfeebled. If never required to grapple with difficult problems, or tasked to comprehend important truths, it will, after a time, almost lose the power of growth.

The Bible is the most comprehensive and the most instructive history which men possess. It came fresh from the fountain of eternal truth, and a divine hand has preserved its purity through all the ages. Its bright rays shine into the far-distant past, where human research seeks vainly to penetrate. In God's word alone do we find an authentic account of the creation. Here we behold the power that laid the foundation of the earth, and that stretched out the heavens. Here only can we find a history of our race, unsullied by human prejudice or human pride.

In the word of God the mind finds subject for the deepest thought, the loftiest aspiration. Here we may hold communion with patriarchs and prophets, and listen to the voice of the Eternal as he speaks with men. Here we behold the Majesty of Heaven as he humbled himself to become our substitute and surety, to cope single-handed with the powers of darkness, and to gain the victory in our behalf. A reverent contemplation of the themes brought to view in the word of God, cannot fail to soften, purify, and ennoble the heart, and, at the same time, to inspire the mind with new strength and energy.

This sacred word is the will of God revealed to men. Here we learn what God expects of the beings formed in his image. Here we learn how to improve the present life, and how to secure the future life. No other book can satisfy the questionings of the mind and the cravings of the heart. By obtaining a knowledge of God's word, and giving heed thereto, men may rise from the lowest depths of ignorance and degradation, to become sons of God, associates of sinless angels.

A clear conception of what God is, and what he requires us to be, will give us humble views of self. He who studies aright the sacred word, will learn that human intellect is not omnipotent; that, without the help which none but God can give, human strength and wisdom are but weakness and ignorance.

This is the education so much needed at the present time. In an age like ours, in which iniquity abounds, and God's character and his law are alike regarded with contempt, special care must be taken to teach the youth to study, and to reverence and obey, the divine will as revealed to man. The fear of the Lord is fading from the minds of our youth because of their neglect of Bible study.

With Daniel, the fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom. He was placed in a position where temptation was strong. In kings' courts, dissipation was on every side; selfish indulgence, intemperance, and gluttony were the order of each day. Daniel could join in the debilitating, corrupting practices of the courtiers, or he could resist the influences that tended downward. He chose the latter course. He would not even defile himself with the king's meat, or with the wine that he drank. The Lord was pleased with the course that Daniel pursued. He was greatly beloved and honored of Heaven; to him the God of wisdom gave skill in the learning of the Chaldeans, and understanding in all visions and dreams.

If the youth who attend our various educational institutions would discard unprofitable amusements and indulgence of appetite, their minds would be clear for the pursuit of knowledge. If they would be firm for the right, and would not associate with those who walk in the paths of sin, like Daniel they would enjoy the favor of God. They would thus gain a moral power that would enable them to remain unmoved when assailed by temptation. It requires a continual struggle to be constantly on the alert to resist evil; but it pays to obtain one victory after another over self and the powers of darkness.

A spotless character is as precious as the gold of Ophir. None can rise to an honorable eminence without pure, unsullied virtue. But noble aspirations and the love of righteousness are not inherited. Character cannot be bought; it must be formed by daily efforts to resist temptation. The formation of a right character is the work of a lifetime, and must be the result of individual effort. Friends may encourage you, dear youth; but they cannot do the work for you. Wishing, sighing, dreaming, will never make you great or good. You must climb. Gird up the loins of your mind, and go to work with all the strong powers of your will. It is the wise improvement of your opportunities, the cultivation of your God-given talents, that will make you men and women that can be approved of God and a blessing to society. Let your standard be high, and with indomitable energy press to the mark.

The fear of the Lord is the very foundation of all progress. Your intellectual and moral faculties are God's gifts, talents intrusted to you; and you are not at liberty to let them lie dormant for want of proper cultivation, or be crippled and dwarfed for lack of exercise. It is for you to determine whether or not the weighty responsibilities that rest upon you shall be faithfully met, whether or not your efforts shall be well-directed and your best.

October 2, 1884

Happy and Unhappy Homes

Many are unhappy in their home life because they are trying so hard to keep up appearances. They expend large sums of money, and labor unremittingly, that they may make a display, and gain the praise of their associates,—those who really care nothing for them or their prosperity. One article after another is considered indispensable to the household appointments, until many expensive additions are made, that, while they please the eye and gratify pride and ambition, do not in the

least increase the comfort of the family. And yet these things have taxed the strength and patience, and consumed valuable time which should have been given to the service of the Lord.

The precious grace of God is made secondary to matters of no real importance; and many, while collecting material for enjoyment, lose the capacity for happiness. They find that their possessions fail to give the satisfaction they had hoped to derive from them. This endless round of labor, this unceasing anxiety to embellish the home for visitors and strangers to admire, never pays for the time and means thus expended. It is placing upon the neck a yoke of bondage grievous to be borne.

Four walls and costly furniture, velvet carpets, elegant mirrors, and fine pictures, do not make a "home" if sympathy and love are wanting. That sacred word does not belong to the glittering mansion where the joys of domestic life are unknown. There are spacious parlors closed from the sweet sunshine and life-giving air, for fear these choicest gifts of Heaven might tarnish the furniture and fade the carpets. These rooms are sunless and damp, unlighted and unheated save when visitors are to be entertained. Then the doors are thrown open, and the beautiful rooms, too fine for the use and comfort of the family, are devoted to unsympathizing acquaintances.

These rooms are altogether too precious for every-day use; above all, the children must be strictly excluded from their precincts, for fear of soiling the furniture or the curtains. In fact, the comfort and welfare of the children are the last things thought of in such a home. They are neglected by the mother, whose whole time is devoted to keeping up appearances and meeting the claims of fashionable society. Their minds are untrained, they acquire bad habits, and become restless and dissatisfied. Finding no pleasure in their own homes, but only uncomfortable restrictions, they break away from the family circle as soon as possible. They launch out into the great world with little reluctance, unrestrained by home influence, and the tender counsel of the hearth-stone.

How different is it in the Christian home, where the mother is attentive to the wants of husband and children, and takes pleasure in the performance of her sweet home duties; where the father cooperates in all her efforts to make home happy, and to lay the foundation of a good Christian character by training the children in the way they should go. Such parents, while they win the affections of their children by their sympathy and tender care, will yet be firm and decided in their government, and will guard them with jealous care. They will exhort, reprove, and counsel their children when they rise up, and when they sit down; when they go out, and when they come in. It will be "line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little." In such homes angels will love to linger; and who can tell what an influence for good shall go out from them?

It does not require costly surroundings and expensive furniture to make children contented and happy in their homes; but it is necessary that the parents give them tender love and careful attention. Parents should by their example encourage the formation of habits of simplicity, and draw their children away from an artificial to a natural life. Gentle manners, cheerful conversation, and loving acts will bind the hearts of children to their parents by the silken cords of affection, and will do more to make home attractive than the rarest ornaments that can be bought for gold.

There are but few true fathers and mothers in this age of the world, and this is owing more to the artificial lives that are so generally led than to any other cause. There should be less anxiety for external appearances, but more earnest effort to secure practical comfort in every room throughout the house. Less parade in the parlor, and more time devoted to the training of the children, to the

preparation of simple, wholesome food, and to the general economy and comfort of the household, would make happy hearts and pleasant faces in the home. There are many who should live less for the outside world, and more for the members of their own family circle. There should be less display of superficial politeness and affection toward strangers and visitors, and more of the courtesy that springs from genuine love and sympathy toward the dear ones of our own firesides.

The very best part of the house, the sunniest and most inviting rooms, and the most comfortable furniture, should be in daily use by those who really live in the house. This will make home attractive to the inmates, and also to that class of friends who really care for us, whom we could benefit, and by whom we could be benefited. But those guests who are attracted to us by the prospect of sumptuous dinners and an extravagant luxury of style, are not the ones whose companionship will improve our minds and hearts. We have no moral right to spend our time and means in entertaining such visitors, while our precious, God-given children are suffering gross neglect.

But it is so flattering to the pride of some persons to exhibit a certain extravagant and fashionable style of living for the benefit of occasional guests, that they are willing to sacrifice the peace and comfort of the household for this empty gratification. The fine mansion, the costly furniture and ornaments, the toil in serving up dainty dishes to gratify the appetite, the expensive entertainments which swallow up money and time, and the dashing carriages designed more for show than comfort, bring no peaceful contentment. They have no connection with the real joys of life; they interfere with domestic quiet, and unfit the mind for the homely but pleasant duties of practical life.

As these extravagances fail to satisfy their possessors, they blindly seek to remedy the failure by adding new luxuries, and plunging deeper into the whirlpool of fashionable society. But the inevitable result is greater dissatisfaction, and an increase of care and anxiety. Decorations of dress and houses do not make people happy; but the lowliest dwelling may be beautified, and the poorest family be made rich, by the possession of meekness, kindness and love. Pleasant voices, gentle manners, and sincere affection that finds expression in all the actions, together with industry, neatness, and economy, make even a hovel the happiest of homes. The Creator regards such a home with approbation; and the inmates, though they have not "that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, and of putting on of apparel," have that which is far better.—"the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

"Godliness with contentment is great gain." It is "profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." We should open our hearts and houses to the Lord. The restraint which his word imposes upon us is for our own interest. It increases the happiness of our families and of all about us. It refines the taste, sanctifies the judgment, and brings peace of mind, and in the end, everlasting life.

October 9, 1884

The Benefits of Industry

Those who look upon work as a curse are cherishing a mistaken idea. God appointed labor as a blessing to man, to occupy his mind, to strengthen his body, and to develop his faculties. Adam toiled in the garden of Eden, and found it to be one of the pleasures of his holy existence to do so. And when, as the result of his disobedience, he was driven from his beautiful home, and was forced

to struggle with a stubborn soil to gain his daily bread, that very labor, although far different from his pleasant occupation in the garden, was a protection against temptation, and a source of happiness.

For thirty years Jesus was an inhabitant of Nazareth, and his life was one of patient industry. He walked the streets clad in the simple garb of a common laborer. He toiled up and down the mountain steeps, going to and returning from his humble work. He did not employ his divine power to lessen his burdens or to lighten his toil. He lived in a peasant's home; he mingled with the lowly, and shared their daily toil. His example shows us that it is man's duty to be industrious, that labor is honorable.

The life of Jesus should encourage the poor and lowly to be contented with their lot. Honest labor has received the sanction of Heaven, and men and women may hold the closest communion with God, while occupying the humblest positions in life. Jesus was as faithfully fulfilling his mission when working at his humble trade as when he healed the sick or walked upon the storm-tossed waves of Galilee.

Those who divorce religion from their worldly business are reproved by the example of Jesus. Although he could command the entire angel host, he dwelt among the hills of Nazareth, a simple carpenter, working for wages, and living a godly life. He called no attention to himself as a marked personage; yet his life is a lesson that mankind should copy to the end of time. It was a mystery to angels that Christ should condescend, not only to take upon himself humanity, but to assume its heaviest burdens and most humble occupations. But this he did that he might become like one of us; that he might be acquainted with the toil, the sorrows, and the fatigue of the children of men, and thus be better able to understand their privations and sympathize with their trials.

The essential lesson of contented industry in the necessary duties of life, however humble, is yet to be learned by the greater portion of Christ's followers. Though there may be no human eye to examine our work, nor voice to praise or blame, it should be done just as well as though the Infinite One himself were personally to inspect it. We should be as faithful in the minor details of our business as we would in the larger affairs of life.

Our varied trusts are proportioned to our various abilities. Where much is given, much will be required. God expects corresponding returns for the talents he has intrusted to his servants. It is not the greatness of the talents possessed that determines the reward, but the manner in which they are used, the degree of faithfulness with which life's duties are performed, whether those duties are great or small. Whoever does his work conscientiously and well, whether in the shop, in the field, or in the pulpit, will be rewarded according to the spirit in which he has worked. It requires more grace and discipline of character to work for God in the capacity of mechanic, merchant, lawyer, or farmer, carrying the precepts of Christianity into the ordinary pursuits of life, than to labor as a minister of Christ, 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 work-shop and business office, sanctifying the details of every-day life, and ordering every worldly transaction according to the Bible standard; but this is what God requires of his people.

Judicious labor is a healthful tonic for the human race. It makes the feeble strong, the poor rich, and the wretched happy. Idleness is the greatest curse that can fall upon man, for vice and crime follow

in its train. Satan lies in ambush, ready to destroy those who are unguarded, whose leisure gives him opportunity to insinuate himself into their favor under some attractive disguise. He is never more successful than when he comes to men in their idle hours.

Among the evils resulting from wealth, one of the greatest is the fashionable idea that work is degrading. Says the prophet Ezekiel, "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom; pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy." Here are presented before us the terrible results of idleness, which enfeebles the mind, debases the soul, and perverts the understanding, making a curse of that which was given as a blessing.

The glory and joy of life are found only by the working man or woman. Labor brings its own reward, and the rest is sweet that is purchased by the fatigue of a well-spent day. But there is a self-imposed toil that is utterly unsatisfying and injurious. It is that which gratifies unsanctified ambition, which seeks display or notoriety. Pride of appearance or the love of possession leads many to carry to excess that which is in itself lawful,—to devote the entire strength of body and mind to those interests which should occupy but a small portion of their time. They bend every energy to the acquisition of wealth or honor; they make all other objects secondary to this; they toil unceasingly for years to accomplish their purpose; yet when the goal is reached, the coveted prize secured, it turns to ashes in their grasp; it is a shadow, a delusion. They have given their lives for that which profiteth not.

God is watching the character we develop in our daily lives, weighing our moral worth. Those who ignore the claims of God in their business life, as carpenters, lawyers, or merchants, are unfaithful in matters of eternal interest, since it is the life that indicates the spiritual advancement, and registers upon the books of Heaven the unchangeable figures of the future. Those who are unfaithful in little things, cannot be intrusted with the true riches of the kingdom. Yet all the lawful pursuits of life may be safely followed, if the spirit is kept free from selfish hopes and the contamination of deceit and envy. The business life of the Christian should be marked with the same purity that held sway in the work-shop of the holy Nazarene. It is the working man or woman who sees something great or good in life, and who is willing to bear its responsibilities with faith and hope.

God designed that all should be workers. The toiling beast of burden answers the purpose of its creation better than does the indolent man, who does not develop his physical and mental powers, but neglects the tasks which God has set for him to do. In the cause of reform the indolence of the many necessitates the overwork of the few earnest and devoted laborers. Because these are allowed to do the work of others in addition to their own, they often fail beneath the burden. But though the path of the Christian reformer may be hard and narrow, it is honored by the footprints of the Redeemer, and he is safe who follows in that sacred way.

The angels are workers; they are ministers of God to the children of men. Those slothful spirits who look forward to a Heaven of inaction will be disappointed; for the economy of the Creator prepares no place for the gratification of sinful indolence. But to the weary and heavy-laden, rest is promised. It is the faithful servant who will be welcomed from his labors into the joy of his Lord. He will lay off his armor with rejoicing, and forget the noise of battle in the glorious rest prepared for those who conquer through the cross of Calvary.

October 23, 1884

Health and Religion

The wise man says that wisdom's "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Many cherish the impression that devotion to God is detrimental to health and to cheerful happiness in the social relations of life. But those who walk in the path of wisdom and holiness find that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." They are alive to the enjoyment of life's real pleasures, while they are not troubled with vain regrets over misspent hours, nor with gloom or horror of mind, as the worldling too often is when not diverted by some exciting amusement.

It is true that there are many professing Christians who have diseased imaginations, and do not correctly represent the religion of the Bible. They are ever walking under a cloud. They seem to think it a virtue to complain of depression of spirits, great trials, and severe conflicts. This course is not in accordance with the words of the Saviour, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." It is the duty of all to walk in the light, and to cultivate habitual cheerfulness of mind, that they may reflect light rather than gloom and darkness.

Godliness does not conflict with the laws of health, but is in harmony with them. Had men ever been obedient to the law of ten commandments, had they carried out in their lives the principles of these ten precepts, the curse of disease that now floods the world would not be. Men may teach that trifling amusements are necessary to keep the mind above despondency. The mind may indeed be thus diverted for the time being; but after the excitement is over, calm reflection comes. Conscience arouses, and makes her voice heard, saying, "This is not the way to obtain health or true happiness."

There are many amusements that excite the mind, but depression is sure to follow. Other modes of recreation are innocent and healthful; but useful labor that affords physical exercise will often have a more beneficial influence upon the mind, while at the same time it will strengthen the muscles, improve the circulation, and prove a powerful agent in the recovery of health.

"What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles."

The consciousness of right-doing is the best medicine for diseased bodies and minds. The special blessing of God resting upon the receiver, is health and strength. One whose mind is quiet and satisfied in God is on the highway to health. To have the consciousness that the eye of the Lord is upon us, and that his ear is open to our prayers, is a satisfaction indeed. To know that we have a never-failing Friend to whom we can confide all the secrets of the soul, is a happiness which words can never express. Those whose moral faculties are clouded by disease are not the ones to rightly represent the Christian life or the beauties of holiness. They are too often in the fire of fanaticism, or the water of cold indifference or stolid gloom.

Those who do not feel that it is a religious duty to discipline the mind to dwell upon cheerful subjects, will usually be found at one of two extremes: they will be elated by a continual round of exciting amusements, indulging in frivolous conversation, laughing, and joking, or they will be depressed, having great trials and mental conflicts, which they think but few have ever experienced or can understand. These persons may profess Christianity, but they deceive their own souls. They have not the genuine article.

Many have a self-complacent feeling. They flatter themselves that if they had an opportunity, or were more favorably situated, they could and would do some great work. These persons do not view things from a correct standpoint. Their imagination is diseased. Day-dreaming, castle-building, has unfitted them for usefulness. They have lived in an imaginary world, have been imaginary martyrs, and are imaginary Christians. There is nothing real and substantial in their character. Persons of this class sometimes think that they have an exquisite delicacy of organization, a refined and sympathetic nature, which must be recognized and responded to by others. They put on an appearance of languor and indolent ease, and frequently think that they are not appreciated. Their sickly fancies do not help themselves or others. Appropriate labor, the healthy exercise of all their powers, would withdraw their thoughts from themselves.

Some are naturally devotional; but much of their life has been wasted in dreaming of doing some great work in the future, while present duties, though they may be small, are neglected. They have been unfaithful. If they would train their minds to dwell upon themes which have nothing to do with self, they might yet be useful; but the Lord will not commit to their trust any greater work until the duty nearest them has been seen and performed with a ready, cheerful will. Unless the heart is put into the work, it will drag heavily. The Lord tests our ability and faithfulness by giving us small duties first. If we turn from these with dissatisfaction and murmuring, no more will be given us; but when we cheerfully take up the small duties that lie in our pathway, and do them well, higher and greater responsibilities will be intrusted to us.

God gives liberally, and he expects corresponding returns. The talents intrusted to our keeping are not to be squandered, but to be used to good purpose, that, at his coming, the Master may receive his own with usury. These talents are not distributed indiscriminately. God dispenses his sacred trusts according to the powers and capacities of his servants, and thus has given to "every man his work." When their fidelity has been proved, their wise stewardship is evidence that they can be intrusted with the true riches, even the gift of everlasting life.

Despondent feelings are frequently the result of too much leisure. The hands and mind should be occupied in useful labor, lightening the burdens of others; and those who are thus employed will benefit themselves also. Idleness gives time to brood over imaginary sorrows; and frequently those who do not have real hardships and trials, will borrow them from the future.

There is much deception carried on under the cover of religion. Passion controls the minds of many who have become depraved in thought and feeling in consequence of "pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness." These deceived souls flatter themselves that they are spiritually minded and especially consecrated, when their religious experience consists in a sickly sentimentalism rather than in purity, true goodness, and humiliation of self. The mind should be drawn away from self; its powers should be exercised in devising means to make others happier and better. "Pure religion and

undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

True religion ennobles the mind, refines the taste, sanctifies the judgment, and makes its possessor a partaker of the purity and the holiness of Heaven. It brings angels near, and separates us more and more from the spirit and influence of the world. It enters into all the acts and relations of life, and gives us the “spirit of a sound mind,” and the result is happiness and peace.

Said the apostle Paul to his Philippian brethren, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” Adopt this as the rule of life. “Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

November 6, 1884

Science Falsely So Called

In these days when skepticism and infidelity so often appear in a scientific garb, we need to be guarded on every hand. Through this means our great adversary is deceiving thousands, and leading them captive according to his will. The advantage he takes of the sciences, sciences which pertain to the human mind, is tremendous. Here, serpent-like, he imperceptibly creeps in to corrupt the work of God.

This entering in of Satan through the sciences is well devised. Through the channel of phrenology, psychology, and mesmerism, he comes more directly to the people of this generation, and works with that power which is to characterize his efforts near the close of probation. The minds of thousands have thus been poisoned, and led into infidelity. While it is believed that one human mind so wonderfully affects another, Satan, who is ready to press every advantage, insinuates himself, and works on the right hand and on the left. And while those who are devoted to these sciences, laud them to the heavens because of the great and good works which they affirm are wrought by them, they little know what a power for evil they are cherishing; but it is a power which will yet work with all signs and lying wonders,—with all deceivableness of unrighteousness. Mark the influence of these sciences, dear reader; for the conflict between Christ and Satan is not yet ended.

If Satan were to make an open and bold attack upon Christianity, it would bring the Christian at once to the feet of his mighty Deliverer, who alone could put the adversary to flight. He does not generally do this. He is artful, and knows that the most effectual way for him to accomplish his designs is to come to poor, fallen man in the form of an angel of light. In this disguise he works upon the mind to allure from the safe and right path. He has ever been ambitious to counterfeit the work of Christ, and establish his own power and claims. He leads deceived mortals to account for the works and miracles of Christ upon scientific principles; he makes them appear as the result of human skill and power. In many minds he will thus eventually destroy all true faith in Christ as the Messiah, the Son of God.

Satan worked in a similar manner when through Moses the power of God was manifested in Egypt. He well knew that Moses was chosen of God to break the yoke of bondage from off the children of Israel; and he also knew that in this work Moses was a type of Christ, who was to come to break the reign of sin over the human family, and to deliver those who were captives to its power. He was aware that when Christ should appear, mighty works and miracles would be wrought by him, that the world might know that the Father had sent him. He trembled for his power. He resolved to accomplish a work which should answer a twofold purpose,—(1) To destroy the influence of Moses as the servant of God, by using his agents to counterfeit the true work of God; (2) To exert an influence by his work through the magicians which would reach down through all ages, and in many minds destroy true faith in the mighty miracles to be performed by Christ when he should come to this world.

It was the power of God, and no human influence or power possessed by Moses, that produced those miracles wrought before Pharaoh. Those signs and wonders were designed to convince Pharaoh that the great "I AM" had sent Moses, and that it was the duty of the king to let Israel go that they might serve the living God. Pharaoh called for the magicians to work with their enchantments. They also showed signs and wonders; for they wrought not by their own science alone, but by the power of their god, the devil, who through them ingeniously carried out his deceptive work. Yet even here the power of God was shown to be superior to that of Satan; for the magicians were unable to perform all the miracles which God wrought through Moses. Only a few of them could they do. The magicians' rods did become serpents, but Aaron's rod swallowed them up. And when they sought to produce lice, and could not, they were compelled to acknowledge even to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God."

Satan was unwilling to have the children of Israel released from bondage that they might serve God. He wrought through the magicians in a manner to harden the heart of the tyrant against the miraculous manifestations of God's power. He also thought to stagger the faith of Moses and Aaron in the divine origin of their mission, and then his instruments would prevail. But after the magicians had failed to produce the plague of lice, they could no more imitate Moses and Aaron. God would not suffer Satanic deception to proceed further. His controlling power cut off the channel through which Satan worked, and even the instruments through whom Satan wrought so wonderfully could not save themselves from the plagues. We read: "The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians."

When Christ came to earth, Satan renewed his attack. He came to the Saviour in the wilderness in the form of a beautiful young man,—more like a monarch than a fallen angel,—with Scripture in his mouth. Said he, "It is written." He spread the world before Christ in the most attractive light, and intimated to him that he need not endure so much suffering to gain its kingdoms; Satan would yield all his claims if Christ would but worship him.

Satan was dissatisfied in Heaven because he could not be first and highest in command, equal with the Father, exalted above Christ. In the wilderness he hoped to gain advantage through the weakness and suffering of Christ, and obtain from him that homage which he could not win in Heaven. Could he have succeeded, then the plan of salvation would have failed, and mankind would have been plunged in hopeless misery. But Jesus yielded not to the suggestion of the tempter for a moment; on the contrary, he asserted his superior power by bidding him, "Get thee hence." Satan

was baffled. He then turned his attention to accomplishing his purpose in another way,—by winning from the human race that honor which was refused him in Heaven, and by Jesus on earth; and here he has been only too successful.

The plan of redemption was not defeated. The dear price has been paid for man's ransom. And now our great adversary seeks to tear away the foundation of the Christian's hope, by turning men's minds into such a channel that they may not be benefited through the great sacrifice offered. He leads them to believe that they can do very well without an atonement; that they need not depend upon a crucified and risen Saviour; that their own merits will entitle them to God's favor. And then he destroys confidence in the Bible, well knowing that if he succeeds here, and faith in the detector which places a mark upon himself is destroyed, there are no bounds to the victories he may gain.

If the tempter can so deceive the human mind as to lead mortals to think that they possess the inherent power to perform great and good works, they cease to rely upon God. They acknowledge not a superior power. They give not God the glory which he claims, and which is due to his great and excellent Majesty. Satan's object is thus accomplished; and he exults that fallen men presumptuously exalt themselves, as he exalted himself in Heaven, and was cast out. He knows that if they take this course, their ruin is just as certain as was his own.

Another means by which Satan seeks to separate the soul from God is to make man believe that prayer is but a useless form. He well knows how needful are meditation and prayer; and by his devices he would divert the mind from these important exercises, that the soul may not lean for help upon the mighty One, and obtain strength to resist his attacks. The prayer of faith is the great strength of the Christian, and will assuredly prevail. This is why Satan insinuates that we have no need of prayer.

Neglect of prayer leads men to rely on their own strength, and opens the door to temptation. In many cases the imagination is captivated by scientific research, and men are flattered through the consciousness of their own powers. The sciences which treat of the human mind are very much exalted. They are good in their place; but they are seized upon by Satan as his powerful agents to deceive and destroy souls. His arts are accepted as from Heaven, and he thus receives the worship which suits him well. The world, which is supposed to be benefited so much by phrenology and animal magnetism, never was so corrupt as now. Through these sciences, virtue is destroyed, and the foundations of Spiritualism are laid. And thousands are conversing with, and receiving instructions from, this demon-god, and are acting according to his teachings, all the while supposing that they are obeying the voice of God through their dead friends.

(Concluded next week.)

November 13, 1884

Science Falsely So Called

(Concluded.)

Says Paul, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." This scripture is especially applicable as a warning against modern Spiritualism. If the mind commences to run in the channel of phrenology

and animal magnetism, it is almost sure to lose its balance. "Vain deceit" takes possession of the imagination. Many think there is such power in themselves that they do not realize their need of help from a higher power. Their principles and faith are "after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Jesus has not taught them this. He does not direct the minds of men to themselves, but to God, the Creator of the universe, as the source of strength and wisdom.

"Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." In this verse a special warning is given. The teachers of Spiritualism come in a pleasing, bewitching manner. Their object is to deceive, and those who listen to their fables are beguiled by the enemy of righteousness. When one is overcome by this fascinating influence, the mind is poisoned, and faith in Christ as the Son of God is destroyed. The victim of this sophistry is beguiled of his reward; for he is led to rely upon his own merits for salvation. Many exercise voluntary humility, are even willing to make sacrifices, to debase themselves, and to yield their minds to the belief of supreme nonsense. They receive the most absurd and erroneous ideas from those whom they believe to be their dead friends, now angels in a higher sphere; and their eyes are so blinded and their judgment so perverted that they see not the evil.

Spiritualism is a most successful and fascinating delusion,—one that is calculated to take hold of the sympathies of those who have laid their loved ones in the grave. Evil angels come in the form of these loved ones; they relate incidents connected with their lives, and perform acts which they performed while living. In this way they lead persons to believe that their dead friends are angels, hovering about them and communing with them. These evil angels who assume to be dead friends, are regarded with a certain idolatry, and with many, what they may say has greater influence than the word of God. This holy word they entirely reject, or they select the vital portions which testify of Christ and point out the way to Heaven, and change these plain statements to suit their own corrupt nature and ruin souls.

With due attention to the word of God, all may be convinced if they will of this soul-destroying delusion. That word declares in positive terms that "the dead know not anything." Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6: "For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun." The word of God expressly declares that the dead have no more a portion in anything that is done under the sun. Spiritualists say that the dead know everything that is done; that they communicate to their friends on earth, give valuable information, and perform wonders. "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." Satan, transformed into an angel of light, works with all deceivableness of unrighteousness. He who could take up the Son of God, and place him upon a pinnacle of the temple, and again could take him up into an exceeding high mountain, and present before him the kingdoms of the world, can exercise his power upon the human family, who are far inferior in strength and wisdom to Jesus, even after he had taken upon himself man's nature.

"Intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind," says the apostle. Some tamper with Spiritualism to gratify their curiosity. They have no real faith in it, and

would start back with horror at the thought of being mediums; yet they place themselves in a position where Satan can exercise his power upon them. They do not mean to enter deep into this work; but they know not what they are doing. They are venturing upon forbidden ground; and the mighty destroyer considers them his lawful prey, and exercises his power upon them against their will. They have yielded their mind to his control, and he holds them captives. Nothing can deliver these ensnared souls but the power of God in answer to the earnest prayers of his faithful followers.

Satan cannot control minds unless they are yielded to him. But those who depart from the right are in serious danger. They separate themselves from God and from the watch-care of his angels; and the prince of darkness, who is ever upon the alert to destroy souls, begins to present to them his deceptions. Such are in the utmost peril. If they see the snare, and try to free themselves from it, it is not an easy matter. They have ventured on Satan's ground, and he claims them. He will not hesitate to engage all his energies, and call to his aid all his evil host, to wrest a single human being from the hand of Christ. Those who have tempted the devil to tempt them cannot free themselves from his power without making a desperate effort. But when they begin to work for themselves, angels of God, whom they have grieved, come to their rescue. Satan and his angels are unwilling to lose their prey, and the conflict is severe. But if those who have erred continue to plead, and in deep humility confess their wrongs, angels that excel in strength will prevail, and wrench them from the powers of darkness.

The only safety now is in searching for the truth as it is revealed in the word of God, as we would search for hid treasure. The great and important truths for this time will prove as an anchor to hold God's people amid the perils of the last days. But the mass of mankind despise God's word, and prefer fables. They receive not the "love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie."

The most licentious and corrupt are highly flattered by these spirits, which they believe to be the spirits of their dead friends, and the wicked and vile are vainly puffed up in their fleshly minds, "not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God." They deny Him who ministers strength to the body, that every member may increase with the increase of God, and each man become perfect in Christ Jesus.

Vain philosophy! The members of the body are controlled by the head. Spiritualists lay aside the Head, and believe that all the members of the body must act out their nature, and that fixed laws will lead them on in a state of progression without a head. Said Jesus: "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." "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. 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. 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."

Christ is the source of our strength. He is the vine, we are the branches. We must receive nourishment from the Living Vine. Deprived of the strength and nourishment of that Vine, we are as members of the body without a head, just the condition that Satan wishes us to be in, that he may

control us as he pleases. He works "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." Spiritualism is a lie. It is founded on the great original lie, "Thou shalt not surely die."

Satan is Christ's personal enemy. He is the originator and leader of every species of rebellion in Heaven and on earth. His rage increases as the time to work grows shorter, and we do not realize his power. Evil angels are upon our track every moment. Are we prepared to resist them? Will not many souls be ensnared and taken? We should all now seek to arm ourselves for the contest in which we must soon engage; and the word of God is the only weapon which we can use successfully. That word, prayerfully studied and practically applied, will be our shield from Satan's delusive arts, and will bring us off conquerors through the blood of the Lamb.

November 20, 1884

The Right Use of Talents

A short time before Jesus entered Gethsemane to bear the sins of the world, he gave the memorable discourse recorded in the Matthew 24:1 and Matthew 25:1, including the parable of the talents, given in chap. 25: 14-30. He was a partaker of our human nature, and was wearied with the work of the day. The Pharisees had pressed him into speaking on various subjects, while they watched his words, hoping to seize upon something whereby they might condemn him and vindicate themselves in their cruel purpose toward him; and he had exhausted his strength by prolonging his words of prediction and warning. His own words were, "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work."

The parable of the talents has a relation to that of the ten virgins, which preceded it. In the parable of the virgins, Jesus had presented events connected with his second coming, showing the duty of being in readiness, and waiting and watching for that great event; and in the parable of the talents he brought before his disciples in the most impressive manner the solemn, sacred duty of unselfish, vigilant labor in the cause of God. Jesus would teach us that it is not by a life of quiet, prayerful meditation alone that Christian character is perfected; something more is needed to give us a fitness for his second appearing. Neither does religion consist altogether in work; it is not necessary to be always busy, loaded down with cares and responsibilities, so that the cultivation of personal piety is neglected. Paul's exhortation to Timothy was to the point: "Take heed to thyself," and then "to the doctrine." Keep thyself in the love and fear of God, and then preach the word with all diligence. We are to be, "not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

There are many whose religion consists in activities. They want to be engaged in, and have the credit of doing, some great work while the little graces that go to make up a lovely Christian character are entirely overlooked. The busy, bustling service, which gives the impression that one is doing some wonderful work, is not acceptable to God. It is a Jehu spirit, which says, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord." It is gratifying to self; it feeds a self-complacent feeling; but all the while the soul may be defiled with the plague-spot of unsubdued, uncontrolled selfishness.

Jesus says, "I know thy works." It is indeed true that all our works are passing in review before God; then how careful should we be to have them such as will bear inspection,—honest, pure, and holy.

We should be particular in self-examination, making sure that we have the oil of grace in our vessel with our lamps. We should maintain a living connection with God, that no Satanic spirit may be allowed to have a moulding influence upon our experience and mar our work. The Christian must represent Jesus by both being good and doing good. Then there will be a fragrance about the life, a loveliness of character, which will reveal the fact that he is a child of God, an heir of Heaven.

The soul must be surrendered to God, submitted to be purified and made fit for the indwelling of his Holy Spirit. Unless the fountain be cleansed, the stream which issues from it will be impure; but if the fountain be pure, it cannot send forth bitter water. It is by cultivating meekness and lowliness, by performing kindly, thoughtful acts for others when no human eye can see and no human praise stimulate, by hiding self in Jesus, and letting his gentleness appear in the home-life, by exercising patience when provoked, giving a soft answer when tempted to be harsh, overbearing, and vindictive, that we leave the unmistakable impression on the minds of our children that father and mother are Christians. To be a Christian is to be Christlike,—to learn of him daily, to work as he worked, to deny self as he denied himself. Jesus lived not to please himself, and his disciples must follow his example.

To every one Jesus has left a work to do, there is no one who can plead that he is excused. Every Christian is to be a worker with Christ; but those to whom he has intrusted large means and abilities have the greater responsibilities, and Satan will tempt these in various ways to neglect their sacred trust. In the parable, Jesus carries his hearers forward to the general Judgment, when every man's case will be decided according to his faithfulness in the work left for him to do. Men are justified by faith, but judged and rewarded according to their works.

The Master bestows his gifts according to the varied capacities of his servants. In the parable we read: "Unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey." To every one of us is committed some talent to be improved by use. The goods of Heaven are intrusted to our keeping, not to be hoarded or idolized, but to be wisely employed in the service of Christ. We are to place the highest value upon the talents committed to our trust, and to trade even with pence and farthings. Our opportunities may seem small; but if we are diligent, the blessing of God will rest on our efforts. He admits no idlers in his vineyard. All will be held responsible, from those in the highest positions to those in the most lowly; and of all he expects returns corresponding to the gifts bestowed.

Every man is responsible for the use he makes of his time, his talents, and his possessions; for they are not his own. In the parable we are represented as trading on borrowed capital. Our relation to God is that of borrowers; to our fellow-men, that of owners. God is the giver of all our benefits. Not only has he the right of ownership in ourselves and all that we have, but he alone can give wisdom to so guide us that we shall make no mistake in using our powers according to his purposes. Yet how few there are who consider that they must render an account to God for the use they make of every faculty. How often men act as though their time and their possessions were their own, to be used as best pleased themselves.

No honest, faithful laborer will rest content while neglecting to use his tact, skill, and inventive powers to advance the interests of his employer. If to successfully carry on the various enterprises connected with worldly business, aptness, careful thought, education, and discipline are required, how much more essential that these qualities be used in the service of the Lord, in advancing his

cause in the earth; and as the faculties are exercised in this direction, their power is increased, so that each succeeding day we shall be able to do better work for God and humanity.

The power of speech is one of God's good gifts to man. In the day of final accounts, we shall find that the tongue was a power for good or a power for evil. It is often used in making hard speeches, in speaking words that descend like a desolating hail upon tender plants. There is much dishonesty, much exaggeration, in the use of the tongue. All these things come under the head of idle words; and for every idle word that men utter, they must give an account at the bar of God.

There are many whose conversation is apt and appropriate where their own interests are concerned, who never think of their obligation to use precious talent in winning souls to Christ. But the power of speech is a sacred trust to be improved to exalt the plan of redemption and magnify its Author, to speak words of comfort to the discouraged and desponding, to speak kind and pleasant words that shall be as a refreshing draught to those who are thirsting for sympathy and love. Our conversation should not be upon our own disappointments and trials, but upon the love of Jesus and the better home in Heaven. Dear reader, let your conversation be honest. Use sound speech which cannot be condemned, that it may minister grace and knowledge to the hearer.

The gift of writing is a talent from God; but in many cases this too has been perverted so that it has become an active agent in promoting evil. Many who profess to be children of God write to their friends in an extravagant, jesting strain, perhaps even turning serious subjects into sport and ridicule. Every communication is registered in Heaven; a copy is imprinted on the books above, with the result of these productions; and in the day of Judgment, what shame will cover those who have written or spoken idle, mischievous words. But if the love of Jesus is in the heart, the letters will breathe his spirit. Out of the treasure-house of such a heart will be brought forth good, precious things, edifying the one with whom you communicate.

The Master has given directions, "Occupy till I come." He is the great proprietor, and has a right to investigate every transaction, and approve or condemn; he has a right to rebuke, to encourage, to counsel, or to expel. The Lord's work requires careful thought and the highest intellect. He will not inquire how successful you have been in gathering means to hoard, or that you may excel your neighbors in property, and gather attention to yourself while excluding God from your hearts and homes. He will inquire, What have you done to advance my cause with the talents I lent you? What have you done for me in the person of the poor, the afflicted, the orphan, and the fatherless? I was sick, poor, hungry, and destitute of clothing; what did you do for me with my intrusted means? How was the time I lent you employed? How did you use your pen, your voice, your money, your influence? I made you the depositary of a precious trust by opening before you the thrilling truths heralding my second coming. What have you done with the light and knowledge I gave you to make men wise unto salvation?

Our Lord has gone away to receive his kingdom; but he will prepare mansions for us, and then will come to take us to himself. In his absence he has given us the privilege of being co-laborers with him in the work of preparing souls to enter those mansions of light and glory. It was not that we might lead a life of worldly pleasure and extravagance that he left the royal courts of Heaven, clothing his divinity with humanity, and becoming poor that we through his poverty might be made rich. He did this that we might follow his example of self-denial for others.

Each one of us is building upon the true foundation, wood, hay, and stubble, to be consumed in the last great conflagration, and our life-work be lost, or we are building upon that foundation, gold, silver, and precious stones, which will never perish, but shine the brighter amid the devouring elements that will try every man's work. Any unfaithfulness in spiritual and eternal things here will result in loss throughout endless ages. Those who lead a Christless life, who exclude Jesus from heart, home, and business, who leave him out of their counsels, and trust to their own heart, and rely on their own judgment, are unfaithful servants, and will receive the reward which their works have merited.

At his coming the Master will call his servants, and reckon with them. The parable certainly teaches that good works will be rewarded according to the motive that prompted them; that skill and intellect used in the service of God will prove a success, and will be rewarded according to the fidelity of the worker. Those who have had an eye single to the glory of God will have the richest reward. Selfishness, indolence, worldliness, pride, covetousness, and human ambition will appear in their true and hateful character, as the works of Satan; while every work done from love to Jesus, with a sincere desire to glorify him, will appear as the height of human excellence and wisdom.

With the consciousness that they have done only their duty, and merit no reward, the faithful stewards will present the talents they have gained through use. They bring sheaves. With their money and talents they have been instrumental in bringing honor to Jesus; through his blessing attending their efforts, they have been able to benefit others. They present to their Lord both principal and interest; but it is with a sense of humility. An eternal weight of glory is awarded them; but they receive it as a free gift.

But to those who hide their Lord's talents in the earth, Jesus will say, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant.... Wherefore gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds."

Take from him the opportunities for usefulness which he has failed to improve. I have no confidence in him; he will not do faithful work for me. He has misused my gifts, perverted my talents. Had he traded in my interest upon the capital I intrusted to him, he would now reap eternal life; but he has lived selfishly; his life-work has been a failure. And now he comes unrolling a napkin, and telling me I have my own. He brings no interest. Take the talent from him, for he is no longer worthy of it, and give it to him that has ten talents; for to him that hath shall be given, and from him that has no returns to make, even that which I intrusted to him shall be taken away. And he shall suffer eternal loss. "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

I present these thoughts before the laymen in the church, that they may awaken to a sense of their responsibility. What are you doing, dear reader, with your intrusted talents? If you are burying them in the world, do so no longer. Work for Jesus; put your entire interest into his cause. Self-flattery and self-deception would make you believe that you are doing about right; but how does your life compare with that of Jesus when he was in this world? Jesus has done everything for you; he withheld not even himself. Now show zeal and earnestness in putting all your powers to work for him, and you will receive as your reward the gift of eternal life.

November 27, 1884

Noah's Time and Ours

In the days of Noah "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth." This is an accurate description of the generation that perished in the waters of the flood; for it was written by inspiration.

"God saw that the wickedness of man was great," and that the "earth was filled with violence." Lawlessness was rife. God had given men his commandments as a rule of life; but the fear of God had well-nigh died out of their hearts. His law was transgressed, and almost every conceivable sin was the result. The wickedness of men was open and daring, and the cries of the oppressed reached to Heaven. Justice was trampled in the dust. The strong not only disregarded the rights of the weak, but forced them to commit deeds of violence and crime.

The same characteristics prevail in our day. Crimes as grievous, as black and terrible, are perpetrated. How many men in high positions, who have been honored as men of talent and integrity, have proved themselves unworthy to be trusted. How many such persons have been detected in fraud, bribery, theft, and even murder. Take up the secular papers, and read the accounts of murder. Many of these crimes are so cold-blooded and causeless that it seems as though men kill one another merely from impulse or for amusement. And these atrocities have become of such common occurrence that they hardly elicit a comment or awaken surprise. They are looked upon as a matter of course, as evils that must be endured.

Before the flood the wickedness of man was great; but this was not all. "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The purposes and desires of the heart were corrupt from day to day.

Men sometimes flatter themselves that in this enlightened age they are superior in knowledge and talents to those who lived before the flood; but those who think this do not rightly estimate the physical and mental strength of that long-lived race. Growth was slow and firm. Men did not, as at the present time, flash into maturity early, use up their vital forces, and only live out half their days. Their minds were of a high order, and were strong and clear. Had these men, with their rare powers to conceive and execute, devoted themselves to the service of God, they would have made their Creator's name a praise in the earth, and would have answered the purpose for which he gave them being. But they failed to do this. Man corrupted his way on the earth. There were many giants, men of great stature and strength, renowned for wisdom, skillful in devising the most cunning and wonderful work; but in proportion to their skill and mental ability was their great guilt because of unbridled iniquity. They were apostates from God, and were cruel and oppressive to those who were not able to resist them.

God bestowed upon these antediluvians many and rich gifts; but they used his bounties to glorify themselves, and turned them into a curse by fixing their thoughts and affections upon the gifts

instead of the Giver. They had goodly trees of great variety and almost without limit; but of these they made temples, where they reveled in scenes of pleasure and wickedness. Gold, silver, and precious stones were in abundance, but they used these also to gratify the desires of their own proud hearts.

These sinful men could not deny the existence of God; but they would have been glad to know that there was no God to witness their deeds, and call them to an account. They delighted to put him out of their minds and hearts. The children were not taught to fear and reverence their Maker. They grew up unrestrained in their desires; and were without principle or conscience. Their minds were absorbed in devising means to rival one another in pleasure and vice. This world was all the Heaven these people wanted. They were slaves to appetite and passion, and the indulgence of every wish was their ambition. They were hasty and violent, and would bear no contradiction. Everything that interfered with their desires was bitterly hated, and quickly moved out of the way.

Yet the whole world was not corrupt. There were faithful witnesses for God. Methuselah, Enoch, Noah, and many others labored to keep alive on the earth the knowledge of the true God, and to stay the tide of moral evil. God declared that his Spirit should not always strive with guilty men, but that their probation should be a hundred and twenty years; if they did not then cease to pollute with their sins the world and its rich treasures, he would blot them from his creation; and these faithful ministers of righteousness gave the warning message to the world. But the light was not heeded; and the preaching of Noah and his co-laborers impressed hearts less and less. Many, even of the worshipers of God, were beguiled into sin by the bewitching allurements which were constantly before them, and lost their peculiar, holy character. They had not sufficient moral power to stand against the corrupting influences of the age.

By their obstinate resistance to the reproofs of conscience and the warnings of God's prophets, that generation filled up the measure of their iniquity, and became ripe for destruction. The patience of God was exhausted, and he determined to manifest his justice in the utter extinction of the sinful race, who had given themselves up to the almost unrestrained control of Satan. Because mankind had perverted his gifts, he would deface and destroy the things with which he had delighted to bless them; he would sweep away the beasts of the field, and the rich vegetation which furnished such an abundant supply of food, and transform the fair earth into one vast scene of desolation and ruin.

Is not this picture of the antediluvian world reproduced in our time? Man has not grown more pure and holy since the days of Noah. His heart has not changed; it is still "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." The intense worldliness of that generation is exceeded by that of the generation now living. Money is lavishly spent for costly houses, fine horses and carriages, and other expensive articles for luxury and display, while the poor suffer for food and clothing. God intrusts means to his stewards that they may prevent heart-sickening poverty with its attendant ignorance and wretchedness; but they do not realize their duty to their fellow-men. The fear of God is banished from their hearts, and his law is treated with indifference and neglect.

Said Christ, "As in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." God did not condemn the antediluvians for eating and drinking; he had given them the fruits of the earth in great abundance

to supply their physical wants. Their sin consisted in taking these gifts without gratitude to the Giver, and debasing themselves by indulging appetite without restraint.

It was lawful for them to marry. Marriage was in God's order; it was one of the first institutions which he established. He gave special directions concerning this ordinance, clothing it with sanctity and beauty; but these directions were forgotten, and marriage was perverted and made to minister to passion. The pious mingled with the depraved, and became like them in spirit and in deeds. "The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose."

A similar state of things exists now in relation to marriage. Marriages are formed between the godly and the ungodly because inclination governs in the selection of husband or wife. The parties do not ask counsel of God, nor have his glory in view. Christianity ought to have a controlling, sanctifying influence upon the marriage relation; but husband and wife are not united by Christian principle; uncontrolled passion lies at the foundation of many of the marriages that are contracted at the present time.

In Noah's day there were men who laughed to scorn his words of warning. They said that there were fixed laws in nature, which made a flood impossible; that Noah was crazy on this subject, and if there were any truth in what he said, the men of renown, the wise, the prudent, the great men, would understand the matter. There was total disbelief in Noah's testimony in regard to the coming judgments; but this unbelief did not prevent or hinder the coming storm. At the appointed time, "the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened," and the earth was washed of its corruption. Only those who found shelter in the ark were saved.

Reader, another storm is coming. The earth will again be swept by the desolating wrath of God; and again sin and sinners will be destroyed. Do you feel that it is an event of little importance? Read some of the utterances of the prophets in reference to the day of God: "Behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." "Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come." "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord. The mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness."

But though this is a day of trouble and distress to the wicked, the righteous will be able to say, "Lo, this is our God;" "we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." The truth will be their shield and buckler. God will be their refuge, and under his wings shall they trust. Says the psalmist: "Because thou hast made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

December 4, 1884

Requisites to a Good Prayer-Meeting

Christians do not always make the public worship of God of sufficient importance. They do not realize their responsibility in the matter. The prayer-meeting, especially, is often dull, spiritless, and unattractive. But it need not be. Even where few love the hour of prayer, it may be made interesting and profitable. The presence of Jesus is not confined to large assemblies. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name," he says, "there am I in the midst of them." "If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven."

We may rest with assurance upon these promises; but if we would have them fulfilled to us, we must live so that God can consistently bless us. If we consciously cherish envy, malice, or any evil in our hearts, our worship is only mockery in the sight of God. We must confess and forsake our sins; we must search our hearts, and see that everything is put away that grieves the dear Saviour; we must be living examples of the transforming grace of God. But when we have done all on our part, we may come to Jesus in humble faith; and he will hear our prayers, for his word is pledged.

If the prayer-meeting is made what it ought to be, it must be preceded by holy living. "The kingdom of God, and his righteousness," must be made the first consideration. To meet the claims of God involves a cross. We are under obligation to honor him by a well-ordered life and godly conversation, and to do all in our power to win others to his service. And to do this requires self-denial. It leaves us no time to devote to selfish plans or pursuits. Frequently business matters receive careful attention, while the interests of the soul are made secondary. While this state of things exists, Christians can never have a convincing power with unbelievers, and the prayer-meeting will be destitute of the presence of the Spirit of God.

Let every one who professes to be a follower of Christ inquire, What am I doing for Jesus? "Ye are the light of the world," said Christ to his disciples. Can you, then, feel clear in inactivity and indolence in the cause of God? There is no such thing as selfishness in religion,—no such thing as a religion that can be enjoyed without benefiting any one. The truth held in humility will commend itself to the minds and hearts of others. The faith which works by love, and purifies the heart, cannot be kept bottled up like some precious perfume. The light of the Christian is not to be put under a bushel, but on a candle-stick, that it may give light to all that are in the house.

Christian friends, will you consider how you can make the prayer-meeting interesting? You can do this if you will. Do not feel that God will care for the meeting, and you have nothing to do. He has given you ability, and he requires you to use it. In the plan of salvation, man must co-operate with God. He has duties to perform as well as hopes to entertain. In the first place, you are not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together. Be prompt and regular in your attendance. Do not let trifles keep you away from the house of prayer. Though there may be but two or three who meet together, be in your place at the time appointed.

Before leaving home, go to God in secret prayer. Plead with him for his blessing, and He who "seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." With your heart softened by the love of Jesus, go to the meeting, feeling that you are personally responsible for its success. If but few attend, you should feel under double responsibility. You are in the service of God, and should do what you can with your talent, tact, and skill to make his worship interesting. You bestow care and thought on business matters; you labor to make them a success. Would you do less for the worship of God? Are not eternal interests of far greater importance than those that are earthly? In this matter act like

intelligent, rational beings. Do not so burden yourselves with temporal cares that you will have no life and energy for the prayer-meeting. God will work with your efforts; but he will not bless you in indolence and carelessness. He speaks to hearts that feel, to consciences that respond to his claims.

When you speak or pray, make an effort to speak in clear tones, loud enough to be heard by all. You do not address your family in a whisper, but in a cheerful, pleasant, audible voice; why not let the same distinct and agreeable tones be heard in the prayer-meeting? If you have never learned to talk aloud when speaking of Jesus, let this be one of your first lessons. If you have been in the habit of praying so that no one present could understand what you said, reserve all such whispered prayers for the closet. How can the prayer-meeting be made interesting, when the prayers offered and the testimonies borne are spoken in so low a tone that only an occasional word can be heard? Who can respond "Amen"? Who can be benefited by such testimonies, however good and fitting they may be in themselves? Who can know how to speak words of comfort and encouragement, or to help those who need help?

Many prayers and testimonies are as destitute of the Spirit of God as a dry sponge is of moisture; for there is no Jesus abiding in the heart. This makes the prayer-meeting cold and lifeless, and it is no wonder that children dread such seasons. Bring no dull, complaining spirit into the prayer-meeting. Do not compare notes to see how sorrowful a story you can tell. There is enough to talk about without raising one doleful strain. When we are willing to come as little children, conscious of our own weakness, and willing to be instructed by the Divine Teachers, our hearts will be filled with the love of Jesus, and we shall long to speak of his matchless worth. We shall cease to talk of self. Our trials will look so small that we shall forget to mention them. We have many blessings. Let us cultivate gratitude, and talk of the goodness of God.

We should individually know Jesus as a sin-pardoning Saviour. We should be able to testify to his compassionate love, and the virtues of the cleansing stream that washes away the stains of sin. Why not speak often one to another of the blessed hope held out before us in the great plan of salvation? Why not talk of the heavenly inheritance and of the rich promises of God? Jesus lives to intercede for us; then let us be glad. Let us come before the Lord with gratitude and praise in our hearts and on our lips. Let us, with rejoicing, speak to one another "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody" in our hearts to the Lord. "Whoso offereth praise," says the Creator, "glorifieth me." Let us not withhold the tribute that is his due.

Full to overflowing will be the heart that is transformed by grace. Divine love will be revealed in the manner, in the speech, in the life. The Christian will enjoy communion with his Maker; he will enjoy the precious privileges of his high calling in Christ Jesus. We want calm devotion; we want the courage and hope to be derived from worshiping God with his people; but we must also have activity and energy, for we have a work to do. "Ye are a chosen generation," says Peter, "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

Let us who have experienced these rich blessings seek to draw others to the Saviour, that they may share the light that shines upon our pathway. Let us point them to Jesus, and say, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The highest commendation we can receive as Christian workers is to say that we present Christ lifted up on the cross as the object of supreme

desire; and how can we do this better than by making religion attractive? Let us show that to us the worship of God is not drudgery and dry form, but spirit and life.

December 18, 1884

God's Dealing with Apostasy

The Lord chose Israel as his peculiar people, and designed that they should be the depositaries of his law. They were to be a distinct and holy nation, separate from the heathen nations around them. They were to preserve the knowledge of the true God, and through them, light from Heaven was to shed its healing beams to all the world. They were to be a living illustration of the superiority of that religion which acknowledges God as the supreme ruler of the universe.

But in the days of Ahab, one of Israel's wicked kings, the people wandered far from God. The heathen Jezebel, whom Ahab married, introduced the worship of false gods,—Baal and the Zidonian goddess Ashtoreth. Through her influence the people were taught that these idol gods were deities, ruling the elements of earth, fire, and water by their mystic power. They forgot that the hills and valleys, the streams and fountains, were in the hand of the living God; that he controlled the sun, the clouds of heaven, and all the powers of nature. They forgot that in the wilderness, in the day of Israel's need, he had listened to the prayers of Moses, and that in obedience to his word living waters gushed from the smitten rock.

The Lord sent his prophet with words of warning and rebuke. He came to the king, through whose influence the people had been led into idolatry, and asserted Jehovah's right to be the only God in Israel. Repeated warnings were given only to be disregarded. The people were captivated by the gorgeous display, and the fascinating rites of idol worship; and they followed the example of their king, and gave themselves up to a degrading and sensual worship, and its intoxicating pleasures. Led by the king and his court, they rejected the moral government of Jehovah, and were unfaithful to their trust as the depositaries of divine truth. The clear light shone upon them; but they preferred to follow their own ways rather than God's ways. And the worship of God, and the good and wholesome laws he had given them, were disregarded.

At length the time came when God could bear with them no longer, and he sent his prophet with a message of denunciation. Elijah came in before the king unannounced, and, lifting his hand toward heaven, solemnly declared: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Having delivered his terrible message, he departed as suddenly as he came, and was gone, before the astonished king could frame a reply.

The word of the Lord went into immediate effect. Apostate Israel should test the power of the gods to whom they had rendered homage. They had forsaken him who brought them up out of Egypt, and had forgotten the wonderful displays of his power at the Red Sea and in the wilderness; and he withdrew his gracious blessings, which they had taken as a matter of course, without gratitude, without even acknowledging them as his gifts. He cut off the dew and rain of heaven, and what a scene of desolation the parched and barren earth became! Now the people could see that he who created nature could control her laws, and could make them the instruments of blessing or destruction.

The priests of Baal have worshiped nature, and have exalted the created above the Creator. All the blessings they enjoy have been ascribed to nature and to their gods. Now they have an opportunity to prove the power of their gods, and of showing that Elijah's words are false. They have altars and priests, and expensive sacrifices are provided to be offered to their idol gods. If nature, governed by her infallible laws, continues her course in defiance of Jehovah's threatenings, then let nature be exalted above the God of nature. If Baal can bring showers of rain; if he can clothe the fields with verdure, and cause vegetation to flourish; if he can bring forth the harvest in its season, and thus provide food for man and beast, then let the gods of wood and stone be worshiped. Who shall fear the God of Elijah, or tremble at the words of the prophet?

The famine came with all its horrors; but the people did not learn the lesson God would teach them. They did not humble their proud hearts, but began to search for some other cause for their sufferings than the true one. They finally decided that Elijah was the originator of all their misery. He had told them that they were breaking the law of God; that all, both teachers and people, were given to idolatry; and he had announced that the Lord would bear with them no longer. If they could only put Elijah out of the way, their troubles would be at an end. The king searched for him through all the land, and there was no nation or kingdom whither he did not send messengers to seek for the man whom he feared and hated.

But at last the word of the Lord came to Elijah, "Go, show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth." The king and the prophet meet; and the king haughtily demands, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" The prophet casts back the imputation. "I have not troubled Israel," he replies; "but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim."

It was disregard of the law of God on the part of Ahab and his people that had brought all their calamities upon them; and Elijah hesitated not to declare the whole truth to the guilty king. The world is full of flatterers and dissemblers, both in palaces and in the ordinary walks of life; but how few there are who have the courage that Elijah manifested,—how few who will stand in defense of the broken law of God in opposition to the great men of earth.

The character of Baal, and that of the true God, were fully revealed. In the long famine the Lord had shown himself mightier than the gods of the heathen; and then came the great test on Carmel, when fire fell from heaven, and consumed the sacrifice of Elijah. The people were now ready to admit that the God of Elijah was above every god, and with one accord they exclaimed, "The Lord, he is the God! the Lord, he is the God!" But they must be protected from those who had taught them idolatry. That they might no longer allure souls to ruin, Elijah was directed to destroy the four hundred and fifty false teachers who had led the people to transgress. When Israel had acknowledged allegiance to the God of Heaven, and the priests of Baal were slain, the windows of heaven were opened, and the blessed showers were permitted to fall on the seared and blackened earth.

The character of God has not changed. He is still the mighty God of Israel. "Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity." And he is just as jealous for his law now as he was in the days of Ahab and Elijah.

And how that law is disregarded at the present day! It is made void by many, even among professed Christians. This is a truth-hating, Bible-neglecting, froward generation. By many it is considered as evidence of ability and learning to sneer at the word of God; and in many cases those who are simple enough to take that word just as it reads, and believe it, are subjects of ridicule. But the Lord will not suffer his law to be broken with impunity. There is a time coming “when the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.” Then they will learn the important lesson that the “fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;” they will realize that “a good understanding have all they that do his commandments.”