

Ellen G. White 1915 Sign Of The Times

January 5, 1915

The Mighty and Inspiring Conflict

To Save Man He Took the Eternal Risk—The Universe Looked On—Unfallen Angels Admired and Adored—The Depths of Infinite Love Revealed—Abundant Provision for Every One

The coming of Christ to our world was a great event, not only to this world, but to all the worlds in the universe of God. Before the heavenly intelligences He was to take upon Himself our nature, to be tempted in all points like as we are, and yet to leave an example of perfect purity and unblemished character.

Satan and his angels exulted as they discovered that the Son of God had taken upon Himself the nature of man, and had come to be man's substitute, to engage in the conflict in our behalf. The human family had been overpowered by the deception of the enemy; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, and the enemy hoped that Christ also would become a victim to his seductive wiles.

Whole Confederacy Attacked Him

Satan gloried in the opportunity of besieging the Son of God with fierce temptations. Because He had taken upon Himself the nature of man, Satan deemed that his victory was certain, and with every malignant device in his power he strove to overcome Christ. The steadfast resistance of Christ to the temptations of the enemy brought the whole confederacy of evil to war against Him. Evil men and evil angels united their forces against the Prince of peace.

He Took the Infinite Risk

The issues at stake were beyond the comprehension of men, and the temptations that assailed Christ were as much more intense and subtle than those which assail man as His character was purer and more exalted than is the character of man in his moral and physical defilement. In His conflict with the prince of darkness in this atom of a world, Christ had to meet the whole confederacy of evil, the united forces of the adversary of God and man; but at every point He met the tempter, and put him to flight. Christ was conqueror over the powers of darkness, and took the infinite risk of consenting to war with the enemy, that He might conquer him in our behalf.

The Redeemer of the world clothed His divinity with humanity, that He might reach humanity; for, in order to bring to the world salvation, it was necessary that humanity and divinity should be united. Divinity needed humanity, that humanity might afford a channel of communication between God and man, and humanity needed divinity, that a power from above might restore man to the likeness of God.

Christ was God, but He did not appear as God. He veiled the tokens of divinity, which had commanded the homage of angels and called forth the adoration of the universe of God. He made Himself of no reputation, took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. For our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich.

Descended to the Depths of Woe

He humbled Himself to pass through man's experiences, and He would not turn aside from the plan by which salvation could come to man. Knowing all the steps in the path of His humiliation, He refused not to descend step by step to the depths of man's woe, that He might make expiation for the sins of the condemned, perishing world. What humility was this! It amazed the angels. Tongue can never describe it. Pen can never portray it. The imagination can not take it in. Sinless and exalted by nature, the Son of God consented to take the habiliments of humanity, to become one with the fallen race. The eternal Word consented to be made flesh. God became man.

But He stepped still lower; He humbled Himself to bear insult, reproach, accusation, and shameful abuse. In the world which He had made, which was sustained by the word of His power there seemed to be no room for Him. He had to flee from one place to another until His life work was accomplished. He was betrayed by one of His followers, and denied by another. He was mocked and taunted. He was crowned with thorns, and forced to bear the burden of the cross.

Felt its Bitterness and Endured it All

He was not insensible to ignominy and contempt; He submitted to it, but He felt its bitterness as no other being could feel it. Pure, holy, and undefiled, He was yet arraigned as a criminal before the eyes of the world. From the highest exaltation the adorable Redeemer took step after step in the path of humiliation. He consented to die in the sinner's stead, that by a life of obedience man might escape the penalty of the law.

He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death. And what a death! It was the most shameful, the most cruel,—the death upon the cross as a malefactor. He died not as a hero in the eyes of men, loaded with honors; He died as a condemned criminal, suspended between the heavens and the earth—died a lingering death, exposed to the tauntings and revilings of a debased and profligate mob.

"All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head." He was numbered with the transgressors, and even His kinsmen according to the flesh disowned Him. He was forced to see the sword pierce the heart of His mother,—He beheld her sorrow. He expired amidst derision. But all His sufferings were counted as of small account in consideration of the result He was working out in behalf of man, and for the good of the whole universe.

The Cry Resounded in All the Universe

He expired on the cross exclaiming, "It is finished," and that cry rang through every world, and through heaven itself. The great contest between Christ, the Prince of life, and Satan, the prince of darkness, was practically over, and Christ was conqueror. His death answered the question as to whether there was self-denial with the Father and the Son.

Through the death of Christ a door of hope was opened for fallen man. Man was under sentence of death for the transgression of the law of God. He was under condemnation as a traitor, as a rebel; but Christ came to be his substitute, to die as a malefactor, to suffer the penalty of the traitors, bearing the weight of their sins upon His divine soul. He descended lower and lower, till there were no lower depths of humiliation to sound, in order that He might lift up those who would believe in

Him, and cleanse the guilty from moral defilement, and impart to them His own righteousness. He died to make an atonement, to redeem, cleanse, restore, and exalt man to a place at His right hand.

He Walked the Earth Unhonored

Through His life upon earth, He scattered blessings wherever He went. Though at His word legions of angels would render Him homage, yet He walked the earth unhonored, unconfessed. In place of praise He met reproach. He walked among men as one of the poor and lowly. Though He healed the sick, relieved the oppressed, bound up the broken-hearted, yet few called Him blessed, and the great of the earth passed Him by with disdain.

His Depths of Love for Man

As a member of the human family He was mortal, but as God He was a fountain of life to the world. He could have withstood the advances of death and refused to come under its dominion, but voluntarily He laid down His life that He might bring life and immortality to light. He bore the sin of the world, endured the penalty, yielded up His life as a sacrifice, that man should not eternally die. Contrast His suffering and humiliation with the riches of His glory, with the wealth of praise pouring forth from immortal tongues, with the anthems of adoration, with the homage of millions of holy angels in the heights of the sanctuary, and seek to comprehend what manner of love inspired the heart of Jesus.

How much has God loved the race of men?—Look to Calvary. As you behold Jesus upon the cross, does not the heinous character of sin appear? It was sin that caused the death of God's dear Son, and sin is the transgression of the law. Says the prophet: "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But 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. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.... It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities."

When the sinner realizes that Christ died for him, that He might impute His righteousness unto him, he magnifies the love of God in providing the plan of salvation.

They Refused Life

"The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." At infinite cost the salvation of man has been purchased. The world may refuse the gift, but this will not lessen its value, or relieve men of its responsibility. When He was upon earth Jesus said to those who refused Him, "Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life." There are many who are refusing to respond to the drawing love of Christ today. Jesus calls, but many refuse to respond to the invitation. They will not avail themselves of the privilege of having Jesus for their personal Saviour. They do not come in humility and faith, that they may know by a personal experience what they are to Jesus, and what He is to them. But the promise is, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Jesus will not rest until He leads His followers unto the realms of perfect joy and glory.

They Will Not Perish

The plans of God can not fail. Men make great plans, but fail to accomplish the object that they design. They begin to build and are not able to finish. They do not count the cost. But Jesus counted the cost of the salvation of every son and daughter of Adam. He provided abundant means whereby all might be saved, if they would but comply with the conditions and lay hold upon eternal life. Unfailing resources are at His command to complete the work which He has begun. Those who respond to His love, yielding their wills to Him, will not perish, but have everlasting life.

How the wondrous provision of the plan of God for the salvation of men widens and exalts our ideas of the love of God! How it binds our hearts to the great heart of infinite love! How it makes us delight in His service, as our hearts respond to the drawing of His loving-kindness and loving mercy!

John calls upon men to behold the marvelous love of God. He exclaims: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." Those who are true, who are pure, who love and obey the words of God, will be counted children of the heavenly King, members of the royal family, heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ.

January 12, 1915

The Conflict Between Christ and Satan

The Master Overcame at Each Step—We May Share His Victory—Every Angel in Heaven Would Be Sent to Our Side if Necessity Required

Christ saw that it was not possible for man to overcome in his own strength; therefore He came in person from the throne of glory, and bore the test that Adam failed to bear. In man's behalf He resisted the temptations of the enemy, and made it possible for man, by faith in Him, to overcome in his own behalf.

Satan knew that everything depended on the result of his effort to overcome Christ. He knew that if Christ bore the test that Adam failed of bearing, the plan of salvation would be carried out to its fulfillment, and his destruction would be certain. He saw that he must either conquer or be conquered. All the powers of the apostate were rallied against the Son of God. Christ was made the mark of every weapon of hell. Satan bent all his energies to the effort to cause Christ to swerve from His allegiance.

The Enemy Stormed Him With Wrath

From the desert to Calvary, the storm of the enemy's wrath beat upon the Saviour; but the more mercilessly it fell, the more firmly did the Son of God cling to the hand of His Father, and press on in the blood-stained path. All the efforts of Satan to overcome Him only brought out in a purer light His spotless character.

In our own strength it is impossible for us to conquer in the conflict with sin. But Christ is acquainted with our necessities and our weakness. He came to this world as a man, and as a man lived a life of

obedience. We shall never be called upon to suffer as He suffered, for upon Him were laid the sins of the whole world. That we might have eternal life. He endured reproach, mockery, insult, and a death of shame.

Must Suffer, But Will Not Fail

We need not expect to gain the victory over sin without enduring suffering, or to win the overcomer's reward by feeble efforts. Think of how much it cost the Saviour, as in the wilderness He battled with temptation. For forty days He fasted and prayed. Weak and emaciated from hunger, worn and haggard with mental agony, "His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men."

The Christian life is a life of constant conflict. It is a battle and a march. Every act of obedience, every deed of self-denial, every trial bravely endured, every temptation resisted, every victory gained, is a step forward in the march to eternal triumph.

Only in the Conqueror's Name

There is hope for man. Christ says, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne." But let us never forget that the efforts we make in our own strength are utterly worthless. Our strength is weakness, our judgment foolishness. Only in the name and strength of the Conqueror can we conquer. When we are pressed with temptation, when unchristlike desires clamor for the mastery, let us offer fervent, importunate prayer to the heavenly Father, in the name of Christ. This will bring divine aid. In the Redeemer's name we may gain the victory.

As, seeing the sinfulness of sin, we fall helpless before the cross, asking forgiveness and strength, our prayer is heard and answered. Those who present their petitions to God in Christ's name will never be turned away. The Lord says, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." "He will regard the prayer of the destitute." Our help comes from Him who holds all things in His hands. The peace that He sends is the assurance of His love to us.

Helpless, Yet Invincible

Nothing can be more helpless and yet more invincible than the soul that feels its nothingness, and relies wholly upon the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour. God would send every angel in heaven to the aid of the one who places his whole dependence on Christ, rather than allow him to be overcome.

If we accept Christ as our guide, He will lead us safely along the narrow way. The road may be rough and thorny, and the ascent steep and dangerous; there may be pitfalls on the right hand and on the left. When weary and longing for rest, we may have to toil on; when faint, we may have to fight; but with Christ as our Guide, we shall not fail of reaching heaven. Christ Himself has trodden the rough path before us, smoothing it for our feet. The way is illuminated by Him who is the light of the world. As we follow in His footsteps, the path grows brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

August 10, 1915

Satan and Our Appetites

The Devil's Strongest Hold on Man—Irritating the Stomach and Weakening the Brain—A Way of Escape Provided—All Heaven Looking On

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Romans 12:1.

In the ancient Jewish service, it was required that every sacrifice should be without blemish. We are God's workmanship; and we are "fearfully and wonderfully made." Psalm 139:14. There are many who are educated in the sciences, and are familiar with the theory of the truth, who do not understand the laws that govern their own being. God has given us facilities and talents; and it is our duty, as His sons and daughters, to make the best use of them. If we weaken these powers of mind or body by wrong habits, or indulgence of perverted appetite, it will be impossible for us to honor God as we should.

Satan's Strongest Hold

We meet intemperance everywhere. We see it on the cars, the steamboats, and wherever we go; and we should ask ourselves what we are doing to rescue souls from the tempter's grasp. Satan is constantly on the alert to bring the race fully under his control. His strongest hold on man is through the appetite, and this he seeks to stimulate in every way possible. All unnatural excitants are harmful, and they cultivate the desire for liquor.

I appeal to parents to begin with their children, and give them a right education. Seek to bring them up so that they shall have moral stamina to resist the evil that surrounds them. The lesson of self-control must begin with the child in its mother's arms. It must learn to restrain passionate temper, to bring its will into subjection, and to deny unhealthful cravings.

Teach your children to abhor stimulants. Do not place luxurious dishes before the children,—spiced foods, rich gravies, cakes, and pastries. This highly seasoned food irritates the stomach, and causes a craving for still stronger stimulants. Furthermore, children are allowed to eat between meals; and by the time they are twelve or fourteen years of age, they are often confirmed dyspeptics.

Under the irritating influence of fiery spices, as well as under that of strong drinks, the stomach becomes of a fiery red color. With the stomach in such a state, there is a craving for something more to meet the demands of the appetite, something stronger, and still stronger. Next you find your sons out on the street learning to smoke. It is a grievous lesson; it makes them deathly sick. Yet they press the matter through with a perseverance that would be praiseworthy in a better cause.

Tobacco weakens the brain, and paralyzes its fine sensibilities. Its use excites a thirst for drink, and in very many cases, lays the foundation for the liquor habit. Its use is an inconvenient, expensive, unclean habit. The teachings of Christ, pointing to purity, self-denial, and temperance, all rebuke this defiling practice. When we think of the long fast that Jesus endured in the wilderness of temptation in order to break the power of appetite over man, we marvel that those who profess to be His followers can indulge in this habit. Is it for the glory of God for men to enfeeble the physical powers, confuse the brain, and yield the will to this narcotic poison? What right have they to mar the image of God?

A great responsibility rests upon us. We cannot render to God true service unless we present our bodies a living sacrifice. No one can be justified in marring this wonderfully intricate human organism. If we do this, not only do we suffer ourselves, but the evil is transmitted to our children. Can we wonder that the children who have such a legacy do not fear God?

Wrong Example of Some Ministers

How often do we see boys not more than eight years old, or younger, using tobacco! If you speak to them about it, they say, "My father uses it; and if it does him good, it will me." They point to the minister or the Sunday school superintendent, and say, "If such good men as these use it, surely I can." How can we expect anything else of the children with their inherited tendencies, while the older ones set them such an example? God pity the poor slave to these indulgences!

Some urge that a man is not responsible for what he does under strong drink. When he places the cup to his lips, he makes himself responsible for all the deeds he commits while under its influence.

It is important that those who make and execute the laws of our great nation should have their faculties unclouded. What about the judges and jurors, in whose hands rests the disposing of human life, and whose decisions may condemn the innocent, or turn the criminal loose upon society? Do they not need to have full control of their mental powers? Are they temperate in their habits? If not, they are not fit for such responsible positions. When the appetites are perverted, the mental powers are weakened, and there is danger that men will not rule justly.

We can understand the value of the human soul only as we realize the greatness of the sacrifice made for its redemption. The word of God declares that we are not our own, that we are bought with a price. It is at an immense cost that we have been placed upon vantage ground, where we can find liberty from the bondage of sin wrought by the fall in Eden. Adam's sin plunged the race into hopeless misery; but by the sacrifice of the Son of God, a second probation was granted to man.

A Way of Escape Provided

In the plan of redemption, a way of escape is provided for all who will avail themselves of it. God knew that it was impossible for man to overcome in his own strength, and He has provided help for him. How thankful we should be that a way is open for us, by which we can have access to the Father; that the gates are left ajar, so that beams of light from the glory within may shine upon those who will receive them!

Christ began the work of redemption just where the ruin began. His first test was on the same point where Adam failed. It was through temptations addressed to the appetite that Satan had overcome a large proportion of the human race, and his success had made him feel that the control of this fallen planet was in his hands. But in Christ he found one who was able to resist him, and he left the field of battle a conquered foe.

Jesus says, He "hath nothing in Me." John 14:30. His victory is an assurance that we too may come off victors in our conflicts with the enemy. But it is not our heavenly Father's purpose to save us without an effort on our part to cooperate with Christ. We must act our part; and divine power, uniting with our effort, will bring victory.

Who will enter in through the gates into the city?—Not those who declare that they cannot break the force of appetite. Christ has resisted the power of him who would hold us in bondage; though weakened by His long fast of forty days, He withstood temptation, and proved, by this act, that our cases are not hopeless. I know that we cannot obtain the victory alone; and how thankful we should be that we have a living Saviour, who is ready and willing to aid us!

Reclaimed From His Hopeless Condition

I recall the case of a man in a congregation that I was once addressing. He was almost wrecked in body and mind by the use of liquor and tobacco. He was bowed down from the effects of dissipation, and his dress was in keeping with his shattered condition. To all appearance, he had gone too far to be reclaimed. But as I appealed to him to resist temptation in the strength of a risen Saviour, he rose tremblingly, and said, “You have an interest for me, and I will have an interest for myself.”

Six months afterward, he came to my house. I did not recognize him. With a countenance beaming with joy, and eyes overflowing with tears, he grasped my hand, and said, “You do not know my name, but you remember the man in an old blue coat, who rose in your congregation, and said that he would try to reform.” I was astonished. He stood erect, and looked ten years younger. He had gone home from the meeting, and passed the long hours in prayer till the sun arose. It was a night of conflict; but, thank God, he came off the victor. This man could tell, by sad experience, of the bondage of those evil habits. He knew how to warn the youth of the dangers of contamination; and those who, like himself, had been overcome, he could point to Christ as the only source of help.

The Mighty, Unfailing Helper

Intemperance is on the increase, in spite of the efforts to control it. We cannot be too earnest in seeking to hinder its progress, to raise the fallen, and shield the weak from temptation. With our feeble hands, we can do but little; but we have an unfailing Helper. We must not forget that the arm of Christ can reach to the depths of human woe and degradation. He can give us help to conquer even this terrible demon of intemperance.

But it is in the home that the real work must begin. The greatest burden rests upon those who have the responsibility of educating the youth, of forming their character. Here is a work for mothers, in helping their children to form correct habits and pure tastes, to develop moral stamina, true moral worth. Teach them that they are not to be swayed by others, that they are not to yield to wrong influences, but to influence others for good, to ennoble and elevate those with whom they associate. Teach them that if they connect themselves with God, they will have strength from Him to resist the fiercest temptations.

Not Registered as a Man

With every facility which has been placed within reach, he who does not resist temptation, is not registered in the books of heaven as a man. The Lord never places men in positions so trying that it is beyond their power to withstand evil. Divine power is ever ready to protect and strengthen him who has been made a partaker of the divine nature.

Temptations to the indulgence of appetite possess a power which can be overcome only by the help that God can impart. But with every temptation, we have the promise of God that there shall be a way of escape. Why, then, are so many overcome?—It is because they do not put their trust in God. They do not avail themselves of the means provided for their safety. The excuses offered for the gratification of perverted appetite are therefore of no weight with God.

All Heaven is Watching

We want a share in the eternal inheritance. We want a place in the city of God, free from every impurity. All heaven is watching to see how we are fighting the battle against temptation. Let all who profess the name of Christ so walk before the world that they may teach, by example as well as by precept, the principle of true living.