

Ellen G. White 1913 Sign Of The Times

July 15, 1913

Faithful Observance of the Sabbath

Particular directions were given of God in regard to the manner of observing the Sabbath. All unnecessary work was strictly forbidden, and the day before the Sabbath was made a day of preparation, that everything might be in readiness for its sacred hours. "This is that which the Lord hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake today, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning."

The Israelites were not in any case to do their own work on the Sabbath. The divine direction was, "Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest." In the busiest seasons of the year, when their fruits and grains were to be secured, they were to remember that their temporal blessings came from the bountiful hand of their Creator, and He could increase or diminish them according to their faithfulness or unfaithfulness in His service.

The Lord places a high estimate upon His Sabbath. Through His prophet He has promised: "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

With God there is no respect of persons. Those who fear Him and work righteousness are precious in His sight; but He requires His people to show their allegiance by strict obedience to all the precepts of the moral law, the Sabbath commandment with the rest. God is jealous of His honor, and let men beware how they remove one jot or tittle of that law that He spoke with His own voice and wrote with His own finger upon tables of stone, and that He has pronounced holy, just, and good.

July 29, 1913

There Is Healing in Him

As the sinner looks upon the Saviour dying on Calvary, and realizes that the sufferer is divine, he asks why this great sacrifice was made, and the cross points to the holy law of God which has been transgressed. The death of Christ is an unanswerable argument as to the immutability and righteousness of the law. In prophesying of Christ, Isaiah says, "He will magnify the law, and make it honorable." The law has no power to pardon the evil-doer. Its office is to point out his defects, that he may realize his need of One who is mighty to save, his need of One who will become his substitute, his surety, his righteousness. Jesus meets the need of the sinner, for He has taken upon Him the sins of the transgressor. "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." The sin could have cut off the sinner, and forever destroyed him; but the costlier plan was chosen. In His great love He provides hope for the hopeless, giving His only-begotten Son to bear the sins of the

world. And since He has poured out all heaven in that one rich gift, He will withhold from man no needed aid that he may take the cup of salvation, and become an heir of God, joint-heir with Christ.

Christ came to manifest the love of God to the world, to draw the hearts of all men to Himself. He said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." The first step toward salvation is to respond to the drawing of the love of Christ. God sends message after message to men, entreating them to repentance, that He may forgive, and write pardon against their names. Shall there be no repentance? Shall His appeals be unheeded? Shall His overtures of mercy be ignored, and His love utterly rejected? O, then man will cut himself off from the medium through which he may gain life eternal; for God only pardons the penitent! By the manifestation of His love, by the entreating of His Spirit, He woos men to repentance; for repentance is the gift of God, and whom He pardons He first makes penitent. The sweetest joy comes to man through his sincere repentance toward God for the transgression of His law, and through faith in Christ as the sinner's Redeemer and Advocate. It is that men may understand the joy of forgiveness, the peace of God, that Christ draws them through the manifestation of His love. If they respond to His drawing, yielding their hearts to His grace, He will lead them on step by step, to a full knowledge of Himself, and this is life eternal.

Christ came to reveal to the sinner the justice and love of God, that He might give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. When the sinner beholds Jesus lifted up upon the cross, suffering the guilt of the transgressor, bearing the penalty of sin; when he beholds God's abhorrence of evil in the fearful manifestation of the death of the cross, and His love for fallen man, he is led to repentance toward God because of his transgression of the law which is holy, and just, and good. He exercises faith in Christ, because the divine Saviour has become his substitute, his surety, and advocate, the One in whom his very life is centered. To the repenting sinner God can show His mercy and truth, and bestow upon him His forgiveness and love.

But Satan will not permit a soul to escape from the captivity of sin if by any means he can prevent it. Tho all heaven has been poured out in one rich gift—for when God gave His Son, He gave the choicest gift of heaven, and the treasures of heaven are at our command—yet to the repenting soul the enemy will seek to represent God as stern and inexorable, unwilling to pardon the transgressor. At different times letters have come to me from persons who were in despair over their sins. One and another have written: "I fear I am past all help. Is there any hope for me?" To these poor souls the message has been given: "Hope in God. The Father has bread enough and to spare. Arise, and go to your Father. He will meet you a great way off, and will give you His love and compassion."

When the enemy comes in like a flood, and seeks to overwhelm you with the thought of your sin, tell him: "I know I am a sinner. If I were not, I could not go to the Saviour; for He came not 'to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' And because I am a sinner, He bids me to come to Christ. I am sinful and polluted, but He suffered humiliation and death, and exhausted the curse that belongs to me. I come. I believe. I claim His sure promise, 'Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'"

Will such a plea made in contrition of soul be turned away?—No, never. By the suffering and death of Christ is proved His boundless love to man. He is willing and able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.

Then as a little child come to God, presenting yourself as suppliant at His feet; for we need not ascend into the heavens to bring Jesus down, nor into the earth to bring Him up; for He is ever near us. He says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: 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." How willing is Christ to take possession of the soul temple if we will let Him! He is represented as waiting and knocking at the door of the heart. Then why does He not enter? It is because the love of sin has closed the door of the heart. As soon as we consent to give sin up, to acknowledge our guilt, the barrier is removed between the soul and the Saviour.

August 5, 1913

Resting in Faith

God does not ask you to feel that Jesus is your Saviour, but to believe that He died for you, and that His blood now cleanses you from all sin. You have been bitten by the serpent, and as the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness that the dying might look and live, so Christ was lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. Saving faith is simplicity itself. You must cry no more; you must cease to hang your head as a bulrush. Look to the uplifted Saviour, and, however grievous may have been your sins, believe He saves you. All the remedies and medicines of the world would have failed to cure one soul who had been bitten by the venomous serpent; but God had provided a remedy that could not fail. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Be not among the number to whom the Saviour said, "Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life." O, how He longed to save them! for while we were yet sinners—not waiting for us to make ourselves good—Christ died for us.

Believe now that God loves you, for He hath declared it; and when Satan tries to fasten the burden of sin and horror upon you, take your Bible, and read, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." You can not repulse the enemy by relating your fearful doubts, by telling him that you are horrified by the thought that you are lost. All this is music in his ears. He wants to make you as miserable as he is himself, but you can answer him by proclaiming the promise that you believe in the Son, and therefore shall not perish. As you turn your eyes away to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, the controversy with the enemy will be ended for that season. You can repulse him by declaring that "Christ was wounded for my transgressions. He was bruised for my iniquities. The chastisement of my peace was upon Him, and with His stripes I am healed."

Take the word of Jesus Christ as more sure and valuable than any word that can come from the human agent. Thank God with your whole heart and soul and voice that you are barricaded with the rich promises of His infallible word, so that the wicked one shall not touch you. God will give you the Holy Spirit, even tho it may seem to you that it is too good to be true. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

August 12, 1913

Christian Parents and the Word

The Lord, through an apostle, admonishes parents, "Provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." The word of God is your guide, Christian parents. Depart not from it to gratify any impulse of passion or of affection.

If parents desire to teach their children self-control, they must first form the habit themselves. The scolding and fault-finding of parents encourages a hasty, passionate temper in their children. Love and justice should stand side by side in the government of the household. Let prompt obedience to parental authority be invariably enforced. God has given parents their work, to form the characters of their children after the divine Pattern. By His grace, they can accomplish the task; but it will require patient, painstaking effort, no less than firmness and decision, to guide the will and restrain the passions. A field left to itself produces only thorns and briers. He who would secure a harvest for usefulness or beauty must first prepare the soil and sow the seed, then dig about the young shoots, removing the weeds and softening the earth, and the precious plants will flourish and richly repay his care and labor.

The work of parents is continuous. It should not be laid hold of vigorously for one day, and neglected the next. Many are ready to begin the work, but are not willing to persevere in it. They are eager to do some great thing, to make some great sacrifice; but they shrink from the unceasing care and effort in the little things of everyday life,—the hourly pruning and training of the wayward tendencies, the work of giving instruction, reproof, or encouragement, little by little, as it is needed. They wish to see children correct their faults and form right characters at once, reaching the mountain top at a bound, and not by successive steps; and because their hopes are not immediately realized, they become disheartened. Let all such persons take courage as they remember the words of the apostle, "Let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

Satan has prepared his snares for parents, tempting them to extravagance in dress, to an unnecessary outlay of time and money in the preparation of food, and to needless indulgence in many other forms. The demands of fashion so fully engross the time and attention that little room is left for communion with God, self-discipline, or the training of children. Thus too many parents let slip from their shoulders the responsibility of family government. It requires earnest heart work to repress evil tendencies, strengthen weak principles, develop good and lovely traits of character, and direct all the powers of mind and body in the right channel. Fathers and mothers, will you not lay hold of your work with energy, perseverance, and love? Sow the precious seed daily, with earnest prayer that God will water it with the dews of grace, and grant you an abundant harvest. The Son of God died to redeem a sinful, rebellious race. Shall we shrink from any toil or sacrifice to save our own dear children?

By precept and example, let the young be taught reverence for God and for His word. Many of our youth are becoming infidels at heart, because of the lack of devotion in their parents. The law of God should be the law of the household. Let fathers and mothers kindly and patiently instruct their children, both from the inspired word and from the book of nature, leading them to understand the character of God. Let them show in their own lives that they are continually seeking to know and to do His will. To secure the approval of their heavenly Father is the great motive to be ever kept before the minds of children. The service of God should be presented, not as an irksome task, but as a precious privilege, by which they may enjoy an honored, useful, and happy life here, and infinitely greater honor, usefulness, and joy in the life hereafter.

God has permitted light from His throne to shine all along the path of life. A pillar of cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night, is moving before us as before ancient Israel. It is the privilege of Christian parents today, as it was the privilege of God's people of old, to bring their children with them to the promised land.

August 26, 1913

The Word of God Can Not Fail

Let none for a moment deceive themselves with the thought that their sin will not bring its merited punishment. Their transgressions will be visited with the rod, because they have had the light, but have walked directly contrary to it. God will not more lightly pass over any violation of His law now than in the day when He pronounced judgment against Adam. The Saviour of the world raises His voice in protest against those who regard the law of God with carelessness and indifference. Said He: "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

It is the grossest presumption for mortal man to venture upon a compromise with the Almighty, in order to secure his own temporal interests. "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God," is thundered from Sinai; and we may not disregard that voice because the words were spoken more than three thousand years ago, and were addressed to the lineal descendants of Abraham. The Lord requires willing sacrifice. No partial obedience, no divided interest, is accepted by Him who declares that the iniquities of the fathers shall be visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him, and that He will show mercy unto thousands of them that love Him and keep His commandments.

There is nothing in the word of God to be thrown aside; there is nothing in the plan of redemption that is unimportant or that may be lightly disregarded. The Bible gives us an account of the dealings of God with man from the creation to the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven; it carries us even farther into the future, and opens before us the glories of the city of God, and the beauty and perfection of the earth made new, the saints' secure abode. But altho the long line of events extends through so many centuries, and new and important truths are from time to time developed, that which was truth in the beginning is the truth still. The increased light of the present day does not contradict or make of none effect the dimmer light of the past.

October 28, 1913

Peter's Confession of Christ

Before His crucifixion, Jesus made use of the few hours of seclusion with His disciples in praying with them, and teaching them more definitely concerning the nature of His kingdom. He saw that in their human weakness, they were inclined to desire that His reign should be a temporal one. Their earthly ambition had caused them to become confused as to the real mission of Christ. He now reproved them for their misconception, and taught them that instead of worldly honor, it was shame that awaited Him, and instead of a throne, the pitiless cross. He taught them that for His sake, and to win salvation, they must also be willing to endure reproach and contumely.

The time drew near when Jesus was to die, and leave His disciples to face the cold and cruel world alone. He knew how bitter hate and unbelief would persecute them, and He wished to encourage and strengthen them for their trials. He accordingly went away by Himself and prayed for them, interceding with the Father, that in the time of that fearful test which awaited them, their faith would prove steadfast, and His sufferings and death might not utterly overwhelm them with despair. What tender love was this, that, in view of His own approaching agony, reached forward to shield His companions from danger!

When He again joined His disciples, He asked them: "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? And they said, Some say that Thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." Questioning still closer, He inquired, "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter, ever ready to speak, answered for himself and his brethren: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven."

Notwithstanding the faith of many had utterly failed, and the power of the priests and rulers was mighty against them, the brave disciple thus boldly declared his belief. Jesus saw, in this acknowledgment, the living principle that would animate the hearts of His believers in coming ages. It is the mysterious working of God's Spirit upon the human heart, that elevates the humblest mind to a knowledge above all earthly wisdom, and acquaintance with the sacred truths of God. Ah, indeed, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee."

Jesus continued: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The word "Peter" signifies a loose stone. Christ did not refer to Peter as being the rock upon which He would found His church. His expression "this rock," applied to Himself as the foundation of the Christian church. In Isaiah 28:16 the same reference is made: "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation." It is the same stone to which reference is made in Luke 20:17, 18: "And He beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." Also in Mark 12:10, 11: "And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?"

These texts prove conclusively that Christ is the rock upon which the church is built, and in His address to Peter, He referred to Himself as the rock which is the foundation of the church. He continues: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

The Roman church makes a wrong application of these words of Christ. They claim that He addressed them specially to Peter. Hence he is represented in works of art as carrying a bunch of keys, which is a symbol of trust and authority given to ambassadors and others in high positions. The words of Christ, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," were not addressed to Peter alone, but to the disciples, including those who compose the Christian church in all ages. Peter was given no preference nor power above that of the other disciples. Had Jesus delegated any special authority to one of them, we would not find them so frequently contending among

themselves as to who should be greatest. They would have at once submitted to the wish of their Master, and paid honor to the one whom He had selected as their head.

But the Roman Catholic Church claims Christ invested Peter with supreme power over the Christian church, and that his successors are divinely authorized to rule the Christian world. In still another place, Jesus acknowledges the same power to exist in all the church, that is claimed to have been given to Peter alone, upon the authority of the text previously quoted: "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."