

Ellen G. White 1885 Sign Of The Times

January 1, 1885

The Old Year and the New

The old year with its three hundred and sixty-six days of privilege and duty, has passed into eternity; and each day a record has been made in the books of Heaven. Our individual characters are as distinctly and faithfully represented there as are the features of the face on the polished plate of the artist. The Lord never mistakes in his estimate of our acts and motives. Our lives stand revealed before the angels in their true light. If the character is unlovely and debased, if the disposition is harsh, over-bearing, and passionate, these traits will exclude their possessor from Heaven. All our acts, with the motives that prompted them, are weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, and the decisions rendered are just and equal. The Lord does not excuse in one what he condemns in another.

Dear reader, examine your own heart and life in the light of God's word, and ask yourself, "What has my record been for the year that is just closing? What advancement have I made in the Christian life? what victories have I gained? and what have I done to help others, and lead them to Christ?"

God has not placed you in this world to lead an aimless life. He designs that you should be useful, and reach a high standard of moral excellence. To each one some work is given. During the old year have you performed your appointed task with cheerfulness and fidelity, having an eye single to the glory of God? Opportunities and privileges have been granted you; what use have you made of these good gifts intrusted to you by our loving heavenly Father? Have you made yourself a blessing to those around you? Have you done what you could to make them happy and win them to Christ?

All this is a part of your appointed work. God also requires each of us to subdue self, not giving the rein to self-indulgence or appetite, and to form characters that will stand the test of the Judgment and go with us into the future life. To guide us in this work he has given us his law, that great standard of right, which will prove a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Have you been conforming your life to this standard? Have you been forming right habits; a Christlike character, or have vicious habits been left to grow and strengthen, until they hold mind and heart in bondage?

Let us remember that character is not the result of accident, but day by day it is forming for good or for evil. Great importance attaches to this work of character building; for it is far-reaching in its results. We are builders for time and for eternity. Few realize the power of habit. Inspiration asks, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" and adds, "Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." This is a solemn assertion, and may well make us thoughtful. But there is comfort and courage in the reflection that if evil habits acquire such force that it seems almost impossible to turn in the right direction, the power of good habits is equally strong. The results of each day's work, whether the tendency be to elevate us in the scale of moral worth or to push us downward toward perdition, are influenced by the days that have preceded it. Defeat today prepares the way for still greater defeat tomorrow; victory today insures an easier victory tomorrow. Then how careful we should be to see that the habits and characters we are forming are correct and virtuous, fashioned after the Divine Model.

Young friends, restrain your feet from all evil ways. Do not take the first step in that direction; for there is no peace or happiness in them. Temptations may come to you in many bewitching forms to entice you from the path of rectitude; but beware. Evil angels, like a dark cloud, are around the vicious and depraved. They are binding them, body and soul, in firm chains that nothing but the grace of God can unloose. Look at the pale, sickly faces of your young companions who have gone astray. Their vicious practices may be read in their haggard countenances, and in their trembling, staggering gait. Bad habits have fixed a brand upon them which they will carry to the grave. They may reform, and improve their condition physically and mentally, and God will pardon, but the traces of sin will remain.

Men may discipline themselves to do right. Like Daniel they may have a Heaven-born purpose in their hearts that they will not defile soul or body, notwithstanding the degeneracy and corruption of the age. God gave Daniel "knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom." His blessing attended the man who put forth human effort in accordance with the divine will. The same help will still be given to all who pursue a similar course, and with the glory of God in view practice abstinence and self-restraint. The same difference will be seen between them and the self-indulgent that there was between Daniel and his fellows and the other youth in the king's court. There will be the clear eye and complexion, the firm tread, the strength and vigor of intellect, the keen perception of spiritual truth.

"Make straight paths for your feet," says the apostle, "lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." The path that leads away from God, away from his holy, perfect standard of right, is always crooked and dangerous. Yet during the past year many have been walking in this path of transgression. In many cases they did not start right in childhood and youth, and they have pursued crooked paths all the way along. Not only have they erred from the right way themselves, but through the influence of their example others have been turned aside from the straight, plain path, and have made fatal mistakes.

We do not always understand the sacred meaning attached to our life and our life-work. We do not always realize the power of example. We are brought in contact with others. We meet persons who are erring, who do wrong in various ways; they may be disagreeable, quick, passionate, dictatorial. While dealing with these we must be patient, forbearing, kind, and gentle. Satan works through them to provoke and harass, so that we shall not exhibit a pleasant and lovable disposition. There are trials and perplexities for us all to encounter; for we are in a world of cares, anxieties, and disappointments. But these continual annoyances must be met in the spirit of Christ. Through grace we may rise superior to our surroundings, and keep our spirits calm and unruffled amid the frets and worries of every-day life. We shall thus represent Christ to the world.

It is only through the help of the Spirit of God that we can gain so great a victory. The apostle exhorts his Ephesian brethren: "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.... Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance."

Consecration to God must be a living, practical matter; not a theory to be talked about, but a principle interwoven with all our experience. We should let our light so shine before others that they, seeing our good works, shall glorify our Father who is in Heaven. We should show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. If the light of Heaven is in the soul, it will be reflected to all around us. I wish all could see this important subject in its true light. There would not then be such thoughtlessness of words and acts, such careless, indolent, irreligious living.

Dear reader, shall the close of the year 1885 find you farther advanced than you are today? Will you put away evil habits? Will you be considerate of others, faithful to do the work of a Christian? If you will carry the principles of right-doing into all the affairs of life, you will find that it will promote health of body, peace of mind, and prosperity of soul. You will have a strength, dignity, and sweetness of character that will have a transforming influence upon others.

We are now entering upon a new year, and may it prove a beginning of years to us. If in the old year we have made failures, let us commence the new by rectifying these errors as far as we can. If the old year has borne into eternity a spotted record of opportunities neglected and privileges slighted, let us see that that of the new year is free from these blemishes. Its days are all before us; let us begin now to make the history of each as it passes such as we shall not tremble to meet in the Judgment. Let us fill each one full of loving, helpful work for others. Let us develop all our powers, and make of ourselves all that God designed we should.

In the keeping of God's commandments there is great reward. A reward awaits the overcomer in the great day, when he shall hear from the lips of our Lord the gracious words, "Well done, good and faithful servant;" and there is also a present reward in the peace and happiness that flow from a conscience at rest, from the sweet assurance that we enjoy the favor of God. "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies." To all who walk in his ways the new year will be crowned with goodness and blessing.

January 8, 1885

The Calling and Character of John

John was one of the first to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. He had listened to the preaching of John the Baptist, and knew that he was sent as the forerunner of Him who was the Hope of Israel. To John and Andrew the Baptist pointed out Jesus as "the Lamb of God." They immediately sought an interview with the new teacher. If the testimony which they had heard borne of him was indeed true, that it was he who should take away the sin of the world, they would become acquainted with him, and be instructed by his words of wisdom. Jesus saw them following him, and welcomed them to his humble abode. They remained with him that night, and when they left his presence, it was with their faith in his divine character and mission fully confirmed.

Andrew went in search of his own brother, Simon, and brought him to Jesus, with the welcome announcement, "We have found the Messiah." The next day Jesus called Philip to follow him. Philip sought out Nathanael, whom he knew to be a sincere and godly man, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and expressed his firm conviction that in Jesus of Nazareth he had found "Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write."

Andrew, Peter, James, and John were henceforth known as disciples of Jesus. They accompanied him to Jerusalem, and were with him while he preached in the cities and villages of Judea, and in Samaria on his return to Galilee. They heard his teachings, and witnessed the exhibitions of divine power in the miracles which he performed; and day by day their faith increased, that this unassuming Galilean peasant was indeed the promised Messiah, who should restore the kingdom to Israel.

Though they attended upon the preaching of Jesus, and were much in his society, they still pursued their humble calling; but the time came when they were to leave their nets and their fishing boats, and be more closely associated with Jesus. Crowds now attended upon his ministry; and as he taught by the lake of Gennesaret, they so "pressed upon him to hear the word of God," that he entered into Peter's boat, and from it taught the people on the shore. When he had ceased speaking, he said unto Peter, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." Peter answered that they had toiled all night, and had taken nothing. Their labors had been fruitless in the usual time for fishing, and there was no human probability of success now; "nevertheless," said Peter, "at thy word I will let down the net." It was done, and the draught of fishes was so great that the net could not contain them, and James and John, the partners of Andrew and Peter, were called to their assistance.

Astonished beyond measure at the unexpected result of his act of simple obedience, Peter impulsively exclaimed, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." But Jesus soothed his excited disciples, telling them that from henceforth they should be fishers of men. An important and solemn work was before them. They were to give up their only means of support, and spend their lives in unselfish efforts to save perishing sinners; but before he called them to this life of self-denial and dependence upon God, the loving Saviour showed them, that, as Lord of Heaven and earth, he was abundantly able to provide for all their wants.

"And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him." From this time they were constantly with Jesus. The Great Teacher passed by the wise men of earth, the talented and the educated, who were accustomed to receive praise and homage as leaders of the people. They were so proud and self-confident in their boasted superiority that they could not be moulded to sympathize with suffering humanity and become co-laborers with the humble Man of Nazareth. It was easier to train and educate these unlearned fishermen for the high and holy work to which he had called them; for they were teachable. They could be elevated to meet the divine standard. They could be taught to subdue self, and could be imbued with correct principles and pure doctrines.

Before they should go out to preach to all the world the good news of salvation through Christ, the disciples were to gain an experience; their fidelity was to be tested.

While teaching them, Jesus was instructing the world. He opened to them sacred truths. He taught them the worth of the soul, that they might feel the importance of laboring for its salvation with zeal and enthusiasm. They must be fitted for the great work which they were to carry forward when Jesus should leave them and return to the Father; and he kept them near him that they might see the character of his labor and be inspired with his spirit.

John was distinguished above the other disciples as the one whom Jesus loved; and he received many tokens of the confidence and love which he enjoyed in so pre-eminent a degree. While not in the least weak or vacillating in character, he had cultivated an amiable disposition and possessed a

warm, loving heart. It was his delight to be ever at the side of his Master, listening to his gracious words of instruction, and his deep and genuine affection led him to be a doer as well as a hearer of the word. Day by day his heart was drawn out toward Christ, until he lost sight of self in love for his Master.

His love for Jesus was not a mere human friendship; it was the love of a repentant sinner, who felt his dependence on the pardoning love and transforming grace of his Redeemer. His deep and fervent affection was not the cause, but the effect of Christ's love for him. It did not spring from natural goodness of heart; for he had by nature serious defects of character. But self was hid in Christ. He was closely united to the Living Vine; and though naturally proud, ambitious, and quick to resent slight and injury, he became meek and lowly of heart, a partaker of the divine nature. Such will ever be the result of communion with Christ.

John was willing to be trained as to his manner of working and the spirit in which he should labor. He did not tenaciously cling to his own way, but yielded his will to that of Christ. He loved to contemplate the life of Jesus; and his strong love gave him a deeper, clearer insight into the character of his divine Lord than any of the other disciples possessed. Here he found the great lessons and perfect model of his own life, and he was ever trying to mould his character after the lovely one presented by the Saviour.

The confiding love and unselfish devotion of John present lessons of untold value to the Christian church. God is no respecter of persons. Heaven is a place prepared for those who have a fitness of character for the society of angels. Its lofty seats are not reserved for relatives and particular friends, but are given to those who love most. The beautiful mansions are opened to those who have practiced self-denial, who have brought their wills into subjection to the will of God, and in life and character have conformed to the divine standard. They may have by nature fierce tempers and grave faults, and these may have been fostered and increased by wrong methods of training; but if through the grace of Christ they subdue their unlovely traits, and fight the good fight of faith, they will receive the overcomer's rich reward.

The work before every one of us who have named the name of Christ is to copy the divine Pattern. We must rely in loving confidence upon the merits of Christ, and take hold upon his strength. Day by day we must subdue the evil traits that strive for the mastery. Earnest faith and loving obedience will bring us into as close relationship to Christ as was the loving and beloved John. Those who are faithful in this appointed work will be the acknowledged heroes of the heavenly courts. They reflect a bright light to the world now, for the power of divine grace is made manifest in them; and by and by they will shine forever as stars in the kingdom of Heaven.

January 15, 1885

Lessons in Humility and Love

On one occasion, as Jesus was journeying with his disciples, the twelve disputed among themselves as to which of their number should be greatest. They thought that Jesus, as the promised Messiah, would set up an earthly kingdom, and reign in Jerusalem on the throne of his father David; and John was no less anxious than his brethren to secure the highest place in that kingdom. The disciples did

not intend their words to reach the ears of their Master; but he knew their hearts, and embraced this opportunity to give them a lesson in humility.

When they were come into the house, Jesus asked, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" The presence of Jesus, and his question, put the matter in an entirely different light from that in which it had appeared to them while they were contending by the way, and they held their peace. They could now see that selfishness and pride of heart were at the foundation of their desire for the pre-eminence. It is no wonder that shame and self-condemnation kept them silent. But a little while before, Jesus had told them that he was to die for their sakes, and their selfish ambition was in painful contrast to his unselfish love.

When Jesus told them that he was to be put to death, and rise again the third day, he designed to awaken their interest, and draw them out to converse with him on this subject; but, wholly engrossed in their own selfish and ambitious hopes and plans, they failed to comprehend him, and they let this golden opportunity to obtain definite knowledge concerning the great test of faith which awaited them, pass unimproved. Had this important truth deeply impressed their minds, they would have been saved much anguish and despair. Jesus would have spoken to them words that would have afforded consolation and hope in their hour of bereavement and keen disappointment.

There was a radical defect in the characters of the chosen twelve, which must be pointed out and remedied. And Jesus "sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them; and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me." Those who possess the spirit of Christ will have no desire to occupy a position above their brethren; and those who are small in their own eyes are the ones who will be accounted great in the sight of God.

This lesson was not lost upon John. He saw his character in a new light. An act was brought to his mind which he had supposed was right, but which he now began to question. "Master," said he, "we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbade him." James and John had thought that in forbidding this man to work miracles in the name of Christ, they had had their Lord's honor in view; but they began to see that they had been influenced by wrong apprehensions and a jealous desire for self-preferment. They acknowledged their mistake, and meekly accepted the mild reproof of Jesus: "Forbid him not; for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part."

But though so willing to make a personal application of the lessons of Jesus, James and John were by no means ready to abandon their ambitious designs. Soon after this, accompanied by their mother, they came to Jesus with the petition that they might be permitted to occupy the position of greatest honor in his kingdom. Jesus answered them, "Ye know not what ye ask." He knew the infinite sacrifice that awaited him; that before the kingly throne there was to be humiliation and shame, and the agonizing death of the cross. And yet he would willingly endure the terrible ordeal for the sake of seeing souls saved in his kingdom to enjoy untold bliss throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity.

This was the joy that was set before Christ, the glory that he was to receive, and that the two disciples had unwittingly requested to share. Jesus asked them, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that

I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" Little did they comprehend the bitter cup of which their Lord spoke, or realize the fiery baptism; but they fearlessly responded, "We are able." Jesus said unto them, "Ye shall indeed drink of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."

"And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren." They were not less anxious than James and John to secure the chief places in the kingdom of Christ; they were therefore angry with the two brothers for taking, as they thought, an undue advantage. Aware of their ambition and their resentment, Jesus reasoned with them. "Ye know," he said, "that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." There was to be a difference between his kingdom and the kingdoms of the world. "The princes of the Gentiles" were ambitious, and sought for place and power; but their course in this respect resulted from false ideas of greatness and the pride of the human heart. Among the disciples of Christ an entirely different state of things was to exist. One was not to aspire to dominion over his brethren, and to seek to be lord over God's heritage.

"Even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." He, their Master, had set them an example of unselfish care for others. He was Lord of Heaven, and angels obeyed his word; yet he condescended to take upon himself the weaknesses and infirmities of human nature, to live man's example and to die his sacrifice. He did not, while upon earth, choose for himself wealth and honor and pleasant associations; but his life was spent among humble peasants in ministering to the wants of the needy and the afflicted. He did not shrink from contact with the most degraded and sinful; he preached the good news of pardon and peace to all who would accept it on Heaven's gracious and liberal terms. And in their ministry the disciples were to follow his example.

The great lesson which Jesus taught on these occasions is thus expressed by the apostle Paul: "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another." The disciples were in a school in which Christ was teacher; and those who were willing to see their own defects, and were anxious to improve in character, had ample opportunity. They were constantly receiving line upon line, precept upon precept, showing them that meekness, humility, and love were essential to growth in grace, and to a fitness for the work upon which they were soon to enter.

The instruction that Christ gave was not designed merely for the little group that listened to his words, but was recorded for the benefit of all his followers to the close of time. The truths he unfolded are of universal application, and should deeply impress our hearts; for they were never more needed than at the present time. The desire for place and power was never stronger; and there are many who think of others only to plan to advantage themselves at their neighbor's expense.

The people of God should be firmly united in love, strengthening one another against temptations and trials; but how often Satan diverts the mind to selfish objects. He knows our wrong traits of character, and he takes advantage of every opportunity to arouse them to activity. He excites contention, and leads professed Christians to seek for the supremacy, while through pride and self-

esteem he blinds their eyes to their own defects of character. While the disciples were contending among themselves as to which of them should be greatest, they little thought that Jesus heard them; but he read their hearts, and understood their ambitious desires. Just so it is at the present time. Jesus is weighing the character of every individual. If our motives are not pure, if our desire to please self is stronger than our desire for righteousness or to glorify God, we may rest assured that nothing is hidden from his eye, and that the desires of our hearts, as well as the acts of our lives, will be considered in the Judgment.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

January 22, 1885

The Cripple Healed

After the death of Christ, John became a faithful, ardent laborer for his Master. For a time, judging from the world's standpoint, the Christian faith was well-nigh extinct. Its Author had died on the cross as a malefactor, and his handful of obscure disciples were covered with reproach. But John and his brethren were not disheartened. Obedient to the word of their Lord, they remained in Jerusalem until after the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Then, endued with power from on high, they preached a risen Saviour; and multitudes came out to listen, many of whom were healed of their diseases, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, that name so hated among the Jews.

Soon after the apostles commenced their public ministry, a notable miracle was performed by Peter and John. As they were one day going up to the temple, at the hour of prayer, they saw lying at the Beautiful gate, a poverty-stricken cripple, above forty years of age, whose whole life had been one of pain and infirmity. This poor man had long desired to go to Jesus and be healed; but he was far removed from the scene of the Great Physician's labors, and when at last he prevailed upon kind friends to carry him to the gate of the temple, it was only to find that He in whom his hopes were centered, had suffered a cruel death.

His disappointment excited pity, and he was daily laid at the gate of the temple, that those who went up to worship might be moved to give him a trifle to relieve his wants. As Peter and John were passing, he asked alms of them. The apostles regarded him with compassion. “And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.” The eyes of the beggar were raised to the pitying ones bent upon him. “Silver and gold have I none,” continued the apostle, “but such as I have give I thee.” The poor man's countenance, which had fallen when Peter declared his own poverty, grew bright with faith and hope as he heard the words that followed: “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.”

As Peter took him by the right hand and lifted him up, he felt through his frame the thrilling influence of divine power. “Immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he, leaping up, stood and walked,” and entered with Peter and John into the temple, “And all the people saw him walking and praising God; and they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.”

Seeing the miracle that had been performed, the people flocked together in the temple, and the apostles embraced this opportunity of preaching to them the gospel of Christ. While Peter addressed them in one part of the temple, John spoke to them in another part. The apostles disclaimed the merit of the good deed done, giving all the honor to Jesus of Nazareth, whose instruments they were. They spoke plainly of the great crime of the Jews in rejecting and putting to death the Prince of life; yet they were careful not to drive to despair those whose consciences were aroused. They declared that the Holy Spirit was calling upon them to repent of their sins, and be converted; and that through the mercy of Christ, their transgressions could all be canceled.

As the apostles preached that Christ had been raised from the dead, and that through his death and resurrection he would finally bring up all who sleep in the dust, the Sadducees were deeply stirred. They felt that their favorite doctrine was in danger, and their reputation at stake. The captain of the temple, and some of the other officials were Sadducees; and they arrested the two apostles, and put them in prison, as it was too late for their cases to be examined that night.

The Jews were astonished that the disciples could perform miracles similar to those they had seen wrought by Jesus. They had supposed that when he died, all such wonderful manifestations would cease. But here was this man who had been a helpless cripple for forty years, now free from pain, and rejoicing in the full use of his limbs.

The following day Annas and Caiaphas, with the remaining members of the council, came together, and Peter and John were brought before them. In that very room, and before those very men, Peter had shamefully denied his Lord. All this came distinctly before his mind as he now appeared for his own trial.

The members of the council remembered Peter's cowardice when his Master was before them, and they flattered themselves that he could be intimidated by threats of imprisonment and death. But the impulsive, self-confident Peter who denied Christ in the hour of his greatest need, was a very different man from the Peter who was then before the Sanhedrim for examination. He was no longer a proud boaster; he had been converted, and had become distrustful of self. He was filled with the Holy Spirit; and through its power he had become firm as a rock, and was ready with modest courage to honor the name he had once disowned. He would embrace this opportunity of redeeming his former cowardice, and removing the stain of his apostasy.

Unable to deny that a miracle had been performed, and yet unwilling to admit that it had been done by divine power, the council demanded, "By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?" Peter replied: "Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel," "be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole."

Peter then referred to the prophetic words: "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." He made the application of the psalmist's words unmistakably plain. The priests and scribes, who were in authority in the church, were themselves the builders; and, says Peter, He whom you have set at naught, whose divine character you have failed to see, is become the head of the corner. He is the desire of all nations; his is the only "name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

It is difficult for us to comprehend the degree of grace and courage required to enable the apostles to make such a confession of faith before the bigoted and prejudiced rulers of a bigoted and prejudiced people, who had done to the Lord what their wicked hearts had listed, and were ready to repeat their acts of cruelty on the persons of his followers. Peter's fearless avowal of the source whence his strength was obtained, and his bold accusation that in the person of Jesus of Nazareth they had crucified their promised Messiah, appalled these priests and rulers. They had supposed that these ignorant fishermen would be awed and embarrassed when confronted by the priests, the scribes, and the elders; but, amazed at the boldness of the apostles, they "took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."

In order to conceal their perplexity, the priests and rulers ordered the apostles to be taken from the room that they might counsel among themselves. They all agreed that it would be useless to deny that the impotent man had been healed through power derived from the Crucified One. They would gladly cover up this fact by falsehoods; but the miracle had been performed before many witnesses, and was already widely known. Thousands had embraced the new doctrine, and both Pharisees and Sadducees were convinced that if these teachers were permitted to go unchecked, their own authority and influence would be in greater danger than when Jesus himself was upon earth. They felt that the work of the apostles must be immediately stopped, or so many would believe on Jesus that they would be held guilty of the murder of the Son of God.

The rulers would gladly have destroyed the apostles, but they feared the people, knowing that "all men glorified God for that which was done." So when Peter and John were again summoned before the council, they were dismissed with threats of severe punishment should they continue to teach, or work miracles, in the name of Jesus. Undaunted by the threats of their enemies, these noble men declared that their work had been given them of God; they were his witnesses, and could not forbear to speak those things which they had seen and heard.

As soon as they were released, they sought their brethren, who, knowing the malignity of the Jews, were filled with intense anxiety. The joy of the believers was great that the apostles had escaped uninjured, and all united in thanksgiving and prayer to God. Their petition was not that they might be delivered from the power of their enemies, nor that they might be released from duty because of the peril that threatened them, but that they might have greater strength in the work of the ministry.

"And now, Lord," they prayed, "behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus." They had no desire to glorify self, but sought to exalt Jesus, and to rescue souls from everlasting ruin.

Here is an example of noble, disinterested devotion to the work of God; and what was the result? As their prayers were ascending to Heaven, the answer came. The place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. They went forth to their work with renewed zeal, speaking the word of God with convincing power, so that daily there were large additions to the church.

Such courage and firmness, in the path of duty, as was manifested by Peter and John and their co-laborers in the gospel ministry, is rare indeed; yet the church cannot attain to any great degree of

prosperity without it. Their example, with that of others who have been eminent for their good works, should kindle our ardor, and awaken generous emulation. There is a wide field in which to work. Sinners are perishing all around us; and every one who has named the name of Christ should feel under solemn obligation to do everything possible for their salvation. To bring a sinner to Christ, is to elevate, dignify, and ennoble the whole character of such an one, and make him a blessing in the home, in society, and in the church. Is not this a work that is worthy of our highest powers?

January 29, 1885

The Preaching of John

John was a faithful minister of Christ, bearing earnest testimony for his Lord on every suitable occasion. He had not enjoyed the training of the schools, his early life having been passed by the Sea of Galilee in the society of uncultivated fishermen; but, by association with the great Teacher, he had obtained the highest education which mortal man can receive. He drank eagerly at the fountain of wisdom, and then sought to lead others to that "well of water springing up into everlasting life."

He had a clear understanding of the character and mission of Jesus. The evidence that the despised Nazarene was indeed the Messiah for whom Israel had so long waited, seemed to him so clear that none need walk in the darkness of error. But the Jews would not believe. The apostle's heart was grieved as he saw that the prejudice and hatred which they so obstinately cherished, were bringing ruin upon the nation, and destroying their hope of everlasting life; that their own blindness, pride, superstition, and ignorance of the Scriptures, were riveting upon their souls fetters that would never be broken. Yet, notwithstanding their stubborn resistance to the truth, John ceased not to warn them, and to present Jesus as their only hope of salvation.

In preaching the words of life, John spoke with great power and feeling. The simplicity of his words, the sublime power of the truths he uttered, and the spiritual fervor that characterized his teachings, gave him access to all classes. He seemed ever to be imbued with the Holy Spirit. The wisdom with which he spoke caused his words to drop as the dew, softening and subduing the heart. It was his constant aim to bring the minds of the people up to grasp the unseen; yet even believers were unable to fully comprehend the sacred mysteries of divine truth unfolded in his discourses.

John believed in God as a child believes in a kind and tender father. His great love expressed in giving his Son to die for a lost race seemed to the apostle too great for language to express, a mystery which finite minds might not fathom. "Behold," he exclaims, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." He was lost in amazement that the plan of salvation, devised at such a cost to Heaven, should be refused by those for whom so great a sacrifice had been made. His favorite theme was the infinite love of Christ. When speaking on this subject, he forgot self; and the love and trust that pervaded his own heart gave a thrilling power to his words.

He had a keen sense of the love that should exist among Christian brethren; and he urged this love upon his children in the faith as an essential characteristic of the followers of Christ. While the heart is destitute of Christian charity, all pretensions to the Christian name are vain. "He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?"

The apostle was a teacher of practical holiness, giving, in his sermons and writings, unerring rules for the conduct of Christians. He declared in unmistakable terms that to be a Christian is to be Christlike. It is to be pure in heart and correct in morals; in no case should one rest satisfied with an empty profession. His own life was an illustration of his teaching, both in practical holiness and in love to God and man. It was his one great aim to conform to the will of God. He followed his Saviour so closely, and had such a sense of his purity and exalted holiness, that in contrast, his own character appeared exceedingly defective, and his humility was deep and genuine.

Although exposed to persecution and peril, and meeting many hindrances in his work, John was spared to the church for many years. Evil men, instigated by Satan, plotted to cut short the useful life of this man of God; but holy angels protected him from their malice. The church needed his testimony, and he was permitted to stand as a witness for Christ.

The apostle lived to see the gospel he loved preached far and near, and thousands eagerly accepting its gracious offer of pardon. But the joy of seeing sinners brought to Christ was not unmixed with sadness as he saw many come into the church who were not thoroughly converted, and who brought with them pernicious errors. Some were deceivers. While professing to believe the gospel, they denied Christ, and taught false doctrines; and the times were full of peril for the infant church. Some claimed that faith in Christ released them from the necessity of obedience to the law. Others held that the law was binding, also the Jewish customs and ceremonies, and that the observance of these was sufficient to insure salvation without the blood of Christ. They held that Jesus was a good man, like the apostles, but denied his divinity.

John saw the danger to which the church was exposed, and he acted with promptness and decision. The emissaries of Satan sought through misrepresentation and falsehood to stir up opposition and hinder his work. But John had been intimately associated with Christ; he had listened to his teachings and witnessed his mighty miracles; and he bore a convincing testimony that made the falsehoods of his enemies of no effect. He wrote to the churches, exhorting them not to give the leaders in these heresies the least encouragement, and by his personal influence and his zeal for the truth he hedged up their way, and saved many souls from ruin.

To one of the helpers in the gospel, a lady of good repute and extensive influence, he wrote: "Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver, and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed; for he that biddeth him Godspeed, is partaker of his evil deeds."

He also taught, in the most unequivocal terms, the binding force of the law of ten commandments. "Whosoever committeth sin," he said, "transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth [transgresseth the law] hath not seen him, neither known him."

The apostle testifies that those who profess to know God, and to be living without sin, and yet break the divine law, give the lie to their profession. His epistles breathe a spirit of love; yet when he

comes in contact with this class, he does not hesitate to reprove them sharply, and to warn them of their fearful deception. He says: "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." "Little children, let no man deceive you. He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning."

Here the apostle speaks in plain terms, as he deemed the subject demanded. In this age of boasted liberality, such plainness would be branded as bigotry. "You must have charity," is the cry everywhere, especially from those who profess sanctification. But charity is too pure to cover an unconfessed sin. The apostle teaches that while we should manifest Christian courtesy, we are authorized to call sin and sinners by their right names, and that this is consistent with true charity. While we are to love souls for whom Christ died, and labor for their salvation, we should not make a compromise with sin. We are not to unite with those who are rebelling against divine authority, and call this charity.

The character of God has not changed. He is the same jealous God today as when he gave his law upon Sinai, and wrote it with his own finger on the tables of stone. Those who trample upon his holy law may say, "I am sanctified;" but to be indeed sanctified, and to claim sanctification, are two different things. John enjoyed the blessing of genuine sanctification; but he did not claim to be sinless. He sought perfection in the way that Christ indicated in his prayer for his disciples: "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth."

The errors that crept into the early church, and threatened its prosperity, have never been extinct. They are peculiarly active at the present time, constituting one of the perils of the last days. And God requires us to stand, as did John in his time, unflinchingly for the truth. With the love of the truth burning in our hearts, we shall "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints."

February 5, 1885

The Apostle John in Exile

The wonderful success which attended the preaching of the gospel by the apostles and their fellow-laborers, increased the hatred of the enemies of Christ. They made every effort to hinder its progress, and finally succeeded in enlisting the power of the Roman Government against the Christians. A terrible persecution arose, and many of the followers of Christ were put to death.

The apostle John was now an aged man, but his zeal and success in the cause of Christ were unabated. The bitterest hatred was kindled against him for his unwavering fidelity. He was the last survivor of those who were intimately associated with Jesus; and his enemies decided that his testimony must be silenced. If this could be accomplished, and the new sect were treated with severity, they thought the doctrine of Christ might soon die out of the world.

John was accordingly summoned to Rome to be tried for his faith. His doctrines were misstated. False witnesses accused him as a seditious person, who had publicly taught theories that would subvert the nation. The apostle presented his faith in a clear and convincing manner, with such simplicity and candor that his words had a powerful effect. His enemies were astonished at his wisdom and eloquence; but the more convincing his testimony, the more intense their hatred against him. They could not controvert his reasoning, nor match the power which attended the utterance of truth; and they determined to silence its faithful advocate. By the decree of the emperor, John was banished to the Isle of Patmos, condemned “for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Patmos, the place of John's exile, was a barren, rocky island in the Aegean Sea, which had been chosen by the Roman Government as a place of banishment for criminals. In former years his life had been spent among wood-covered hills, green valleys, and fruitful plains; now his lonely home was amid scenes of desolation that to many would have appeared gloomy and uninteresting. But to him it was otherwise. Although shut away from the busy scenes of life, and from active labor as an evangelist, he was not excluded from the presence of God. He could commune with the King of kings, and study the manifestations of divine power as revealed in the book of nature, and on the page of inspiration. He had delighted to trace the wisdom and skill of the Creator in the beauties of his handiwork; and now he could see tokens of the same divine Architect in the rocky wilds of Patmos.

In the surroundings of his island home, the exiled prophet held communion with his God. The blue heavens that bent above him on lonely Patmos were as bright as the skies above his own loved Jerusalem. The words of the psalmist seemed appropriate: “The heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord; thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. For who in the Heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.” In the glory of the heavens man sees an illustration of the greatness of the Creator, and is made to feel his own littleness. If he has cherished pride and self-importance because of wealth, talents, or personal attractions, let him here learn to humble his proud spirit as in the presence of the infinite One.

In the sound of many waters,—deep calling unto deep,—John heard the voice of the Creator. The sea, lashed to fury by the merciless winds, represented the wrath of an offended God. The mighty waves, in their most terrible commotion restrained within the limits appointed by an invisible hand, testified of an infinite power controlling the deep,—of One who speaks to the proud ocean, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further,” and the waters are prompt to obey his word. In contrast with the power and majesty of Him who holds in his hands the great and wide sea, how feeble is puny man, who glories in his wisdom and strength, and sets his heart against the Ruler of the universe!

By the rocks John was reminded of Christ, the Rock of his strength, in whose shelter he could hide without a fear. They also called to his mind the rocky Horeb, where God spoke his law in the hearing of all the people. The divine Legislator proclaimed his law amid thunders and lightnings, and the thick cloud that hung over the mountain, with a voice as the voice of a trumpet, exceeding loud, that Israel might be impressed with his power and glory, and fear to transgress his commandments. John

remembered that one of these ten precepts called upon him to “remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” And the Lord's day, the day on which Jehovah rested after the great work of creation, and which he blessed and sanctified, was as sacredly observed by him upon the lonely isle as it had been when he was among the churches, worshipping with them on that holy day.

The rocky waste around him spoke eloquently of the unchangeable character of the divine law; for it testified of the flood which God brought upon the earth because of the transgression of its inhabitants. The rocks thrown up from the great deep, or rent from the solid earth, by the breaking forth of the waters, brought vividly to his mind the terrors of that awful outpouring of God's wrath, and reminded him that it is no light matter for man to sin, to set his perverse will in opposition to the will of his Maker.

Even in this world obedience is for man's highest good; and it is surely for his eternal interest to submit to God and be at peace with him. Of all the creatures that God has made on the earth, man alone is rebellious; yet he alone possesses reasoning powers to understand the claims of the divine law, and a conscience to feel the guilt of transgression and the peace and joy of obedience.

As John became more intimately acquainted with the divine character through the works of creation, his reverence for God increased, and he was overwhelmed with the thought of his majesty and greatness. God is not dependent on man for honor. He could sweep every mortal from the face of the earth in a moment of time, and create a new race to people it and glorify his name. The apostle often asked himself, Why do not men, who are wholly dependent upon God, seek to be reconciled to him by willing obedience? He is infinite in wisdom, and there is no limit to his power. He preserves in perfect harmony the grandeur and beauty of the things which he has created. Had sin never entered the universe, there would have been no discord in Heaven or in earth. Disobedience to the law of God has brought all the misery that has existed among his creatures. Then why will not man submit to a Ruler who is so great and powerful,—a Being who is so wise and kind?

In his exile, John calls to remembrance the wonderful incidents that he has witnessed in the life of Christ. In imagination he again enjoys precious intercourse with his Lord; and his heart is comforted. Suddenly his meditations are broken in upon; he is addressed in tones distinct and clear. He turns to see whence the voice proceeds, and lo! he beholds Jesus, whom he loves, with whom he walked and talked, and whose sufferings on the cross he witnessed. But how changed is the Saviour's appearance! He is no longer “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” He bears no marks of his humiliation. His eyes are like a flame of fire; his feet like fine brass, as it glows in a furnace. The tones of his voice are like the musical sound of many waters. His countenance shines like the sun in its meridian glory. In his hand are seven stars, representing the ministers of the churches. Out of his mouth issues a sharp, two-edged sword, an emblem of the power of his word.

John, who has so loved his Lord, and who has so steadfastly adhered to the truth in the face of imprisonment, stripes, and threatened death, cannot endure the excellent glory of Christ's presence, and he falls to the earth as one stricken dead. A divine hand is laid upon the prostrate form, and he hears the words, “Fear not, I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore.”

John is strengthened; and there are presented before him in holy vision, the purposes of God for future ages. He is shown the history of the church down through the centuries; he sees her feeble

and struggling, almost overborne by her enemies; he sees her wading through bloody persecutions, then emerging from the darkness of papal error, drawing nearer and nearer to the clear light of truth, until at length she looks forth "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

Nor is this all. The attractions of the heavenly home are made known to him. He beholds the beautiful city with its glittering battlements and many mansions. He is permitted to look upon the throne of God, and the white-robed throng of redeemed ones. He hears the music of angels, and the songs of triumph that rise from those who have overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. His heart is filled with longing for the uninterrupted presence of his Lord. To the cheering promise, "Surely I come quickly," he responds with a glad, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Thus highly favored was this hero of the Christian faith. On the desolate isle, and with the deep sea moaning about him, he was shut in with God; and his gloomy abode proved to him the very gate of Heaven. His enemies thought to silence a faithful witness for Christ; but from the place of exile came the most wonderful revelations, the most thrilling truths ever presented to man. And the promise of God was verified, "Them that honor me, I will honor."

February 12, 1885

A Cheerful Spirit Honors God

[Remarks made in the 6 o'clock morning meeting on the campground at Los Angeles, Cal., May 14, 1884.]

The Christian should live so near to God that he may approve things that are excellent, "being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." His heart should be attuned to gratitude and praise. He should be ever ready to acknowledge the blessings he is receiving, remembering who it is that has said, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me."

Many professed Christians dwell too much on the dark side of life, when they might rejoice in the sunshine; they repine when they should be glad; they talk of trials when they should offer praise for the rich blessings they enjoy. They look at the unpleasant things, hoard up the disappointments, and sigh over the griefs, and, as a consequence, grow heavy-hearted and sad, when, should they count up their blessings, they would find them so numerous that they would forget to mention their annoyances. If they would every day take note of the favors that are done them; if they would store their minds with the precious memory of kindnesses received, how much occasion they would find to render thanks and praise to the Giver of all good.

Some Christian wives who have unconverted husbands and children make this a cause of despondency and gloom. They manifest so much more anxiety for their friends than trust in God, that they forfeit the blessings of peace, and joy, and a thankful spirit, which might be theirs. I have heard some say that they did not even care to be saved unless their husbands and children were saved with them. They feel that Heaven would not be Heaven to them without the presence of these who are so dear. But have they an eye single to the glory of God when they cherish this feeling? Oh, no! Such expressions are not pleasing to God, for they place the creature before the Creator. But

they are just what Satan delights in, for he can use the evident sadness and discouragement of spirit that grow out of this feeling to make the Christian religion appear unattractive.

Dear Christian sisters, the best thing you can do for your loved ones who are out of Christ is to live before them a life of peace and joy, to show them that in Jesus you find a helper who gives you strength according to your day. Make home happy. In the home circle exercise Christian courtesy, forbearance, and love; but the sadness, the tears, the distress for your unconverted friends, should be reserved for the closet. Jesus will meet you there, and you may roll all your burdens upon him, the Burden-bearer. Our precious Saviour is the friend of man. He died for these souls; he is waiting to bless and save them. He has claims upon their service, for he has bought them with an infinite price; and he is grieved with their resistance of his claims, their rejection of his offers of mercy, more deeply grieved than you can possibly be.

God has given you, too, a work to do; and because your husband and children refuse to do their duty, will you relax your efforts in his cause? Should not the very fact that these who are so dear to you are ignoring his just claims upon them arouse you to greater diligence, that, so far as possible, you may supply their deficiency?

Wives, mothers, cultivate trust in God. He does not want you to carry a constant load of anxiety and care. Rise above your trials; look away from them to the blessings you are receiving. Fix the mind upon the mansions Jesus has gone to prepare for those that love him. Cultivate clear perceptions of truth, unselfish purposes, and a desire to do others good and make them happy.

"I am persuaded," says Paul, "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." Again he says: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

As you read these strong, brave words from one who suffered so much for his faith in Christ, and yet counted his severest trials as light afflictions, enduring but for a moment, will you not resolve to possess your soul in patience amid the petty annoyances of every-day life, that are often so irritating and so hard to bear? Will you not resolve that these things shall not interrupt your communion with God and separate you from his love?

Do not allow the perplexities and worries of every-day life to fret your mind and cloud your brow. If you do, you will always have something to vex and annoy. Life is what we make it, and we shall find what we look for. If we look for sadness and trouble, if we are in a frame of mind to magnify little difficulties, we shall find plenty of them to engross our thoughts and our conversation. But if we look on the bright side of things, we shall find enough to make us cheerful and happy. If we give smiles, they will be returned to us; if we speak pleasant, cheerful words, they will be spoken to us again.

When Christians appear as gloomy and depressed as though they thought themselves friendless, they give a wrong impression of religion. In some cases the idea has been entertained that cheerfulness is inconsistent with the dignity of the Christian character; but this is a mistake. Heaven is all joy; and if we gather to our souls the joys of Heaven, and as far as possible express them in our

words and deportment, we shall be more pleasing to our heavenly Father than if we were gloomy and sad.

It is the duty of every one to cultivate cheerfulness instead of brooding over sorrow and troubles. Many not only make themselves wretched in this way, but they sacrifice health and happiness to a morbid imagination. There are things in their surroundings that are not agreeable, and their countenances wear a continual frown that, more plainly than words, expresses discontent. These depressing emotions are a great injury to them healthwise; for by hindering the process of digestion, they interfere with nutrition. While grief and anxiety cannot remedy a single evil, they can do great harm; but cheerfulness and hope, while they brighten the pathway of others, "are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh."

Christ came to restore to its original loveliness, a world ruined by sin. The work of the fall will be undone. All that was lost in Adam's transgression will be regained through the sufferings and death of Christ. In the new earth there will be no sin nor disease. All blemishes and deformity will be left in the grave, and the body will be restored to its original perfection. We shall wear the spotless image of our Lord, for "he shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."

The development of Christian character, tending toward this state of perfection, is a growth toward beauty. The character is expressed in the countenance. The evil that is in the heart hangs out its sign, and we read at a glance coarseness, unrest, selfishness, cunning, deceit, lust, falsehood, envy, pride, and malice. As the heart becomes transformed by the renewing of the mind, the graces of the Spirit leave their impress on the face, and it expresses the refinement, delicacy, peace, benevolence, and pure and tender love, that reign in the heart, and constitute the inward "adorning," which is in the sight of God of "great price."

The apostle Paul exhorts: "Rejoice evermore; pray without ceasing." Give "thanks always for all things unto God," "singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."

February 19, 1885

The Pharisee and the Publican

"And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

In the story of the Pharisee and the publican, Christ teaches one of the most important lessons that we have to learn,—the danger of self-flattery. Two classes of worshipers are here brought to view. The class represented by the Pharisee is regarded as eminent for piety, possessing great excellence of character. The other class, represented by the publican, is much less respectable in the eyes of the world. But is this estimate a correct one? No; it is the exact opposite of truth,—the exact opposite of the estimation in which they are held in Heaven. Both the Pharisee and the publican are under the eye of the heart-searching God, who is no respecter of persons. Wealth and titles, talent and

reputation, are no recommendation to his favor. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

The relative estimate which the Pharisee and the publican place upon themselves is as false as that which others place upon them. Both resort to the temple at the hour of public prayer, professedly to worship God; but what a contrast there is in the motives that actuate them, and in their feelings, as expressed in their prayers!

The Pharisee went, not because he felt his great need of God, but because he wanted to be thought a very pious and excellent man. He was perfectly self-satisfied, and thought that others looked upon him with the same complacency with which he regarded himself. He did not present the offering of a broken and contrite heart. He did not come with confession of sins, and with love flowing out in words of gratitude for the great mercy of a covenant-keeping God. He came not to present his needs. He made no supplication; he expressed no want. Standing in the temple of God, he dared to boast of his own goodness, and to measure himself with other men, and claim superiority. He began his self-worship: "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." He then proceeded to enumerate some of his own good deeds: "I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess"

The Pharisee went down to his house destitute of the divine blessing; but his self-love and vanity were fed. He was terribly self-deceived. He judged himself according to a human standard, exalted self, and covered his sins from his own sight. But God abhorred him. The publican thought himself a very wicked man, and others looked upon him in the same light; but there was nothing in his life so offensive to Heaven as the self-complacency expressed in the boastful, self-righteous prayer of the Pharisee.

The publican went up to the temple with other worshipers; but he soon separated himself from them, as unworthy to mingle with them in their devotions. Standing afar off, he "would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast" in bitter anguish and self-abhorrence. He thus expressed his sense of his distance from God, and of his unworthiness to come into his presence. He felt that he had offended God, that he was sinful and polluted before him. He could not expect help from those around him; for they looked upon him with undisguised contempt. Feeling that he had no claim on the mercy of God, he looked forward with terrible dread to the Judgment, when every case will be decided. In his great need, he finds voice to cry out earnestly, "God, be merciful to me a sinner."

The course taken by the publican is the only one that will secure pardon and peace with God. He did not compare his sins with those of others who were worse than himself. He came before God with his own burden of guilt and shame, as a transgressor of God's law, a sinner in thought, in word, and in act. He acknowledged that should he receive punishment for his sins, it would be just and right. Mercy, mercy, was his only plea. Oh, for the assurance of pardon, giving peace and rest to the sin-sick soul!

The self-abasement manifested by the publican is wholly acceptable to God. To know ourselves is to be humble. Self-knowledge will take away all disposition to entertain the Most High with a recital of our own excellent qualities. Realizing our sins and imperfections, we shall come to the feet of Jesus with earnest supplication, and our petitions will not be passed by unheard. Ezra had the true spirit of

prayer. Presenting his petition before God for Israel, when they had sinned grievously in the face of great light and privileges, he exclaimed, "I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." Ezra remembered the goodness of God in again giving his people a foothold in their native land, and he was overwhelmed with indignation and grief at the thought of their ingratitude in return for the divine favor. His language is that of true humiliation of soul, the contrition that prevails with God in prayer. Only the prayer of the humble enters into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly; but the proud he knoweth afar off." "To this man will I look," saith the Lord, "even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

The Pharisee expressed his self-commendation in the form of thanksgiving. "God, I thank thee," he says, "that I am not as other men are." But there was no real gratitude in his heart. His self-love had excluded every such generous principle. He neither loved God supremely nor his neighbor as himself; yet before God and men he could boast loudly of his own goodness. Thus he insulted God, while he deceived men in regard to his true character.

There are many now who entertain the same feeling of self-congratulation that the Pharisee had. Does this feeling rise in your heart in any degree, dear reader? If so, you may be assured that while you commend yourself, the condemnation of God rests upon you. You may be thought excellent in character. Your name may be registered on the church-book; but it is not written in the Lamb's book of life. If a special work has been done for any of us, it is through the grace of God alone. Man is to take no credit to himself; for he has nothing which he has not received.

Let us examine ourselves, and see how many vain thoughts dwell within our hearts, how much we love praise, how selfishness is shown in our manners, how often we misjudge the character and motives of others, or feel contempt for them because their appearance is not prepossessing. Let us think how our words sound in the ears of God, how our selfish thoughts look in his sight, when we judge and condemn others, who may be better in heart and purpose than ourselves.

From the parable of the Pharisee and the publican we learn that to profess excellence which we do not possess, will exclude us from the grace which alone can make us of value in the sight of God. The teachings of Christ give no countenance to a spirit of self-righteousness which would exalt self over others. Vanity is never the result of virtue and true piety. "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

February 26, 1885

Sanctification—The True and the False

The parable of the Pharisee and the publican was given for the benefit of those who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." This spirit is the hidden rock upon which thousands are wrecking their hopes of Heaven; and the Savior here shows how offensive it is in the sight of God. Many are self-deceived, filled with spiritual pride and vanity. They do not see the enormity of sin, and go on parading their own virtues, those of poor, fallen humanity, before the Majesty of Heaven, whose eyes read the intents and purposes of the heart, and see disobedience and grave defects of character in these who extol self and claim superior goodness.

John defines sin to be the “transgression of the law.” Paul says: “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” “I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” “I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came [home to the conscience], sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.”

Jesus came into the world because the human race were under sentence of death for their transgressions. His work was to bring them back to allegiance to the law of God, which Paul declares is “holy, and just, and good.” He kept his Father's commandments. Those who by repentance and obedience testify their appreciation of the salvation he came to bring, will show the work of the Spirit on their hearts. And the test is the life. “By their fruits ye shall know them.” “He that saith, I know Him,” says John, “and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

Yet, notwithstanding these inspired testimonies as to the nature of sin, many claim to be sanctified, and incapable of sin, while they are constantly transgressing the law of God. Through these the enemy is doing a work of deception. They could never boast so loudly of their own goodness, had they not rejected God's great standard of right and wrong, and set up in its place one of their own devising. Judging themselves by their own imperfect standard, they dare to say, “I am without sin.”

The “holiness people” and the Salvation Army have a great deal of what Paul denominates “bodily exercise,” that “profiteth little.” They follow impressions and claim to be taught of the Spirit; and like the fanatics that troubled Luther, they place these impressions above the written word of God, while they trample upon the divine law because their hearts are not in harmony with its precepts. The Spirit and the word agree. The Spirit of Christ leads into all truth; but there is in these spirit-taught ones an enmity against the plainest statements of the Bible. The spirit that guides them leads to the believing of lies rather than the truth, showing that their teacher is the great master spirit that “worketh in the children of disobedience.”

Those who have had the light on the law of God, and yet have refused to accept that light, are not under the influence of the Spirit of God, whatever professions they may make or whatever wonderful works may be done through them. They are deceived by the sophistry of Satan. But they love his deceptions; for he exalts self, and leads them to trust in their own goodness; and this is more pleasing than to see themselves as they appear before a just and holy God.

Said Christ: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

These may profess to be followers of Christ, but they have lost sight of their Leader. They may say, “Lord, Lord;” they may point to the sick who are healed through them, and to other marvelous works, and claim that they have more of the Spirit and power of God than is manifested by those who keep his law. But their works are done under the supervision of the enemy of righteousness, whose aim it is to deceive souls, and are designed to lead away from obedience, truth, and duty. In the near future there will be still more marked manifestations of this miracle-working power; for it is

said of him, "and he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men."

We are surprised to see so many ready to accept these great pretensions as the genuine work of the Spirit of God; but those who look to wonderful works merely, and are guided by impulse and impressions, will be deceived. My brother, my sister, will you weigh sin in your own balances, or in the balances of Heaven? Realizing its true nature, you will see your undone condition, and will lay hold of offered mercy. But those who feel that their offenses are very small, will never be able to comprehend the perfection of Christ, nor the great sacrifice he has made to rescue them from the thralldom and degradation of sin.

No one who claims holiness is really holy. Those who are registered as holy in the books of Heaven are not aware of the fact, and are the last ones to boast of their own goodness. None of the prophets and apostles ever professed holiness, not even Daniel, Paul, or John. The righteous never make such a claim. The more nearly they resemble Christ, the more they lament their unlikeness to him; for their consciences are sensitive, and they regard sin more as God regards it. They have exalted views of God and of the great plan of salvation; and their hearts, humbled under a sense of their own unworthiness, are alive to the honor of being accounted members of the royal family, sons and daughters of the King Eternal.

Those who love the law of God cannot harmonize in worship or in spirit with the determined transgressors of that law, who are filled with bitterness and malice when the plainly revealed truths of the Bible are taught. We have a detector which discriminates between the true and the false. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

The only safe position for any of us to take is to consider ourselves sinners, daily needing divine grace. Mercy through the atoning blood of Christ is our only plea. But let us shun Phariseeism. When it suits his purpose best, Satan can appear as an angel of light. But he presents before men, not the meekness and humility of the Christian religion, but their own good deeds and wonderful impressions. We can meet his specious temptations only with the word of God. Those who have the truth as it is revealed in that holy word, must stand fast on the platform of truth, relying on, "It is written." The question for us each to settle is, "Am I exalting self, or am I exalting God and his grace, seeking salvation through Christ alone?"

God has great blessings to bestow upon his people. They may have the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding." They "may be able to comprehend with all saints [not sinners, who are transgressors of God's law] what is the "breadth, and length, and depth, and height," of the love of Christ, being "filled with all the fullness of God." But it is only to those who are meek and lowly of heart that Christ will thus manifest himself. The ones whom God justifies are represented by the publican rather than by the self-righteous Pharisee. Humility is Heaven-born; and none can enter the pearly gates without it. All unconsciously, it shines in the church and in the world, and it will shine in the courts of Heaven.

March 5, 1885

Christ Our Model

[Morning talk at

Los Angeles, Cal., May 11, 1884]

“Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” “Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

If these rules were observed, there would not be that constant strain after the things of the world that makes life a burden in its intensity; but in its place would be the rest and peace that comes of seeking first the “kingdom of God, and his righteousness.” Many professed Christians seem to think that no effort on their part is needed in order to insure growth in grace, and as a consequence they are indolent and listless in spiritual things. But they are entertaining a mistaken view. They are called upon to be a peculiar people, a holy nation, a royal priesthood. God has opened to them the treasures of his word. Christ is to be made unto them wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption; and he would have them communicate the rich treasures of his grace to the world.

It will require a constant effort on our part to overcome the temptations we must daily meet. The world is against us; nominal Christians are against us; and Satan is against us, determined to resist every effort we make to advance in the divine life. He is watching every opportunity to interpose himself between our souls and our Creator. He will crowd in numberless cares, that we may find no time for reading the Bible and prayer. But we are not left alone in our warfare against the powers of darkness, and we should not allow ourselves to be separated from the Source of our strength.

If we would grow up into Christ our living head, we must make prayer a daily necessity, not only in the closet, but in the family also. It is because we pray so little that our prayers are not more urgent and intelligent. In prayer we commune with God, and become acquainted with him. What a privilege it is that we may draw near to him by faith, presenting the promises given in his word. Let us encourage and refresh our souls with these sure promises, pleading our great need as the reason why they should be fulfilled. Let us learn the simple art of faith, every day understanding better how to approach our heavenly Father. Let us observe his commandments as obedient children, and then rest upon his word, trusting that he will surely do as he said he would. Jesus loves us; and if we commit the keeping of our souls to him, he will not disappoint our hopes. He is waiting to be gracious to those who feel that they are weak and unworthy. He loves to bless them; for they will appreciate his blessings. But he will not intrude his presence; he will not force the will nor compel obedience.

Jesus may seem far off, and Satan may urge that he does not care for one like you. He may point to your hesitating, stumbling walk, and tell you that the God of Heaven will not condescend to answer your broken prayers. It is then that you may present the mighty argument of the cross: “Jesus died for me. He is my Redeemer. I shall not be ashamed or confounded; for I will cling to him, and trust in his righteousness.”

Become acquainted with the Scriptures, and learn to rely implicitly upon them, that when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord may lift up a standard against him. Few have the power of faith and true godliness, because, in a majority of cases, the God-given powers are devoted to worldly plans and enterprises, and the follies and fashions of social life, to the neglect of the things of God. The inventive powers are taxed for dress and the adornment of the home; but the ornament

of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price, is made a matter of secondary importance.

We cannot afford to fritter away the golden moments in studying the fashions, or in following the customs of those whose god is this world. Precious probationary time should not be devoted to needless ornamentation; yet the Christian should not be careless and slovenly. It is our duty to be neat and tasty in person, dress, and habits; and to keep our houses and premises in order. Heaven is a place of perfect order, and as far as possible we should copy the heavenly model. We are representatives of Christ; then let us not dishonor him by our defective lives. Let us see that our tastes, our habits, our conversation, and our associations are in accordance with our high calling as sons and daughters of the King eternal.

Many take a superficial view of the character and mission of Christ. They imagine that he was devoid of warmth and sunniness; that he was gloomy, stern, unbending, severe, and joyless. This is the Jesus that was presented to Martin Luther. He was taught, as the Catholic Church has instructed so many of its votaries, that our Lord is an austere being, who delights in the sufferings of his creatures; that he is pleased with long fasts, and penances of the most painful and revolting character. And in many cases the whole religious experience is colored by these gloomy views, and the whole life warped.

It is often said that Jesus wept, but that he was never known to smile. Our Saviour was indeed a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; for he opened his heart to all the woes of man. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." But though his life was self-denying, and shadowed with pain and care, his spirits were not crushed. His countenance did not wear an expression of grief or repining, but ever one of peaceful serenity. His heart was a well-spring of life, and wherever he went he carried rest and peace, joy and gladness.

Our Saviour was deeply serious and intensely in earnest, but never gloomy or morose. The lives of those who imitate him will be full of earnest purpose; they will have a deep sense of personal responsibility. Levity will be repressed; there will be no boisterous merriment, no rude jesting or joking. But the religion of Jesus gives peace like a river. It does not quench the light of joy; it does not restrain cheerfulness, nor cloud the sunny, smiling face. Our lives should breathe the fragrance of Heaven, while we obey the injunction of the apostle,—“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”

The soul is exalted and transformed by dwelling, not on self and on the sorrows and hardships that surround us, but on the glories of the eternal world. Unbroken communion with God gives increased knowledge of his truth and will, and of the soul's susceptibilities and powers; and the result will be unselfish motives and right traits of character. There will be no darkness or gloom to reflect to others. More of Heaven in men on earth would make religion attractive, and win souls to Christ.

Christ came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and when his love reigns in the heart, we shall follow his example. If we keep uppermost in our minds the unkind and unjust acts of others, we shall find it impossible to love them as Christ has loved us; for there are few persons who do not on close acquaintance reveal unamiable traits of character. Even the best of us have these unlovely traits; and in selecting friends we should choose those who will not be driven away from us when

they learn that we are not perfect. Mutual forbearance is called for. We should love and respect one another notwithstanding the faults and imperfections that we cannot help seeing; for this is the Spirit of Christ. Humility and self-distrust should be cultivated, and a patient tenderness with the faults of others. This will kill out all narrowing selfishness and make us large-hearted and generous.

If you have perplexities and troubles—and these are the common lot of mankind—do not tell them to others, and thus shadow their path. Do not go for help to every source but the right one; but tell Jesus everything; take it to the Lord in prayer, and then believe that he accepts you and your burden. Faith is the gift of God, but the power to exercise it is yours. A single earnest expression of faith strengthens faith; but every expression of doubt confirms doubt, and helps to gather about your soul the dark shadows of unbelief. Then do not open your soul to Satan's temptations by cherishing and expressing the doubts that he insinuates. Talk faith and courage. Press to the light; and bright beams from the Sun of Righteousness will dispel clouds and darkness, and sweet peace will pervade the soul.

“Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” “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,” and make them your rule of life. And “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

August 6, 1885

The Power of the Truth

[A sermon delivered in Oakland, Cal., July 11, 1885.]

Text: “Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” John 17:17-19.

This prayer of the world's Redeemer comprehends much more than has been thought, and I wish that the truths here taught might be impressed upon all our hearts. “Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.” “For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” Every one of us who professes to believe in Christ is embraced in this prayer, and has a responsibility which it is impossible to throw off. We are required to be sanctified, not simply that we may be benefited personally, but that we may help others.

In these days it is difficult for the truth to find access to the human heart. You know that on one occasion when Jesus entered into the temple, he found there “those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting.” Thus the sacred courts of the Lord's house were converted into a place of merchandise, where greed and avarice flourished. As the eye of Jesus swept over the scene of busy traffic, divinity flashed through his humanity. He “cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.” The traffic suddenly stopped, and the throng of buyers and sellers fled as though a company of armed men were pursuing them. With bated breath the priests and rulers looked upon him who was clothed with such majesty and power; and, as though a flash of

light from Heaven had revealed the truth to their beclouded minds, the conviction forced itself upon them that this was no common man.

As Christ found it difficult to obtain access to the temple courts because they were lumbered with things that should never have been there, so is the human heart closed against the truth because it is lumbered with the cares and burdens of this world. It has received the worldly mould. The prince of the powers of darkness is playing the game of life for the soul. He is working with every device that he can invent, with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, to separate man from God. The lust of the flesh, the pride of life, the vanities of the world, have taken possession of the soul-temple, and no room is left for Jesus. But when the heart is once brought under the power of the truth, even its secret recesses feel the renewing and transforming influence. To those who have lumbered the soul-temple with worldly cares, and desecrated it with buyers and sellers, we would say, Take these things hence, and let the truth have possession of the soul. Jesus stands knocking at your heart, pleading, "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Will we let the Lord of glory enter? Will we make room for the truth of heavenly origin?

Jesus says: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." If you will make room for Jesus, and cleanse the soul from the defilement of sin, you may enjoy perfect peace with God. But some will ask, How am I to do this? By an entire surrender of your will and your way to God. The peace of God will not rule in your hearts while you retain your worldly ambitions and indulgences. The passions that have held possession of the soul must be removed. When we profess the truth, it is our privilege and duty to show to the world that it has had a transforming power upon the life and character.

Why is it so hard for many to walk uprightly before God? It is because they are trying to serve two masters, a thing which the Saviour declares no man can do. If they would give themselves to Jesus, he would take possession of the soul, and every wrong desire, every false ambition, every evil purpose, would be brought into subjection to the will of God. This is the sanctification that Christ meant when he said, "I sanctify myself." This is the sanctification that he desired for his disciples when he prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth." We profess to be sons and daughters of the Lord; the chosen ones of Christ, of whom he says, "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, ever as I am not of the world." What right have we to let the things of the world take possession of the heart and engross our energies? What right have we to make the heart a highway for the world's travel, or to imitate its customs and practices? We cannot serve God and mammon. We must come out from the world, and be separate. Its fashions are not to control us; its principles are not to be our principles.

If the worldly element is allowed to take possession of the heart, things that are not approved of God will seem right, and the religious life will be mixed with error. The perceptions will not be clear and distinct to understand the word and will of the Lord. There is danger of pursuing this course of disobedience until the wrong is gilded over, conscience is blunted, and the self-deceived one believes himself on the highway of holiness when he is on the downward road to perdition.

The work of the overcomer is a close and trying work. We have individually to fight the good fight of faith, and war against the powers of darkness; for when the truth commences the work of purifying the soul-temple, the conflict between good and evil begins in earnest.

A minister who is professedly preaching the gospel, in conversation with a sister learned that she was conscientiously keeping the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. "Well," said he, "you are right so far as the argument is concerned. Saturday is the true day to keep; the Bible is clear on that point. But," he added, "I do not keep it, because it would create confusion. The Lord will overlook this in me because it is so inconvenient, so contrary to the custom of society. And then I do not think it really makes any difference what day I observe, because I am sanctified; you know that makes every difference. But stick to your faith, for you have the right of it." Here is a man who claims to be sanctified while living in disobedience to the word of God; but what is there that sanctifies outside of the truth?

Said Christ: "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." Two classes are here represented,—those who are sanctified through the truth, and the many who profess to be sanctified while knowingly breaking the law of God. The true foundation is the commandments of God; and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Men may erect a standard of righteousness of their own aside from that presented in the word of God; but their hope, like the house built upon the sand, will surely fall.

We are to listen to what God says, and be obedient to his word. It is not long sermons or prayers, it is not the things which we say, but it is the things we do, the characters we form, that makes us acceptable to God. The truth should influence our daily life, and then when we associate together the tongue will not run upon unimportant, frivolous things.

"Ye are the light of the world," says Christ. Therefore "let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." In the death of Christ the priceless treasures of Heaven were poured out to humanity. Can we keep such precious riches to ourselves? Oh! we should lift up the risen Saviour before the people, and tell them what a dear Redeemer we have found. We are his representatives; let us walk worthy of our calling. The reason why we have no greater influence to win souls to Christ is that we are not doers of the word. When we do the works of Christ, when the truth becomes a living principle in the soul, we shall have power with God and men. Others will take knowledge of us, that we have been with Jesus and learned of him, and our very presence will be an influence for good. We shall not dare to sin, lest others follow our example of folly.

"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Says the True Witness, "I know thy works." Then let us be careful that we are not half-way Christians. We can be brought into perfect harmony with God and his truth; but there is much for us to resist. We should search our Bibles, and learn what the Scriptures say in relation to our duty.

Said Christ: "Take ye heed, watch and pray; ... for the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch." Not one of us is excused from the duties here enjoined. We are to watch every

avenue of the soul, lest Satan come in and desecrate the temple of the heart, which should be wholly consecrated to God. We are to watch lest passion take possession of the soul, to watch lest selfish thoughts are cherished. The reason why there is not more vitality and power in the church is that we do not work and watch as we should. We should stand as faithful sentinels at the post of duty. I pray that the grace of Christ may come into our hearts, and that we may be ever watching for opportunities to do good.

One who is truly converted will find no satisfaction in devoting God-given probationary time to the preparation of apparel, the outward adorning of the body. To such, the pride of life, the vanities and follies of the world, will be a very inferior matter. They will ever feel, I am in the presence of God; his eye discerns every thought of vanity, every attempt to extol and glorify self. If the time that is wasted in vain attempts to make the outward appearance attractive, were devoted to the study of the Bible, to earnest prayer for the grace of Christ, the meek and quiet spirit which is the heavenly adorning of the soul, and will never perish, how easy, how pleasant, would the service of Christ become. The promise would be fulfilled, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."

There is a constant warring of the flesh against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. The pollutions cherished in the soul war against the pure, sanctifying truth. Some have advanced the idea that if we are once in grace, we are always in grace. But our work is to overcome every day. Temptations press upon every hand; do we resist them, and come off victor in the name of Christ?

When we become children of God, our names are written in the Lamb's book of life, and they remain there until the time of the investigative Judgment. Then the name of every individual will be called, and his record examined by Him who declares, "I know thy works." If in that day it shall appear that all our wicked deeds have not been fully repented of, our names will be blotted from the book of life, and our sins will stand against us. If the professed believer becomes self-confident, if in word or spirit he breaks the least precept of God's holy law, he misrepresents Jesus, and in the Judgment the awful words will be spoken, "Blot out his name from the book of life; he is a worker of iniquity." But the Father pities the self-distrustful, God-fearing soul, harassed though he may be with doubts and temptations. Jesus pleads for him, and confesses his name before the Father and his holy angels.

He who is to be our judge knows our works. He understands every temptation and trial, and I am glad of it. He knows the circumstances that surround every soul. He knows our weaknesses, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. "If any man sin," says John, "we have an advocate with the Father! Jesus Christ the righteous." Oh, how precious is the name of Jesus, and how precious every name that he confesses before the Father! When our gracious Redeemer says of the poor penitent, "He is mine; I have graven his name on the palms of my hands," the answer comes, "I will not blot his name from the book of life, but his sins shall be remembered against him no more."

The promise is, "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." There is power in the blood of Christ to remove sin. Poor, trembling sinner, today you are the prisoner of hope. Jesus lives, and because he lives you may live also.

Said the angel of God to John, as he beheld the multitudes of the redeemed gathered about the throne: "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him

day and night in his temple." Through the blood of the Lamb it is the privilege of every one of us to make our life a glorious victory. We shall have trials and difficulties to meet, but if we sanctify ourselves by obedience to the truth, the God of Israel will be our strength. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord, his going forth is prepared as the morning." The Lord wants to give power to his people. He wants them to rejoice in the God of their salvation. He wants them to be conformed to his image, that when he comes, he may receive them to himself. If we lay hold upon the arm of Infinite Power, it will sustain us through every conflict and discouragement of life, and will finally place a crown of glory upon our heads, and bring us to share the eternal reward of the righteous.

"Blessed are they that do His commandments," says the Saviour, "that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." "And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it, and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it." "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth," "but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

August 13, 1885

Sabbath-School Duties in the Camp-Meeting and at Home

Dear brethren and sisters who assemble at our camp-meetings, we wish to address to you a few words in the interest of our Sabbath-schools. This is one of the important branches of the work, and should not be left to chance, or to hap-hazard management. If these schools are conducted as they should be, the efforts made in the pulpit to present the truth in a manner to win souls may be deepened; and if the labor bestowed is followed up by interested workers in the Sabbath-school, much good will be accomplished. But it is not enough to have the Sabbath-school move like well-regulated machinery. There should be practical workers; the teachers should be of that class who have a living connection with God, who have an appetite for study themselves, who will give time and moral earnestness to their work, and who will not be satisfied unless they see something accomplished.

There should be a living, growing interest in storing the mind with Bible truth. The precious knowledge thus gained will build a barrier about the soul. Although assailed with temptation, there will be a firm trust in Jesus, through the knowledge of him who hath called them to glory and to virtue. Let the teachers enter heart and soul into the subject-matter of the lesson. Let them lay plans to make a practical application of the lesson, and awaken an interest in the minds and hearts of the children under their charge. Let the activities of the scholars find scope in solving the problems of Bible truth. The teachers may give character to the work, so that the exercises will not be dry and uninteresting.

Teachers do not make as earnest work as they should of the Sabbath-school exercises; they should come close to the hearts of the scholars, by aptness, by sympathy, by patient and determined effort to interest every scholar in regard to the salvation of the soul. These exercises should become altogether what the Lord would have them,—seasons of deep conviction of sin, of heart reformation. If the right work is done in a skillful, Christ-like manner, souls will be convicted, and the inquiry will be, "What shall I do to be saved?" In some Sabbath-schools, positions are given to persons who have no aptitude to teach. They have no earnest love for souls. They do not half

understand the practical bearings of the truth themselves. How, then, can they lead the children and youth to the living fountain? Let the teachers themselves drink deep of the water of salvation; and then angels of God will minister to them, and they will know just what course the Lord would have them take to win the precious youth to Jesus. It requires aptitude, a will, perseverance, a spirit such as Jacob had when he wrestled in prayer and exclaimed, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." When the blessing of God rests upon the teachers, it can but be reflected to those under their charge. Never place the youth under individuals who are spiritually indolent, who have no high, elevated, holy aspirations; for the same mind of indifference, Phariseism, of form without the power, will be seen in both teachers and scholars.

Let parents do their part, not only helping the children in their study, but becoming familiar with the lessons themselves. The Bible is our text-book. Parents, teachers, and scholars need to become better acquainted with the precious truths contained in both the Old and the New Testaments. We must come up to a higher plane of action. Let the spirit of Jesus vitalize the souls of the workers. Then their plans and methods of labor will be of that character to win souls to Jesus Christ. In our large churches, where there are many children and youth, there is great danger of so managing the Sabbath-school that it will become a mere form, mechanical but spiritless. It lacks Jesus. Do not allow all your strength and energy to be given to worldly, temporal things during the week, and so have no energy and moral strength to give to the service of Christ on the Sabbath. There is earnest work to be done just now. We have not a moment's time to use selfishly. Let all we do be done with an eye single to the glory of God. Never rest till every child in your class is brought to the saving knowledge of Christ.

It is important that the exercises in our camp-meeting Sabbath-schools be conducted with order, promptness, and efficiency. Then the right mould will be given to Sabbath-schools in the different churches, as the people return to their homes. Do not allow business and other interests to crowd out the Sabbath-school interest, so that it shall be considered a matter of no special consequence.

Very much can be done for the education and moral and religious training of our youth by well organized, properly conducted Sabbath-schools. Time and attention should be given to this branch of the work; for its importance in its influence upon our youth cannot be estimated. But our teachers need to be converted men and women, who know what it means to wrestle with God, who will not be at rest until the hearts of the children are tuned to love, praise, and glorify God. Who will be the earnest workers for souls in our Sabbath-schools? Who will take the youth separately, and talk and pray with them, and make personal appeals to them, beseeching them to yield their heart to Jesus, that they may be as a sweet savor to Christ? As we view the magnitude of the work, and see how little it is appreciated, we feel like groaning in spirit and exclaiming, Who will accept these grave responsibilities and watch for souls as they that must give an account? We are Christ's representatives upon the earth. How do we fulfill our mission? Christ's representatives will be in daily communion with him. Their words will be select, their speech seasoned with grace, their hearts filled with love, their efforts sincere, earnest, persevering, to save souls for whom Christ has died. Let all do their utmost to work for the salvation of the dear children and youth, and by and by they will listen with joy to the words of Jesus, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." What is this joy?—It is beholding the redeemed saints saved through their instrumentality, through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Mrs. E. G. White, in S. S. Worker

August 27, 1885

A Profitable Occasion

The following paragraphs were not intended for publication, but are from a private letter written by sister White to members of her family. We take pleasure in presenting them to the readers of the signs, feeling assured that they will be interested in the success that is attending her labors:

We reached Worcester, Mass., about half past eight, Friday evening, July 31, and went directly to the mission rooms. In the evening we had a New England thunder-storm; but it cleared away before meeting time, and at the appointed hour the tent was filled with interested listeners. I spoke from the words of the Saviour found in Matthew 7:24-27. The bitterest opposition and prejudice had been created against me here, and some who were the most prejudiced were out to hear me. The Lord enabled me to present the truth with such power that the people listened as if spell-bound, and many were deeply impressed. One, an infidel, took his stand for the Sabbath, and others expressed their intention never again to disregard God's holy day.

On the Sabbath we had a congregation of about one hundred. I spoke from the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah, and had special freedom. In the afternoon several stated that they were keeping the Sabbath for the first time.

It was cloudy all day Sunday, and in the evening it began to mist. We feared it would rain so that we should not have a congregation, but the tent was packed full, and there was a large crowd outside. The best part of the community was represented. I spoke from the third chapter of First John: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God," etc. I dwelt particularly on the binding claims of the law of God, and I never saw greater interest manifested. The police had been notified to see that there was no smoking or talking outside the tent. Three powerful men were placed on guard; but Elder Canright said they stood like marble pillars, never for a moment looking away from me.

When the meeting closed, the people did not leave the tent, but lingered as if loth to go. A merchant who had attended the meetings and the infidel of whom I have spoken, came together. Said the merchant, "Henceforth the doors of my place of business shall be closed every Sabbath evening at sundown." The infidel responded, "I will never break another Sabbath." "Good," said the merchant, "give me your hand on that." And they there clasped hands, pledging each other to keep the Sabbath of the Lord.

About twenty-five are keeping the Sabbath here. The work has but just begun, and we expect more fruit will be seen as the result of this effort.

September 10, 1885

Influence and Importance of Associations

In our social relations, in our intercourse one with another, the words of Christ, "Ye are the light of the world," are especially true. Every association we form, however limited, exerts an influence on the life and character; and the extent of that influence will be determined by the degree of intimacy

maintained, the constancy of the intercourse, and the love and confidence felt for the one with whom we associate. Even the enemies of Christ, as they see his spirit and life exemplified in the daily life of his followers, will be led to glorify God, the source of their strength and honor. Thus those who have a living connection with God can exert a saving power in the church and in society. Reader, examine your own course; consider the character of the associates you are choosing. Do you seek the company of the wise, or are you willing to choose worldly associates, companions who fear not God, and obey not the gospel? Are your recreations such as to impart moral and spiritual vigor? Will they lead to purity of thought and action?

Many parents are disregarding the most sacred claims of God, by their neglect to consecrate themselves and their children to him. Many are reposing in false security, absorbed in selfish interests and attracted by earthly treasures. They fear no evil. Danger seems a great way off. They will be deceived, deluded, to their eternal ruin, unless they arouse, and with penitence and deep humiliation, return unto the Lord.

The pride, self-indulgence, impiety, and iniquity that surround us, have an evil influence upon us. Few realize the importance of shunning, so far as possible, all associations unfriendly to religious life. In choosing their surroundings, few make their spiritual prosperity the first consideration.

Parents flock with their families to the cities, because they fancy it easier to obtain a livelihood there than in the country. The children, having nothing to do when not in school, obtain a street education. From evil associates they acquire habits of vice and dissipation. The parents see this, but because it will require a sacrifice to correct their error, they stay where they are, until Satan gains full control of their children. Better sacrifice any and every worldly consideration than to imperil the precious souls committed to your care. They will be assailed by temptations, and should be taught to meet them; but it is your duty to cut off every influence, to break up every habit, to sunder every tie, that keeps you from the most free, open, and hearty committal of yourselves and your family to God.

Instead of the crowded city, seek some retired situation where your children will be, so far as possible, shielded from temptation, and there train and educate them for usefulness. The prophet Ezekiel thus enumerates the causes that led to Sodom's sin and destruction: "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." All who would escape the doom of Sodom, must shun the course that brought God's judgments upon that wicked city.

Who will heed the counsel of the True Witness, to seek the gold tried in the fire, the white raiment, and the eye-salve? The gold is faith and love, the white raiment is the righteousness of Christ, the eye-salve is that spiritual discernment which will enable us to see the wiles of Satan and shun them, to detect sin, and abhor it, to see truth and obey it.

The deadly lethargy of the world is paralyzing the senses. Sin does not appear repulsive to those who are blinded by Satan. The judgments of God are soon to be poured out upon the earth. "Escape for thy life," is the warning from the angels of God. Other voices are heard saying, "Do not become excited; there is no cause for special alarm." Those who are at ease in Zion, cry peace and safety, while Heaven declares that swift destruction is about to come upon the transgressor. The young, the frivolous, the pleasure-loving, consider these warnings as idle tales, and turn from them with a jest.

Parents are inclined to think their children about right in the matter, and all sleep on at ease. Thus it was at the destruction of the old world, and when Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed by fire. On the night prior to their destruction, the cities of the plain rioted in pleasure. Lot was derided for his fears and warnings. But these scoffers perished in the flames. That very night the door of mercy was forever closed to the wicked, careless inhabitants of Sodom.

It is God who holds in his hands the destiny of souls. He will not always be mocked; he will not always be trifled with. Already his judgments are in the land. Fierce and awful tempests leave destruction and death in their wake. The devouring fire lays low the desolate forest and the crowded city. Storm and ship-wreck await those who journey upon the deep. Accident and calamity threaten all who travel upon the land. Hurricanes, earthquakes, sword, and famine follow in quick succession. Yet the hearts of men are hardened. They recognize not the warning voice of God. They will not flee to the only refuge from the gathering storm.

Many who have been placed upon the walls of Zion, to watch with eagle eye for the approach of danger, and lift the voice of warning, are themselves asleep. The very ones who should be most active and vigilant in this hour of peril are neglecting their duty, and bringing upon themselves the blood of souls.

Let no one put aside the warning, and say, "It does not mean me. I will not be disturbed by this excitable message." It is the evil servant who says in his heart, "My Lord delayeth his coming." Professedly a servant of Christ, he may not, in words, deny that the Lord is soon to come; but his actions show that he puts off that day to a distant period. He guiltily presumes on the supposed delay; he becomes careless, and his works testify his unbelief. He adopts the maxims and conforms to the practices of the world.

As soon as the evil servant begins to lose the spirit and power of the message, he manifests his unbelief. He smites his fellow-servants. He is ready to pass censure on those who are better than himself. "The poison of asps is under their lips" His course is downward. Erelong he may be found "eating and drinking with the drunken"—uniting with worldlings in their gatherings for pleasure, and, to all intents and purposes, one with them. Such is the condition of very many among us today.

In the instruction given by our Saviour to his disciples are words of admonition especially applicable to us: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." Watch, pray, work—this is the true life of faith. "Pray always," that is, be ever in the spirit of prayer, and then you will be in readiness for your Lord's coming.

The Christian life is a warfare. The Apostle Paul speaks of wrestling against principalities and powers as he fought the good fight of faith. Again, he declares, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Ah, no. Today sin is cherished and excused. The sharp sword of the Spirit, the word of God, does not cut to the soul. Has religion changed? Has Satan's enmity to God abated? A religious life once presented difficulties, and demanded self-denial. All is made very easy now. And why is this? The professed people of God have compromised with the powers of darkness.

The path to Heaven is no smoother now than in the days of our Saviour. All our sins must be put away. Every darling indulgence that hinders our religious life must be cut off. The right eye or the

right hand must be sacrificed if it cause us to offend. Are we willing to renounce our own wisdom, and to receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child? Are we willing to part with self-righteousness? Are we willing to give up our chosen worldly associates? Are we willing to sacrifice the approbation of men? The prize of eternal life is of infinite value. Will we put forth efforts and make sacrifices proportionate to the worth of the object to be attained?

Great importance is attached to our associations. We may form many that are pleasant and helpful; but none are so precious as that by which finite man is brought into connection with the infinite God. When thus united, the words of Christ abide in us. We are not actuated by a spasmodic feeling, but by a living, abiding principle. The result will be a purified heart, a circumspect life, and a faultless character. But it is only by acquaintance and association with Christ that we can become like him, the one faultless example.

Communion with Christ—how unspeakably precious! Such communion it is our privilege to enjoy, if we will seek it, if we will make any sacrifice to secure it. When the early disciples heard the words of Christ, they felt their need of him. They sought, they found, they followed him. They were with him in the house, at the table, in the closet, in the field. They were with him as pupils with a teacher, daily receiving from his lips lessons of holy truth. They looked to him as servants to their master, to learn their duty. They served him cheerfully, gladly. They followed him, as soldiers follow their commander, fighting the good fight of faith. “And they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.”

October 8, 1885

Workers With Christ

Many profess to be followers of Christ and to be working for the upbuilding of his cause, when the whole weight of their influence is cast on the side of the great adversary. For this reason it becomes very important to inquire, By what means shall we determine whose side we are on? This question may be easily settled if we will consider the character of our thoughts and of the subjects upon which we love to converse, also who it is that has our best energies and the warmest affections of our hearts. If we are on the Lord's side, our sweetest thoughts will be of him. We shall have no friendship with the world. All that we have and are will be consecrated to our God; we shall long to bear his image, breathe his Spirit, and do his will and please him in all things.

A great work has been committed to the church of God. Oh that we could each realize how much is depending upon our earnestness and fidelity! All who realize their accountability to God, will be burden-bearers in the church. There can be no such thing as a lazy Christian, though there are many indolent professors of Christianity. While Christ's followers will realize their own weakness, they will cry earnestly to God for strength, that they may be workers together with him. They will constantly seek to become better men and women, that they may more faithfully perform the work which he has committed to their hands.

Every one may do something to strengthen and build up the church, and to enlighten those who are in the darkness of sin and error. There must be a feeling of individual responsibility. Each must seek to maintain a close connection with God, that he may have strength to aid and counsel others. “God

is light, and in him is no darkness at all." The heart in which his Spirit dwells, will be a channel of light to others. It cannot be otherwise.

Those who do not preserve a living connection with God themselves, will have little interest in the salvation of others. They have no light from Heaven to reflect to the world. If these careless, irresponsible ones could see the fearful results of their course, they would be alarmed. Every one of us is exerting an influence upon some other soul; and we shall each be held accountable for the effect of that influence. Words and actions have a telling power, and the long hereafter will show the results of our life here. Yet how few consider these things. The members of the church listen to the words of God spoken by his servant, and then one goes to his farm, another to his merchandise; and by their absorbing interest in the affairs of this life, they declare that eternal things are of secondary importance.

The days are evil, wickedness prevails; therefore there is the greater need that Christ should be faithfully represented to the world as a mighty Saviour, able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him. But the professed people of God are asleep. They are not doing what it is in their power to do for the salvation of souls. Especially are the youth deficient. They seem to feel no burden for souls, no duty to represent Christ to those with whom they associate. In all this, are they not following in the steps of church-members who are older in experience, and who should have set them a better example?

The young, as well as those of more advanced age, are accountable to God for their time, their influence, and their opportunities. They have their fate in their own hands. They may rise to any height of moral excellence, or they may sink to the lowest level of depravity. There is no election but one's own by which any may perish. Every person is a free moral agent, deciding his own future by his daily life. What course, then, is it wisest for us, as rational beings, to pursue? Shall we live as becomes candidates for eternity, or shall we fail to fulfill the great end of our creation?

Jesus died that through his merits men might be redeemed from the power of sin, and be adopted into the family of God; and in view of the great sacrifice which has been made for us, we are exhorted to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Yet how many, endowed by their Creator with reasoning powers, reject the high honors which Christ proffers, and degrade themselves to the level of the brute. Because they do not like to retain God in their thoughts, he leaves them to follow their own evil ways. They yield to Satan's control the souls for whose redemption Christ has died.

We are free to obey or to disregard the will of God; free to live without prayer or to pray. As God compels no man to be righteous, so none are compelled to be impenitent and vicious. Human passions may be strong and wayward, but help has been laid upon One who is mighty. While that help will not be forced upon any who despise the gift, it is freely, gladly given to all who seek it in sincerity.

We may be assailed by strong temptations, for we have a powerful, cunning foe; but these temptations are never irresistible. He who struggles against them in the strength of Christ, will overcome; but God will never deliver those who will not strive to free themselves. The Christian must be watchful against sins of the flesh, watchful against sins of the mind. Says the apostle, "Gird up the loins of your mind." The thoughts and feelings must be restrained with a firm hand, lest they

lead us into sin. How many have become the willing slaves of vice, their mental and physical powers enervated, their souls debased, because impure thoughts were allowed to dwell in the mind, and to stain the soul. "Unto the pure, all things are pure." To those who are pure in heart, all the duties and lawful pursuits of life are pure; while to those whose heart and conscience are defiled, all things are impure.

Another sin of the mind is that of extolling and deifying human reason, to the neglect of divine revelation. Here, too, we must "gird up the loins of the mind." We are living in an age when the minds of men are ever on the stretch for something new. Rightly directed, and kept within proper limits, this desire is commendable. God has given us in his created works enough to excite thought and stimulate investigation. He does not desire men to be less acute, less inquiring, or less intelligent. But with all our aspirations and in all our researches, we should remember that arrogance is not greatness, nor is conceit knowledge. Human pride is an evidence, not of strength, but of weakness. It reveals not wisdom, but folly. To exalt reason unduly is to abase it. To place the human in rivalry with the divine, is to make it contemptible.

How can man be just with God? This is the one great question that most concerns us. Can human reasoning find an answer? No; revelation only can solve the all-important problem, can shed light upon the pathway of man's life. What folly, then, to turn from the one great source of light, the Sun of Righteousness, to follow the feeble and uncertain light of human wisdom.

We must each have an experience for ourselves. The work of our salvation lies between God and our own souls. Though all nations are to pass in judgment before him, yet he will examine the case of each individual with as close and searching a scrutiny as though there were not another being on the earth. Every individual has a soul to save or to lose. Each has a case pending at the bar of God. Each must meet the great Judge face to face. How important, then, that every mind contemplate often the solemn scene when the Judgment shall sit and the books be opened, when, with Daniel, every individual must stand in his lot at the end of the days.

At the final day, we shall be approved or condemned according to our works. The Judge of all the earth will render a just decision. He will not be bribed; he cannot be deceived. He who made man, and whose are the worlds and all the treasures they contain—he it is who weighs character in the balance of eternal justice.

Oh that Christ's followers might realize that it is not houses and lands, bank stock or wheat-fields, or even life itself, that is now at stake, but souls for whom Christ died! We should ever remember that the men and women whom we daily meet are Judgment-bound. They will stand before the great white throne, to testify against us if we are unfaithful to duty, if our example shall lead them away from the truth and from Christ, or to bear witness that our fidelity has encouraged them in the path of righteousness. These souls will either live to offer praise to God and the Lamb through ceaseless ages, or they will perish with the wicked. Christ suffered and died that they might enjoy a blissful eternity. What sacrifices are we willing to make for their salvation?

October 15, 1885

Letter from Mrs. E. G. White

[Written to the New York camp-meeting. Copied from the Syracuse Standard. See note on last page.]

On Board S.S. "Cephalonia"

Near Queenstown, Ireland,

August 17, 1885.

I feel urged to address those who are engaged in giving the last message of warning to the world. Whether those for whom they labor see and accept the truth depends very much upon the individual workers. The command of God is, "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." Paul charges Timothy, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine." The work must commence with the worker. He must be united to Christ as the branch is united to the vine. "I am the true vine," said Christ, "ye are the branches." Here is represented the closest possible connection. Insert the leafless rod into the flourishing vine stalk, and it becomes a living branch, drawing sap and nourishment from the vine. Fiber by fiber, vein by vein, the sapling clings until it buds and blossoms and bears fruit. The sapless twig represents the sinner. When united to Christ, soul is joined to soul, the feeble and finite to the holy and infinite, and this man becomes one with Christ. "Without me," says Christ, "ye can do nothing." God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification. Are we who claim to be workers with Christ united with him? Do we abide in Christ, and are we one with him? The message that we bear is worldwide. It must come before all nations, tongues, and people. The Lord will not require any one of us to go forth with this message unless he shall give us power and grace to present it to the people in a manner corresponding to its importance. The great question with us today is, Are we carrying this solemn message of truth in a manner that is equal to its importance? The Lord will work with the workers if they will make Christ their only dependence. He never designed that his missionaries should work without his grace, and destitute of his power. The humble, contrite heart will be the abode of the Spirit of Christ. "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

God has chosen us out of the world that we might be a peculiar and holy people. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." God's workers must be men of prayer, diligent students of the Scriptures, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, that they may be a light and strength unto others. Our God is a jealous God, and he requires that we worship him in spirit and in truth, and in the beauty of holiness. The psalmist says: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." We must, as workers, take heed to our ways. If the psalmist could not be heard if he regarded iniquity in his heart, how can the prayers of ministers be heard if iniquity is regarded among them? There are dangers to which we are continually exposed. It is Satan's studied plan to make the workers weak in prayer, weak in power, weak in influence before the world, because of the defects in their characters, defects which in no way harmonize with the truth. We must, as workers, be united in frowning down and condemning anything that bears the least approach to evil in our association with one another. Our faith is holy, and our work is to vindicate the honor of God's law. Our work is not of a character to bring any one down to a low level in thought or in deportment. There are many who claim to believe and to teach the truth, who have error and fanciful ideas of their own mingled with the truth. There is an exalted platform upon which we must stand. We must believe and teach the truth as it is in Jesus.

Holiness of heart will never lead to impure actions. When one who claims to be teaching the truth is inclined to be much in the company of young women or even of married women; when he familiarly

lays his hand upon their shoulders, or is often found conversing with them in a familiar manner, be afraid of him. The pure principles of truth are not inwrought in the soul. Such are not workers with Jesus; they are not in Christ, and Christ is not abiding in them. They need a thorough conversion before God can accept their labors. The truth of heavenly origin never degrades the receiver, never leads him to the least approach to undue familiarity. On the contrary, it sanctifies the receiver, refines the taste, elevates and ennoble him, and brings him in close connection with Jesus. It does not lead him to disregard the Apostle Paul's injunction, to abstain from even the appearance of evil, lest his good should be evil spoken of. We have a great work to do to elevate man and to win him to Christ, to lead him to choose and to seek earnestly to be a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Every thought, every word, and every action of the workers should be of that elevated character that is in harmony with the sacred truth they advocate. We are living in an age where iniquity abounds, and an unguarded word or an improper action may greatly injure the usefulness of the one showed this weakness. Keep up the barriers of reserve. Let not one instance occur in your relation to others that the enemy may make capital of. If you begin to place your affections upon one another, giving special attention to favorites, using flattering words, God will withdraw his Spirit. If married men leave their wives to care for their children at home, the wife and mother is doing fully as great and important a work as the husband and father. Although one is in the missionary field, the other is a home missionary, whose cares and anxieties and burdens frequently far exceed those of the husband and father. Her work is a solemn and important one. It is to mould the minds and fashion the characters of her children, and train them for usefulness here, and fit them for the future, immortal life. The husband in the open missionary field may receive the honors of men, while the home toiler may receive no credit for her labor. But if she works for the best interest of her family, to fashion their characters after the divine model, the recording angel writes her name as one of the greatest missionaries in the world. God does not see things as man's finite vision views them.

I am pained when I see men praised, flattered, and petted. God has revealed the fact that some who receive these attentions are unworthy to take his name into their lips. Yet they are exalted to Heaven in the estimation of finite man, who reads only from outward appearance. My sisters, never fawn over, pet, and flatter poor, failing, erring men, either young or old, married or unmarried. You know not their weaknesses, and you know not but these very attentions and this profuse praise may prove their ruin. I am alarmed at the short-sightedness, the want of wisdom, that many manifest in respect to this familiarity. Men who are doing God's work and who have Christ abiding in their hearts, will not lower the standard of morality, but will ever seek to elevate it. They will not find pleasure in the flattery of women, or in being petted by them. Let young men and married men say, "Hands off! I will not give the least occasion to have my good evil spoken of. My good name is capital, of far more value to me than gold or silver. Let me preserve it untarnished. If men assail that name, it shall not be because I have given them any occasion to do so, but for the same reason that they spoke falsely of Christ,—because they hated the purity and holiness of his character, for it was a constant rebuke to them."

I wish I could impress upon every worker the great need of continual, earnest prayer. They cannot be constantly upon their knees, but they can be uplifting their hearts to God. This is the way that Enoch walked with God. When young, or even married men and women open their family secrets to you, beware. When they express a desire for sympathy, know that it is time to exercise great caution. Those who are imbued with the Spirit of Christ, and who are walking with God, will have no

unholy repining for sympathy. They have a companionship that satisfies every desire of the mind and heart. Married men who accept the attention, the praise, and petting of women, should be assured that the love and sympathy of this class is not worth the obtaining. It is valueless. This is a subject to which we must give heed. We must guard against the sins of this degenerate age. We must stand aloof from everything that savors of commonness and undue familiarity. God condemns it. It is forbidden ground, upon which it is unsafe to set the feet. Every word and action should tend to elevate, refine, and ennoble the character. There is sin in thoughtlessness about such matters. The Apostle Paul exhorted Timothy to diligence and thoroughness in his ministry, and urged him to meditate upon those things that are pure and excellent, that his profiting might appear unto all. The same counsel is greatly needed by young men of the present age. Thoughtful consideration is essential. If men would only think more and act less impulsively, they would meet with much greater success in their labors. We are handling subjects of infinite importance, and we cannot afford to weave into our work our own defects of character. We want to represent the character of Christ.

Women are too often tempters. Through one pretense or another they engage the attention of the married or unmarried men, and lead them on till they transgress the law of God. Their usefulness is ruined and their souls jeopardized. The history of Joseph is left on record for the benefit of all who, like him, are tempted. He was firm as a rock to principle, and answered the tempter, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Moral power like his is what is now needed. If women would elevate their lives and become workers with Christ, there would be less danger through their influence. But with their present feelings of unconcern in regard to home responsibilities, and in regard to the claims that God has upon them, their influence is often strong in the wrong direction. Their powers are dwarfed, and their work bears not the stamp of the divine. They are not home missionaries, neither are they missionaries away from home, and frequently home, precious home, is a desolation. Is there not enough transpiring about us to show us the dangers that beset our path? Everywhere are seen wrecks of humanity, broken-down family altars, broken-up families. There is a strange abandonment of principle. The standard of morality is lowered, and the earth is fast becoming as Sodom. The Sodomitish practices which brought the judgment of God upon the old world and caused it to be destroyed by water, and which caused Sodom to be destroyed by fire, are fast increasing.

We are nearing the end. God has borne long with the perversity of mankind, but their punishment is no less certain. Let those who profess to be the light of the world depart from all iniquity. We see the very same spirit manifested against the truth as was seen in Christ's days. For want of Bible arguments those who are making void the law of God will manufacture falsehoods to stain and blacken the workers. They did this to the world's Redeemer; they will do it to his followers. Reports that have not the least foundation will be asserted as truth. May the Lord attract souls to himself, and impart to them individually a sense of their sacred responsibilities to form such characters that Christ will not be ashamed to call them brethren. Elevate the standard, and then the heavenly benediction will be pronounced upon you in that day when every man will receive according to the deeds done in the body. Workers for God must live as in his sight, and be constantly developing in character, true virtue, and godliness. Their minds and hearts must be so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Christ, and solemnized by the sacred message they have to bear, that every thought, every action, and every motive will be above the earthly and sensual. Their happiness will not be in forbidden, selfish gratification, but in Jesus and his love.

The standard of morality is not exalted high enough among God's people. In view of the dangers of this time, shall not we, as commandment-keeping people, put away from among us all sin, all iniquity, and all perverseness? Shall not the women professing the truth keep strict guard over themselves, lest the least encouragement be given to unwarrantable familiarity? They might close many a door to temptation if they would observe at all times strict reserve, and propriety of deportment. Let men find an example in the life of Joseph, and stand firm to principle, however strongly tempted. We want to be strong men and women for the right. There are those around us who are weak in moral power. They need to be in the company of those who are firm, and whose hearts are closely knit with the heart of Christ. Every one's principles will be put to the test, but there are those who go into temptation like a fool to the correction of stocks. They invite the devil to tempt them. They unnerve themselves, are weakened in moral power, and shame and confusion are the result. Never should the mark of distinction between the followers of Jesus and the followers of Satan be obliterated. There is a distinct line drawn by God himself between the world and the church, between commandment-keepers and commandment-breakers. These do not blend together. They are as far separated, as much different, as midday and midnight; different in their tastes, their aims, their pursuits, their characters. If we cultivate the love and fear of God, we will loathe the least approach to impurity.

My prayer is, O Lord, anoint the eyes of thy people, that they may discern between sin and holiness, between pollution and righteousness, and come off victorious at last.

Ellen G. White.

October 22, 1885

Character-Building

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” Colossians 3:1-4.

“Seek those things which are above,” says the apostle. Are we obeying this injunction? Are we withdrawing our affections from the things of earth, and setting them on things which are eternal, pertaining to the kingdom of God? Let us not disregard these words, lest we pass on, following our own ways, encouraging ourselves in evil thoughts and unlovely actions, which separate us from God, and place us on the enemy's ground, subject to his control.

“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” The character of the true Christian will be consistent, meek, cheerful, fragrant with good works, and so resolute that sin will find no sanction in the heart or in the words and acts. The peace of Christ, ruling in the heart of the earnest, working Christian, while it will elevate and refine the taste and sanctify the judgment, will be reflected upon others, and help them on in the upward path. Such will be the character of those who are indeed “risen with Christ,” and are seeking “those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”

But we are none of us perfect. We are only learners in the school of Christ. If with unprejudiced mind and humble heart we carefully search the Scriptures, we shall find much in our lives and characters

to condemn, much that needs to be remedied. But in that word the way of life is fully pointed out, so that there need be no mistake. Thus the apostle explains what it is to die to self and live to God:

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry; for which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience; in the which ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.”

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” What solemn and important words are these! And what weight do they have with us? If any have been in the habit of giving them away to someone else, I hope they will now take them home to their own hearts. Closely examine yourself, Christian reader, not once a week, but daily, and see if you are cultivating a spirit which is meek, forbearing, long-suffering, humble, and teachable, and are thus bearing in your life the precious fruits of the Spirit, which grow on no other than the Christian tree.

Some will be ready to ask, “How can I get out of the worries in which I find myself involved? How shall I ever be understood and appreciated? I have no confidence in this one’s religion or honesty, and that one has done me wrong.” Be careful how you sin against your brethren by misjudging them, and speaking evil of them. God has not given you permission to climb upon the judgment-seat, and pronounce one good because he praises, pets, and favors you, and denounce another because he is not your particular friend. This selfish, narrow, bigoted spirit does harm to those with whom you associate. It is not the spirit of Christ, but of him who has been from the beginning the accuser of the brethren. Instead of misjudging others, examine your own conduct. Place the most favorable construction on the words and actions of others, and you will thus be exercising the mercy that is becoming to those who are the holy and beloved of God, members of the royal family. Seek the meekness of Christ. He suffered wrong, and did not attempt to avenge himself.

Perhaps some child of God may be commissioned to give you a word of reproof for some inconsistency in your words or deportment, and instead of feeling grateful for the faithful discharge of a really unpleasant duty, and heeding the warning given in love to your soul, you may turn away in anger. All the wrath and malice of an unsubdued heart may be stirred up, and the foul waters poured forth to poison the minds and hearts of others. This shows that you have not mortified your members. “Anger, wrath, malice,” have not been “put off.” You have not been seeking to repress everything in your character that is contrary to the word of God. Satan laughs, and angels weep, because you are too proud and stubborn to confess and forsake your faults.

Trials cannot be avoided. When they come, do not indulge the thought, “If those around me would do right, it would be easy to be cheerful, happy, and contented. Oh that I could get into a place where there would be no irritations, where life to me would not be filled with discouragements, and my temper constantly tried. If I could only escape these things!” You can escape them only by having a new heart and dying to self. You will gain no real victories so long as you allow your temper to rise

the minute your track is crossed; neither will you conquer by fleeing from the field of battle. He who runs is a coward, not a conqueror.

Meet your trials in the strength of Jesus, and endure them. Let the inquiry be, How can I endure the provings of God? How can I meet provocations, and not lose self-control? When you claim that you cannot do this, you acknowledge that your life is not hid in Christ; that you are not exemplifying the character of your divine Lord; that self is not dead, but is clamoring for the supremacy. Your Christian life may be a victorious one; but you must strain every nerve and muscle in the contest against self and sin. There is no release in this war, no delightful arbor where you may rest and slumber; for your wily foe would gain advantages that would result in eternal loss.

When you have done all that you can on your part, you may in faith ask help of the Captain of your salvation, and he will bring divine aid to be combined with human effort; and he will bind upon your brow the laurels of the conqueror, just as though you had yourself wrought out the victory. And remember, it is the overcomer that enters the portals of the kingdom of glory; it is the overcomer that wears the crown of life, and stands with the blood-washed throng around the great white throne.

Our work here is that of character-building; and let each build over against his own house. Time is graciously given us for this work; and day by day, brick by brick, the structure is going up. Let it not be defective and deformed, but make it symmetrical and beautiful, strong to resist cold and heat, storm and sunshine.

In the wise providence of God, obstacles are permitted, yes, ordered, as a means of discipline, and to nerve us with determination not to be conquered by circumstances. The life of Christ is our example. Did he seek ease and self-indulgence? Ah, no! He "was in all points tempted like as we are;" he was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Yet his heart was so full of love and interest for others that he thought not, planned not, lived not, for himself. He came to seek and to save that which was lost, and he left his followers to carry on this work in his name. But no one can bear another upward to Heaven; each must tread the rough pathway which Jesus has trodden before him, and which he has brightened by his presence.

We must not think that we can wait till we get to Heaven before we perfect pure, chaste, lovely characters. The Christian will be Christlike here. There is a diversity among us. We each have traits of character, tastes, gifts, and capacities peculiar to ourselves, all of which have been established or modified by education and habit. But by the grace of Christ all these varied characteristics may be brought into harmony with the will of God.

In our early experience, a gray-haired brother, giving his testimony in a social meeting, expressed the fear that he should be overcome by temptation, and give up the faith once delivered to the saints. Said he, "I cannot afford to lose eternal life. What would I not give to know that I should never fall!"

A week from this time, when he arose to speak in the social meeting, his face was all aglow with the light and peace of Heaven. "Brethren," he exclaimed, "I have found a sure rule for success in the Christian journey. You will read it in 2 Peter 1:5-7: '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.' We must climb

this ladder, round after round, remembering that God is above it, ready to help us in our efforts. We must live upon the plan of addition, and God has promised that he will multiply his grace to us.” Then with earnestness and enthusiasm he added: “Let us begin today to climb Peter's ladder, never looking back; for we have the word of the inspired apostle that if we do these things we shall never fall, but an entrance will be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour.”

This brother continued to follow Peter's excellent rule for Christian living until his work on earth was done; and he now sleeps in Jesus, awaiting the resurrection morning.

Will we be diligent to make our calling and election sure? Will we patiently climb the ladder of Christian progress, until from the topmost round we step into the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ? We may become pure and holy. We may become more precious than fine gold, even the golden wedge of Ophir. And what joy it will be to hear from the lips of Jesus the sweet benediction, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” What a victory to be of that company of whom John speaks: “And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

October 29, 1885

The Test of Christian Living

“Therefore 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.” Matthew 7:24-27.

In this text there is presented something for us individually to do in order to build securely, where the fierce tempest will not sweep away our foundation. The earnest, anxious inquiry of every soul should be, How am I building? Is my foundation sliding sand, or solid rock?

Let us consider more fully the lesson that Jesus gave in his sermon on the mount, as with great distinctness and power his words fell on the ears of the listening multitude. “Enter ye in at the strait gate,” he says; “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.”

Many tell us, “You are too particular. God does not expect us to be constantly on guard lest we make mistakes. He is too good to hold us accountable for our course of action day by day.” But we are to remember that the way to destruction is broad, while the way to eternal life is strait and narrow.

Listen again to the words of the great Teacher: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." This shows us that we are to be guarded on every side, lest we mistake the way. We must be careful not to listen to agents of the great adversary, who would guide our feet into forbidden paths, as our first parents were led into transgression.

Our Lord does not leave us in darkness as to whom to trust. Here is the rule by which to decide; "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." Here is the test by which to judge every man who claims to be a teacher and a guide to the people. And now listen to his startling denunciation of those teachers who make high pretensions to godliness, while their works do not correspond with their profession: "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." Do their high claims prove them to be genuine Christians and reliable guides? No, indeed! We must look carefully at the life and character, the words and deeds.

Jesus is guarding his hearers from deceptions that would endanger their souls; and he warns them to beware of false teachers, who are wolves in sheep's clothing. He would have every one for whom his precious blood is a ransom, constantly on his guard, comparing every man's pretentious claims with the great standard of righteousness. The question is, "What saith the Scriptures?" Human lips may utter perverse things, lying doctrines that have no foundation in God's word, and souls may be sincere in accepting these erroneous doctrines; but will their sincerity save them from the sure and disastrous result? The Bible is the standard of truth and holiness. If they were carefully and prayerfully living by this word, they would not be deceived.

The words of Jesus are full of awful significance: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven." That will is made known in his law, which is the foundation of his government in Heaven and upon earth. Those who cheerfully obey that law are doing the will of God.

The lesson continues: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Here attention is called to a class who are actively engaged in religious work, making high claims to the favor of God, while they are all the time serving the great adversary of souls. They are transgressing the law of God, and are teaching others to transgress it also. Thus they are zealous workers of iniquity, while claiming Christ as their Lord, and professedly doing great works in his name.

"Therefore 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 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."

Here are two houses. One is built on a rock, and is almost inaccessible; the other is on the level ground, in a much pleasanter location. To the thoughtless observer it seems that the man who built his house on the steep rock was odd and foolish, while the one who built on the low, level plain is considered wise and prudent. But by and by the storm comes. The winds blow and the tempests beat upon these houses. And what is the result? The beautiful home upon the plain is overthrown,

and lies upon the beach, a useless ruin, while the other, perched on the high rock, stands firm, unmoved by storm and flood.

Jesus compared the man who hears and obeys his words to the one who built his house upon a rock. The floods of temptation may come and the tempests of trial beat; but he remains unmoved, for his foundation is sure. But the man who built his house on the sand, where it had no firm foundation, but was quickly undermined and overthrown, fitly represents the one who hears the words of Christ and disregards them. Will we let this lesson impress our hearts, and have an influence on our character building? Will we plant our feet upon the truth of God—the sure foundation, or will we trust in erroneous doctrines, which are but sliding sand? Holiness and sin are opposed to each other. “Sin is the transgression of the law;” therefore the “doers of the word” are not those who are making void the law of God. “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.” The blessing is pronounced on those that obey, not on those that transgress, the holy law of God.

Everywhere error will be presented for truth; and unless we have a living connection with God, and are diligent in searching the Scriptures, there is danger of being misled. Voices will be heard on every side, saying, “Come with us; we have the truth.” Jesus is the true Shepherd. His sheep hear his voice, and follow him; but a “stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.” But unless we are ever on our guard, there is constant danger of listening to strange voices.

The Lord commanded Adam in Eden, “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat;” “for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” But another voice was heard saying, “Ye shall not surely die.” This strange voice tested Adam and Eve, and proved their loyalty. They had an opportunity to show whether they would be obedient to God, or would disregard his word, and accept that of the deceiver who came to destroy them.

The Lord did not prove Adam and Eve in a large matter. The test given them was the smallest that could have been devised. Had it been a large test, then men and women whose hearts incline to evil would excuse themselves by saying, “This is a trivial matter, and God is not so particular about little things,” and there would be constant transgression in things looked upon as small, and which pass unrebuked among men. But the Lord has made it very evident that sin, in any degree, is offensive to him.

To Eve it seemed a small thing to disobey God by tasting the fruit of the forbidden tree, and to tempt her husband to transgress also; but their sin opened the floodgate of woe upon the world. And their posterity would have remained in hopeless bondage to sin, had not Christ had pity on them. He left his throne in the courts of Heaven; he laid aside his royal robe, clothed his divinity with humanity, and came to our world all seared and marred by the curse, to reach men where they were. He descended step by step in humiliation, that he might reach to the very depths of human woe, where man had been plunged by his transgression of the law, while with his divine arm he grasped the Infinite One, thus connecting man with God, and earth with Heaven. This great sacrifice was not made to verify the words of Satan by saving man in his transgressions. The design was not to do away and make of none effect the law of God, but to give man another trial, another opportunity to prove his loyalty to the God of Heaven.

“By the law is the knowledge of sin.” The law is the great mirror, into which man must look to discern the defects in his character. If he refuses to consult this divinely appointed detector, and thus learn his true state, can we be surprised that he proudly boasts of perfection? He must see his character in the light of God's law. He must have a new heart, one that is pure, loving, and obedient. The old life of sin and alienation from God must be given up, and a new life of loving, trusting obedience begin. Then the peace of Christ will rule in the heart and sanctify the life; and the path in which he treads will be the highway cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in, where light from Heaven is ever shining.

November 12, 1885

Labor a Blessing

Many look upon useful labor as a curse originating with the enemy of souls; but this is a mistaken view. Judicious labor is indispensable to both the happiness and the prosperity of the race. God ordained it for man as a blessing, to occupy his mind, to strengthen his body, and to develop his faculties. Industry makes the feeble strong, the timid brave, the poor rich, and the wretched happy. Adam labored in the garden of Eden, and he found in mental and physical activity the highest pleasures of his holy existence. When, as the result of his disobedience, he was driven from that beautiful home, and was forced to struggle with a stubborn soil to gain his daily bread, that very labor was a relief to his sorrow and remorse, a safeguard against temptation.

Idleness is one of the greatest curses that can fall upon man; for vice and crime follow in its train. Satan is never more successful than when he comes to men in their idle hours. He lies in ambush with his temptations, ready to surprise and destroy those who are unguarded, whose leisure gives him opportunity to insinuate himself into their favor under some attractive disguise.

The greatest curse following in the train of wealth is the fashionable idea that work is degrading. “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, in the words of Holy Writ, the terrible results of idleness. It was this that caused the ruin of the cities of the plain. Idleness enfeebles the mind, debases the soul, and perverts the understanding.

The rich often consider themselves entitled to the pre-eminence among their fellow-men and in the favor of God. Many feel above honest labor, and look down with contempt upon their poorer neighbors. The children of the wealthy are taught that to be gentlemen and ladies they must dress fashionably, avoid all useful labor, and shun the society of the working classes. They dare not shock their fashionable associates by putting to a practical use the talents which God has given them. But such ideas of useful industry are wholly at variance with the divine purpose in the creation of man. What are the possessions of even the most wealthy, compared with the heritage given to the lordly Adam? Yet Adam was not to be idle. Our all-wise Creator, who understands well what is for man's happiness, appointed Adam his work.

The Son of God honored labor. Though he was the Majesty of Heaven, he chose his earthly home among the poor and lowly, and worked for his daily bread in the humble carpenter shop of Joseph.

Christ is our example. He came to earth to teach us how to live. Is it too great a humiliation for us to walk in the path of useful industry, where the King of glory has led the way?

God ordained labor for man; but misguided parents are trying to improve upon his plan. Many send their children away from home influences and home duties, to some boarding-school or college, to obtain an education. There, deprived of parental care, they spend precious hours that should be devoted to useful study and useful employment, in novel reading, in frivolous amusements, or in studying the adornment of their person, that they may outrival their companions. For such pursuits, their duties to God and their fellow-beings are neglected.

This false education leads young ladies to regard uselessness, frivolity, and helplessness as proofs of gentility. They are merely fashionable butterflies, having nothing to do for the good of others, at home or abroad. Here may be found the secret of many of the unhappy marriages, and the flirtations ending in shame, that curse our world today.

Young men as well as young women manifest a sad lack of earnest purpose and moral independence. To dress, to smoke, to talk nonsense, and to indulge their passion for amusement, is the ideal of happiness, even with many who profess to be Christians. It is painful to think of the time which is thus misspent,—of the hours that should be given to some useful employment, to the study of the Scriptures, or to active labor for Christ, that are worse than wasted.

Those who possess wealth and leisure, and yet have no aim in life, have nothing to arouse them to either mental or physical activity. Yet life was given for a true and holy purpose, and is too precious to be squandered. There is work to be done, and it is not physical labor alone that is called for. There is the mind, with all its capabilities, to strengthen and store with the treasures of divine wisdom. There is a Heaven to win; there are souls to save; there are battles to fight. Young friend, Christian reader, you may come to the front in the warfare against the hosts of evil. In the strength of God you may do a good and noble work for the Master.

God designed that all should be workers. Our varied trusts are proportioned to our various abilities, and our Creator expects corresponding returns for the talents he has intrusted to our keeping. Upon those whose opportunities and abilities are greatest rest the heaviest responsibilities. Upon them also will fall the heaviest condemnation if they are unfaithful to their trust. Yet a large class refuse to think or act for themselves. They have no disposition to step out of the old ruts of prejudice and error; and by their negligence and perversity, they block up the way of those who would make advancement, and occasion the overwork of the few earnest, devoted laborers. These often fail for want of a helping hand, and sink beneath their double burdens.

The true glory and joy of life are found only by the working man and 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 which is utterly unsatisfying and injurious. It is that which is done to gratify unsanctified ambition for display or notoriety. The love of appearance or possession leads thousands to carry to excess that which is in itself lawful, to devote all the strength of mind and body to that 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 unflinchingly for years to accomplish their purpose; yet when the goal is reached, and the coveted reward secured, it turns to ashes in their grasp; it is a shadow, a delusion. They have given their life for that which profiteth not.

Yet all lawful pursuits may be safely followed, if the spirit is kept free from selfish hopes and the contamination of deceit and envy. It is the working men and women, who are willing to bear its responsibilities with courage and hope, who see something great and good in life. But the business life of the Christian should be marked by the same purity that held sway in the work-shop of the holy Nazarene.

Patient laborers, remember that they were sturdy working men whom Christ chose from among the fishermen of Galilee to labor with him in the work of salvation. And from these humble men went forth a power that will be felt through all eternity.

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 Creator has prepared no place for the gratification of sinful indolence. But to the weary and heavy-laden, rest is promised. It is the faithful servants who are welcomed from their labors into the joy of their Lord. Gladly will they lay off their armor, and forget the tumult of battle in the peace that shall be the inheritance of the saints.

The path of the Christian laborer may be hard and narrow; but it is honored by the footprints of the Redeemer, and he is safe who follows in that sacred way.

November 26, 1885

The Bible the True Test

“The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.”

It is of consequence to every one to know what the Bible teaches. Like the noble Bereans, we should search the Scriptures carefully, prayerfully, to become acquainted with the utterances of God. We should inquire, not what the minister, the church, or some personal friend may say, but what the Lord says. “To the law and to the testimony. If they [ministers, churches, or friends] speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

While searching for the truth as for hid treasures, light from the written word breaks into the mind. The benumbed and dormant faculties are awakened to new life and energy, the limited capacities are expanded to comprehend the truth, and earnest efforts are put forth to bring others into the light. Then why is it that there is such blindness in regard to the Scriptures? Why are ideas entertained, and sometimes taught to others, that are so vague and inconsistent? It is because the heart is not in harmony with the revealed word; the conscience has been so long depraved by practices condemned by that word, that the mental and moral powers are incapable of discerning spiritual things.

A great responsibility rests upon those who minister in word and doctrine. They should deal kindly, yet faithfully with souls. If they speak as the ambassadors of God, they will echo the teachings of the prophets and the apostles, and, above all, of Christ himself. Not only in the desk, but out of it also, they should seek to lead their hearers to search the Scriptures, and to impress upon them the necessity of understanding the word for themselves.

Let no man think that it is only the minister who is able to understand the Scriptures. Every man may have an intelligent knowledge of God's word; and he who does not make it his life-work to understand it is in danger of making shipwreck of faith. He must study it, comparing scripture with scripture. Such study strengthens and enlarges the mind. By it, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, truths which have been hidden for ages, buried under the rubbish of superstition and error, have been dug out, and brought to the light of day.

Many do not want to know the truth, because it condemns their practices. The words of Christ are applicable to them: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." They do not have moral courage to obey the truth when it calls upon them to leave the customs and practices of the world. They have decided that they will not follow the teachings of the Bible if it requires a separation from the world. When obedience to God requires them to become peculiar in faith and practice, and to take their position with a people who are distinct from the world, they think the cross is too heavy for them to lift. They listen to the truth, and are convicted that it is the truth; but the world has a large place in their affections, and they go away and forget the word spoken.

Those who are seeking salvation must undertake the work understandingly. God's word is our text-book. It tells us what sin is, and points out the remedy. When the lawyer inquired, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Christ referred him to the law. "What is written in the law?" he asked; "how readest thou?" The apostle tells us: "Sin is the transgression of the law." Conviction of sin is the first step in conversion; and the law of God is the instrument to convict the sinner. It is this holy law that discovers the deformity of character, that reveals the plague-spot of sin.

And when man is convicted of sin, when he realizes his lost and undone condition, Jesus reveals himself as a sin-pardoning Saviour. Through him the sinner may obtain forgiveness, though he has failed so decidedly in his duty to render obedience to God. But salvation is never gained by abolishing the law, or lessening its sacred claims.

"If I had not come and spoken unto them," said Christ of those who rejected his gospel, "they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin." There is no condemnation where light is not given. But Jesus came as the light of the world. He taught men the true aim in life, the purposes and principles that underlie right living. The acquisition of property is not the great end of our being. We have individually a work to do to place ourselves in right relations to God, to bless others, and to win souls to Christ. There is true nobleness and dignity in this service. Riches are not enduring; they are often swept away in a moment. But the treasure in Heaven, which the God-fearing worker is garnering up, will endure to all eternity. It will be to its possessor riches and joy in the future life, when wealth, and fame, and worldly honors have perished.

Just before his crucifixion, Jesus prayed for his disciples: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." But those who love the truth, and will cling to their Bibles, will have trials and persecutions to meet. In all ages the defenders of the faith have realized the truth of the apostle's words: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." But there have ever been some who have stood unmoved in their adherence to principle, and have refused to yield their faith to save their lives. The early Reformers were of this number. When urged to accept tradition and the commandments of men in place of the word of God, these men, firmly grasping their Bibles, replied, "Here is the foundation of our faith. Show us from the Bible that we are in error, and we will willingly

renounce our doctrines." But their enemies knew that if the Bible were to decide the matter, they would be condemned; for they had not a plain "Thus saith the Lord" for the doctrines they held. They therefore refused to bring their views to the test of God's word, and tried to wrench the Scriptures from the hands of the defenders of the faith.

There are many ministers who are now pursuing a course similar to that of the papists. When the truth is presented to them, and they know that they cannot prove their doctrines by the Bible, they advise their congregations to have nothing to do with these new doctrines; the best way is to take no notice of them. And they take this course because they know that the Bible condemns their doctrines and their practices.

Jesus met with just such teachers in his day. The Pharisees claimed to be teaching the word of God to the people; but instead they taught their own sentiments and the commandments of men. Jesus said to those who would catch him in his words: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." From the great Teacher a steady light was reflected to the world; but the prejudice of the chief priests and rulers was excited against him. They saw the light; the evidence from the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ was overwhelming. But they exerted their influence to turn the people away from hearing the truth; and many who believed the teachings of Christ had not the courage, in the face of prejudiced, frowning, self-righteous priests to acknowledge their faith in the despised Nazarene.

Says the psalmist, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." When light from the word of God shines into the soul, a man ceases to be sensitive to reproach, neglect, or contempt. He will not be ambitious for worldly rank or honor, but will become a meek and quiet learner in the school of Christ. Those who are sanctified through the truth will have courage to stand on the side of truth and right, no matter who may scoff or how bitter the opposition they may have to meet. Nor will those who thus serve God lose their reward. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

December 3, 1885

Co-laborers with Christ

"For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost."

Before Christ came to the world, his home was in the kingdom of glory, among beings that had never fallen. They loved him, and he might have stayed there and rejoiced in their love. But he did not do this. He left the royal courts, and went without the camp, bearing the reproach of sin. He came to a world all marred and seared by the curse to save the lost sheep; and he gathered into his divine bosom all that would come to him. He was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He trod the rugged path of self-denial himself, and so set us an example. This was the work of Christ for us. Had he not done this, we should have been left to perish without hope in God.

We find here a duty that rests upon all alike; not one of us is excused. Those who see the preciousness of the Saviour's love as he hung upon the cross, those who understand its value as there revealed, will be in earnest; they will be anxious to become co-laborers with Christ in seeking

for the lost and perishing. We are not placed here merely to seek our own gratification. There are sinners to be saved, and they are all about us.

It is a terrible thing to be lost at last. Once when I was at my home in Battle Creek, Mich., a bitter cry rang through the house. I hurried to see what was the matter, and found that one of my children was drowning. When he had been rescued from the water, and his apparently lifeless form laid in his little cradle, I remember how I stood over him for three-quarters of an hour, working for that little one whose life was trembling in the balance. Those around me thought my efforts were in vain; yet I labored on until that little life was given back to me.

That night, as my child that had been, as it were, raised to life, was lying upon my breast, and I was rejoicing in my heart that he was spared to me, though he was still in a very precarious condition, the bells rang out sharply, and a shrill cry was borne on the still night air, "Lost! lost! a child lost!" Then I thought how the little one that God had given to me had almost been lost, of the vacant place that would have been left in the little wicker cradle at my bedside; and the word "lost" came home to me with a force and meaning it had never possessed before.

Never shall I forget the incidents of that night. It was just one little life that was at stake; but it seemed as though the whole city of Battle Creek was stirred to go out in search of the lost child. Lights were glimmering everywhere. They flashed through the streets, along the river bank, and through the adjacent woods, and the cry resounded, "A child is lost! A child is lost!" After a long search, a shout was raised, "The child is found!"

Yes, the child was found; but it might go astray on the journey of life, and be lost at last. I knew, too, that death might come to the little one that was saved to me; and that should he live, he would have the evils of this life to meet and to battle with. And the thought with me was, Will this little child, whose life I hold so dear, be finally lost, or will he be saved to praise God forever in his kingdom?

There was no sleep for my eyes that night. I thought of the lost sheep that Jesus came from Heaven to earth to seek and to save. I thought of Christ as he looked down from Heaven upon a world of lost sinners, lost without hope, and of the sympathy that led him to leave his high and exalted place upon his Father's throne, and make the infinite sacrifice necessary to lift man up from the degradation of sin, and bring him back to the fold of God.

The sin of our first parents had cut off this world from Heaven. But Christ took upon himself our weaknesses and sins. He was tempted; he was ridiculed; he was beset on every hand. He suffered all the woes, all the griefs and sorrows of humanity, without a murmur, that he might leave us an example. He descended step by step in the path of humiliation, until he hung as a criminal upon the cross, that with his right arm of infinite love he might encircle the race, while he grasped the throne of Infinite Power, thus connecting earth with Heaven. This was his work; this was his mission to this world; and how earnest was he in his efforts to seek and to save that which was lost.

Then what is our work to be co-laborers with Christ? As I look over the field, I ask the question, Why do we see such indifference, such neglect of the salvation of others? Why is the whole work of laboring for souls left to the minister? God has promised to all alike, as many as will seek for it, the same redemption, the same love, the same light. Why are we not by living faith grasping the power that he is so willing to give us, that we may be a blessing to those that are lost? Our hearts have

throbbed with love at the very mention of the name of Christ, when we have remembered that he has saved us from our sins. Now what if we should all go forth, as Christ did, to save that which was lost, how would our works appear? Would they not be very different from what they are today?

Our first work is to bring our families to understand their accountability to God. There is not a father or a mother who has studied the Bible but may know just what course to take with the children, and how to restrain them. Parents may have wisdom from God to bind their children to the throne of mercy. Next to our families, we should try to exert an influence to sway others in the right direction, to lead them out of the darkness of error into the precious light of truth.

The perils of the last days are about us; and we should have such an intense love for souls for whom Christ died that we cannot remain at home. When our hearts are overflowing with love for sinners, we shall be anxious to go out in the harvest field to labor for others, and we shall work as Jesus worked. But we know there are some who do not want to be disciplined to work under the Captain of our salvation. It is very difficult matter to make them see their duty, because they have so long had their own way. Their inclinations have been permitted to govern them. Such will have to render an account for their course in the day of God. May the eyes of these blinded ones be opened to see their God-given responsibility.

All desire happiness, and many seek it in every way but the right way. Some travel from place to place in its pursuit; some seek it at a mountain or sea-side resort; some go to places of amusement; and some try change of employment. True happiness is not found in any of these ways, and yet it is not difficult to find. It may be secured if we will try to help one another,—to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

There is peace and happiness in Heaven, and we all hope to share it. This is our privilege. An abundant entrance may be administered unto us into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; but we must prepare for the heavenly society by a life of unselfish labor for others. There are many who do not understand the path of life; this is one reason that more do not travel in it. Multitudes are following the dictates of an unconsecrated heart who do not know what they are doing. And we are not to think that there is no responsibility resting upon us. We are each a part of the great human family, and we are to lay every one's case to our hearts. The nearer our lives approach to the life of Christ, the more helpful shall we be to those around us, and the more happiness we can bring into their lives. We are called upon to labor understandingly for fallen humanity. And by and by, when the Man of Nazareth shall "see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied," we shall enter into the joy of our Lord. But let us be faithful in the work that is committed to us; for it is only to those who have done well that the "Well done" will be spoken.

December 10, 1885

Christian Helpfulness

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

We have read accounts of travelers climbing mountains. How careful they must be where they step! They must have a guide along the rugged and dangerous ascent, lest they make a misstep, and be lost. Sometimes, in passing over very dangerous places, the whole party is bound together with

ropes, so that if one should slip, the others would hold him until he could regain his footing. And thus they were able to make their way up the steep and dangerous mountain.

We are on our way to the city of God, and the perils of the last days are all about us. The path we are climbing is narrow and dangerous, and we do not want to make any false steps. At such a time as this, a faithful guide is as necessary to us as to the mountain-climbers, and such a guide is provided for us in the word of God.

On this perilous journey we should be a stay to one another. It is not safe for any of us to stand alone. We must be bound together by the cords of truth and love. Let us press together, allowing nothing to weaken the bonds of union, so that if one should slip and fall, others can lift him up. We must not think that no responsibility rests upon us in the case of our brother; but we should ever manifest the tenderest interest in one another's welfare, and should seek to be helpful to those around us. Being thus bound together, and to the great heart of Infinite Love, the powers of darkness cannot harm us; and when the storms of temptation and persecution break upon us, we shall not be swept away.

Many wish to engage in the missionary work, and this is right; it is our duty to do what we can for others. But do not think, Christian friends, that you can let your children go to destruction, and yet bring others into the kingdom of God. This is not commencing in the right place. The work should begin at home, and then go to others. But we cannot begin the work in our families, unless we first bring our own hearts into subjection to the will of God. "Return unto me, saith the Lord of hosts;" "and I will heal your backslidings." We must each have an experience in the things of God. Like Joshua of old, we must decide, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." When we see the power of God manifested in our families, we may take it as evidence that we shall have divine aid in working for others.

The children need guidance. It is true there are some that do not want any restriction placed upon them. They do not want any one to say to them that they must do so and so. But they should be taught the lesson of perfect obedience. When they are not called away by duty, they should be at home, under the parental roof. When, with our children, we go to the house of God, they should take a seat by our side; and when the service is over, they should return with us to our homes.

Parents, agonize with God in behalf of your children. If you have Christ in your hearts and in your homes, you will not exert an influence to lead others away from the path of righteousness. You will not, like Eli, let your children go on in sin until the leaven has gone through the camp of Israel, while you feel that your darlings are about right. How can you expect the divine presence in your homes, when you take just the course that Eli did? It is the letting down of the standard of piety that is depriving us of the blessing of God; and yet his blessing is of more worth than the golden wedge and the Babylonish garment, for which it is so often bartered.

There is a doubting and fear that is not Heaven-born; it is unbelief. Persons who are affected by it will go this way and that, until they are confused, and do not know when they are right, and when they are wrong. Small things take their minds, and keep them in a constant fever and unrest. Some matter which does not belong to them attracts their attention, and they keep agitating it, as though that were the all-important matter to be considered. If these persons would manifest all this earnestness and zeal to strike the blow where it is so much needed, their course would be

commendable; but they neglect the weightier matters,—the duties of the heart and the home. When it comes to being a true Christian, one that does his duty every day, and endures trials without complaining, these persons know nothing about it.

The time is not far distant when Satan will come down having great power, and will work wonderful signs and great miracles; and with his delusions he will sweep away every one who does not stand upon the rock of eternal truth. God is even now proving us. We see some who claim to be followers of Christ working miracles; but do they keep the commandments of God? We will go to the inspired word, and try every one of 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.” When the youth go out from our schools, they will have to meet these people; and we want them to be firmly established in the truth. We want them to have a training that will prepare them to withstand error, and will guide their feet in the narrow, upward way.

And as you go out into the world, dear youth, remember that you are to seek and to save that which was lost. How precious are the souls for whom Christ died; but where is the love for sinners which he manifested? Who will go and bring back those whose feet have wandered from the right way? And where is the rejoicing over the lost sheep that has been found and brought back to the fold again?

There is very little of this work done today. If there were more of it done, there would be more order and harmony in our churches. In order to do this work, we must connect with Christ, take hold of Infinite Power, and be real Christians at home. But none should feel that they are entitled to eternal life because they have given to God their money, their education, or even themselves; for all was his before, and they have only returned to him his own. For our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich. He has intrusted us with ability; he has given us all things freely; and he expects his gifts to be returned with usury.

If we appreciated what Christ has done for us as we should, what we do for him would not be done reluctantly. Here is the means which has been intrusted to us. Our Saviour directs: “Provide yourselves bags which wax not old” These “bags which wax not old” are the treasures of Heaven. Are we putting our means into them? Are we cutting down, or adding to, our earthly possessions? If we sell a farm now and another by and by, and put the proceeds into the bank of Heaven; we may not be able to embellish our homes so elaborately; but it will not be like putting money into the banks of this earth. We shall have a treasure “that faileth not,” and it will be something to rejoice over when we reach Heaven.

But some one will say, “Suppose I give away all that I have, and then become dependent on others. It would be said, That man was a fool to do as he did; and what shall we do then? That is not the way the Majesty of Heaven talked. He did not count the cost of saving sinners. He became a man sorrows and acquainted with grief, and had not where to lay his head, that you and [I] might be saved. But we seem to think that if we make a little sacrifice, we have done a great deal, when we should say with David, “All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.”

Christian friends, let your treasures go over on the other side, and let your sympathies go out for one another and for sinners around you. And we want our hearts to go out after Jesus, the Fountain of living waters, that we may behold his matchless charms. I love him, and I want him to take

possession of my soul. We can afford to be ridiculed and to suffer for his sake, if we can have his blessing with us. What are the sufferings of this present life, compared with the final eternal weight of glory? "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever."

May God help us to get our hearts right before him. When divine love transforms the heart, working out of it everything that is selfish and covetous, we shall bring all our tithes and offerings into the store-house of the Lord, and he will pour us out a "blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive." And by and by, when we have kept the truth even to the end, the gates of the heavenly city will be opened to us, and we shall hear the voice of our Saviour saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

December 17, 1885

The Christian's Rest

"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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Here is revealed the secret of the Christian's rest. It is found only in Christ. If we possess his meekness of spirit, we shall find peace and joy in him. The world is full of unrest, trials, and difficulties. It is an enemy's land, and on every hand we are beset by temptations. "In the world," says Jesus, "ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world;" and "my peace I give unto you."

Our Saviour represents his requirements as a yoke, and the Christian life as one of burden-bearing. Yet, contrasting these with the cruel power of Satan and with the burdens imposed by sin, he declares: "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." When we try to live the life of a Christian, to bear its responsibilities and perform its duties without Christ as a helper, the yoke is galling, the burden intolerably heavy. But Jesus does not desire us to do this. To the sin-sick soul, weary and heavy laden with its burden of guilt and care, he extends the gracious invitation: "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Many profess to come to Christ, while they yet cling to their own ways, which are a painful yoke. Selfishness, covetousness, ambition, love of the world, or some other cherished sin, destroys their peace and joy. They are restless, impatient, dissatisfied, their spirits chafe under the weight of care and responsibility, all because they have not made a complete surrender to Jesus, and are seeking to carry their burden without his aid. If he were by their side, the sunshine of his presence would scatter every cloud; the help of his strong arm would lighten every burden.

Christ gave himself for us, "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." His true followers are unlike the world in words, in works, and in deportment. But many are so fearful of provoking unfriendly criticism or malicious gossip that they have not the moral courage to act from principle. They dare not identify themselves with those who follow Christ fully. They love the world; and they desire to conform to its customs and to secure the approbation of worldlings. They thus cumber themselves with needless cares and anxieties, and

weigh themselves down with heavy burdens. Oh! why will not all the professed children of God follow the Saviour fully? Why will they take upon themselves burdens which he has not imposed?

We should be much happier and more useful, if our home life and social intercourse were governed by the principles of the Christian religion, and illustrated the meekness and simplicity of Christ. Instead of toiling to make a display, and to excite admiration and envy, let it appear that we are striving to conform to the will of Christ. Let visitors see that we try to make all around us happy by our cheerfulness, sympathy, and love.

While we endeavor to secure the comfort and happiness of our guests, let us not overlook our obligation to God. The hour of prayer should not be neglected for any consideration. Do not give the time to conversation and recreation until you are too weary to enjoy the season of devotion. To do this is to present to God a lame offering. At an early hour of the evening, when you can pray unhurriedly and understandingly, present your supplication, and raise your voices in happy, grateful praise. Let all who visit Christians see that the hour of prayer is the most sacred, the most precious, and the happiest hour of the day. Such an example will not be without effect. These seasons of devotion exert a refining, elevating influence upon all who participate in them. Right thoughts and new and better desires will be awakened in the hearts of the most careless. The hour of prayer brings a peace and rest grateful to the weary spirit; for the very atmosphere of a Christian home is that of peace and restfulness.

In every act the Christian should seek to represent his Master, to make his service appear attractive. Let none make religion repulsive by persistent gloominess, and by relating their trials and their difficulties, their self-denials and their sacrifices. Talk of these things less, my fellow-Christian, and more of the matchless love of Jesus, of Heaven and its glories. Do not give the lie to your profession of faith by impatience, fretfulness, and repining. Let it be seen that with you the love of Christ is an abiding motive; that your religion is not like a garment that may be put off and resumed again, as the circumstances demand, but a principle, calm, steady, unvarying,—one that rules your whole life. Alas, that pride, unbelief, and selfishness, like a foul cancer, are eating out vital godliness from the heart of many a professed Christian! When judged according to their works, how many will learn, too late, that their religion was but a glittering cheat, unacknowledged by the world's Redeemer.

Whatever your lot in life may be, remember that you are in the service of Christ, and manifest a contented, grateful spirit. Whatever your burden or cross, lift it in the name of Jesus; bear it in his strength. He pronounces the yoke easy, and the burden light; and I believe him, for I have proved the truth of his words. Every provision has been made for us at an infinite cost, that we may have the blessedness of Heaven wrought into our every-day life. We may walk in the sunlight of the divine presence, and weave into our characters the golden threads of forbearance and love, gratitude and peace. We shall thus be reflecting the light of Heaven amid all the frets and irritations that come to us day by day.

It is only through earnest, persevering effort, aided by the grace of God, that we can reach this height of moral excellence. But this is the religion that is the light of the world. The church is becoming weak for the want of consecrated members, who feel that they are not their own; that their time, their talents, their energies, belong to Christ; that he has bought them with his blood, and is pleading for them in the sanctuary above. There are many who have never felt the necessity of subduing self, and overcoming wicked tempers. They cherish bitterness and wrath in their hearts,

and these evil traits defile the soul. They thus deny Christ, and darken the pathway of others. None will be excused for the exhibition of uncontrollable tempers; thousands will miss of Heaven through their want of self-control.

We are to let nothing, small or great, unbalance us. Nine-tenths of the trials and perplexities that so many worry over are either imaginary, or brought upon themselves by their own wrong course. They should cease to talk of these trials, and to magnify them. The Christian may commit every worryment, every disturbing thing to God. Nothing is too small for our compassionate Saviour to notice; nothing is too great for him to carry. Then let us set our hearts and homes in order; let us teach our children that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and let us, by a cheerful, happy, well-ordered life, express our gratitude and love to Him "who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." But above all things, let us fix our thoughts and the affections of our hearts on the dear Saviour who suffered for guilty man, and thus opened Heaven for us.

Love to Jesus cannot be hidden, but will make itself seen and felt. It exerts a wondrous power. It makes the timid bold, the slothful diligent, the ignorant wise. It makes the stammering tongue eloquent, and rouses the dormant intellect into new life and vigor. It makes the desponding hopeful, the gloomy joyous. Love to Christ will lead its possessor to accept responsibilities and cares for his sake, and to bear them in his strength. Love to Christ will not be dismayed by tribulation, nor turned aside from duty by reproaches. And the soul that is not imbued with this love for Jesus is none of his.

Peace in Christ is of more value than all the treasures of earth. Then let us open our hearts to the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Let us seek the Lord with all the heart, and learn of Christ to be meek and lowly, that we may find rest of soul. Let us work cheerfully, joyously in the service of our Master, remembering that the deportment as well as the words of the Christian should be such as to awaken in the heart of the sinner a desire to come to the Fountain of life.

Let us go forward; for we are striving for an immortal crown. Let us be diligent to make our calling and election sure. A slothful, languid professor will never secure an entrance into the kingdom of God. From the cross to the crown there is earnest work to be done. There is wrestling against inbred sin; there is warfare against outward wrong. But we shall triumph at last, if we do not become weary in well-doing. Heaven's portals will be opened for every one who does his best for God and his fellow-men.