

Third Quarter 2023

EGW Notes - Lesson 7, 5 – 11 August

The Unified Body of Christ



Sabbath Afternoon, August 5

The members of the church of God on this earth are as the different parts of a machine, all closely related to one another, and all closely related to and dependent on one great center. There is to be unity in diversity. No member of the Lord's firm can work successfully in independence, detached from the others. All are to use their entrusted capabilities in His service, that each may minister to the perfection of the whole. Each is to work under the supervision of God.

By Christ's wonderful union of divinity with humanity, we are assured that even in this world we may be partakers of the divine nature. Christ has pledged Himself to cooperate with those to whom He has entrusted talents. He has pledged Himself to train us to be His co-laborers. He will help us to follow His example, doing good and refusing to do evil. We are to be consecrated channels through whom the love of Christ flows to those in need of help.

—*Our High Calling, p. 182.*

The Lord has need of all kinds of skillful workmen. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11, 12). Each worker in every branch of work in the Lord's vineyard must have a head and a heart sanctified

through the truth to enable him to see not merely the part of the work which is under his supervision, but its relation to the great whole. When the workers are consecrated to God they will reveal the love of God for their brethren who work under the unseen, divine Master Worker. “We are labourers together with God” (1 Corinthians 3:9).

We are all part of the great web of humanity, thread packed against thread to bring out the pattern of the fabric and make it a complete whole. Be God’s thread to work out His design.

—*That I May Know Him, p. 323.*

There can be no growth or fruitfulness in the life that is centered in self. . . . Talk of the love of Christ, tell of His goodness. Do every duty that presents itself. Carry the burden of souls upon your heart, and by every means in your power seek to save the lost. As you receive the Spirit of Christ—the Spirit of unselfish love and labor for others—you will grow and bring forth fruit. The graces of the Spirit will ripen in your character. Your faith will increase, your convictions deepen, your love be made perfect. More and more you will reflect the likeness of Christ in all that is pure, noble, and lovely.

—*Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 67.*

Sunday, August 6 The Unity of the Spirit

Paul urges the Ephesians to preserve unity and love: “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

By meekness and gentleness, forbearance and love, they were to exemplify the character of Christ and the blessings of His salvation. There is but one body, and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith. As members of the body of Christ all believers are animated by the same spirit and the same hope. Divisions in the

church dishonor the religion of Christ before the world and give occasion to the enemies of truth to justify their course. Paul's instructions were not written alone for the church in his day. God designed that they should be sent down to us. What are we doing to preserve unity in the bonds of peace?

– *Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 239.*

A union of believers with Christ will as a natural result lead to a union with one another, which bond of union is the most enduring upon earth. We are one in Christ, as Christ is one with the Father. It is only by personal union with Christ, by communion with Him daily, hourly, that we can bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit. . . .

The vine has many branches, but though all the branches are different, they do not quarrel. In diversity there is unity. All the branches obtain their nourishment from one source. This is an illustration of the unity that is to exist among Christ's followers. In their different lines of work they all have but one Head. The same Spirit, in different ways, works through them. There is harmonious action, though the gifts differ.

– *God's Amazing Grace, p. 211.*

Many of those who profess to love the Saviour neglect to love those who are united with them in Christian fellowship. . . .

It is not the opposition of the world that endangers us the most; it is the evil cherished in the hearts of professed believers that works our most grievous disaster and most retards the progress of God's cause. There is no surer way of weakening our spirituality than by being envious, suspicious of one another, full of faultfinding and evil surmising. . . .

Harmony and union existing among men of varied dispositions is the strongest witness that can be borne that God has sent His Son into the world to save sinners. It is our privilege to bear this witness. But, in order to do this, we must

place ourselves under Christ's command.

—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 8, p. 242.

Monday, August 7 Together as One in the One

God is leading a people out from the world upon the exalted platform of eternal truth, the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. He will discipline and fit up His people. They will not be at variance, one believing one thing and another having faith and views entirely opposite, each moving independently of the body. Through the diversity of the gifts and governments that He has placed in the church, they will all come to the unity of the faith. . . .

Though we have an individual work and an individual responsibility before God, we are not to follow our own independent judgment, regardless of the opinions and feelings of our brethren; for this course would lead to disorder in the church. . . . [I]f hearts are teachable, there will be no divisions among us.

—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, pp. 29, 30.*

Unity in diversity is God's plan. Among the followers of Christ there is to be the blending of diverse elements, one adapted to the other, and each to do its special work for God. Every individual has his place in the filling up of one great plan bearing the stamp of Christ's image. One is fitted to do a certain work, another has a different work for which he is adapted, another has a still different line; but each is to be the complement of the others. The Spirit of God, working in and through the diverse elements, will produce harmony of action. There is to be only one master spirit—the Spirit of Him who is infinite in wisdom, and in whom all the diverse elements meet in beautiful, matchless unity.

—*Our High Calling, p. 169.*

In [the first angel's] message, God has sent to the church a warning, which, had it been accepted, would have corrected the evils that were shutting them away

from Him. Had they received the message from heaven, humbling their hearts before the Lord and seeking in sincerity a preparation to stand in His presence, the Spirit and power of God would have been manifested among them. The church would again have reached that blessed state of unity, faith, and love which existed in apostolic days, when the believers “were of one heart and of one soul.” Acts 4:32.

If God’s professed people would receive the light as it shines upon them from His word, they would reach that unity for which Christ prayed, that which the apostle describes, “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” “There is,” he says, “one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” Ephesians 4:3-5.

– *The Great Controversy, p. 379.*

Tuesday, August 8 The Exalted Christ, Giver of Gifts

It was to the glory of God that the Prince of life should be the first fruits, the antitype of the wave sheaf. . . . This very scene, the resurrection of Christ from the dead, had been celebrated in type by the Jews. When the first heads of grain ripened in the field, they were carefully gathered; and when the people went up to Jerusalem, these were presented to the Lord as a thank offering. The people waved the ripened sheaf before God, acknowledging Him as the Lord of the harvest. After this ceremony the sickle could be put to the wheat, and the harvest gathered.

So those who had been raised were to be presented to the universe as a pledge of the resurrection of all who believe in Christ as their personal Saviour. The same power that raised Christ from the dead will raise His church, and glorify it with Christ, as His bride, above all principalities, above all powers, above every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in the heavenly courts, the world above.

—Selected Messages, book 1, p. 305.

Before He left His disciples, Christ “breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” John 20:22. Again He said, “Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you.” Luke 24:49. But not until after the ascension was the gift received in its fullness. Not until through faith and prayer the disciples had surrendered themselves fully for His working was the outpouring of the Spirit received. Then in a special sense the goods of heaven were committed to the followers of Christ. “When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” Ephesians 4:8. . . . The gifts are already ours in Christ, but their actual possession depends upon our reception of the Spirit of God.

—Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 327.

The promised Holy Spirit, that He would send after He ascended to His Father, is constantly at work to draw the attention to the great official sacrifice upon the cross of Calvary, and to unfold to the world the love of God to man, and to open to the convicted soul the precious things in the Scriptures, and to open to darkened minds the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness, the truths that make their hearts burn within them with the awakened intelligence of the truths of eternity. . . .

The life of Christ is to be carefully meditated upon, and to be constantly studied with a desire to understand the reason why He had to come at all. We can only form our conclusions by searching the Scriptures as Christ has enjoined upon us to do, for He says, “They testify of me.”

—Reflecting Christ, p. 132.

Wednesday, August 9 Gifts of the Exalted Jesus

The fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians contains lessons given us by

God. In this chapter one speaks under the inspiration of God, one to whom in holy vision God had given instruction. He describes the distribution of God's gifts to His workers, saying: "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

Ephesians 4:11-13. Here we are shown that God gives to every man his work, and in doing this work man is fulfilling his part of God's great plan. . . .

God established His instrumentalities among a people who recognize the laws of the divine government. . . . Every gift, every power, that Christ promised His disciples He bestows upon those who will serve Him faithfully. And He who gives mental capabilities, and who entrusts talents to the men and women who are His by creation and redemption, expects that these talents and capabilities will be increased by use. Every talent must be employed in blessing others and thus bringing honor to God.

— *Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, p. 243.*

In sending forth His ministers our Saviour gave gifts unto men, for through them He communicates to the world the words of eternal life. This is the means which God has ordained for the perfecting of the saints in knowledge and true holiness. The work of Christ's servants is not merely to preach the truth; they are to watch for souls as they that must render account to God. They are to reprove, rebuke, exhort with long-suffering and doctrine.

All who have been benefited by the labors of God's servant should, according to their ability, unite with him in working for the salvation of souls. This is the work of all true believers, ministers and people. They should keep the grand object ever in view, each seeking to fill his proper position in the church, and all working together in order, harmony, and love.

— ***Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, pp. 237, 238.***

There are some in these last days who will cry: “Speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits.” But this is not my work. . . . In the name and strength of my Redeemer I shall do what I can. I shall warn and counsel and reprove and encourage as the Spirit of God dictates, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. My duty is not to please myself, but to do the will of my heavenly Father, who has given me my work.

— ***Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, p. 231.***

Thursday, August 10 Growing Up Into Christ

After the great disappointment in 1844, Satan and his angels were busily engaged in laying snares to unsettle the faith of the body. He affected the minds of persons who had had an experience in the messages, and who had an appearance of humility. Some pointed to the future for the fulfillment of the first and second messages, while others pointed far back into the past, declaring that they had been there fulfilled. These were gaining an influence over the minds of the inexperienced and unsettling their faith. Some were searching the Bible to build up a faith of their own, independent of the body. Satan exulted in all this; for he knew that those who broke loose from the anchor he could affect by different errors and drive about with divers winds of doctrine. . . . [T]here was division and confusion throughout the body.

— ***Early Writings, p. 256.***

Our Lord designed that His church should reflect to the world the fullness and sufficiency that we find in Him. We are constantly receiving of God’s bounty, and by imparting of the same we are to represent to the world the love and beneficence of Christ. While all heaven is astir, dispatching messengers to every part of the earth to carry forward the work of redemption, the church of the living God are also to be co-laborers with Christ. We are members of His

mystical body. He is the head, controlling all the members of the body. Jesus Himself, in His infinite mercy, is working on human hearts, effecting spiritual transformations so amazing that angels look on with astonishment and joy. The same unselfish love that characterizes the Master is seen in the character and life of His true followers.

– *Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 731.*

Many know so little about their Bibles that they are unsettled in the faith. They remove the old landmarks, and fallacies and winds of doctrine blow them hither and thither. Science, falsely so-called, is wearing away the foundation of Christian principle; and those who once were in the faith drift away from the Bible landmarks, and divorce themselves from God, while still claiming to be His children.

The church needs to awake to an understanding of the subtle powers of satanic agencies that must be met. If they will keep on the whole armor, they will be able to conquer all the foes they meet, some of which are not yet developed. . . .

The apostasy will increase. “Some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.” Men and women have confederated to oppose the Lord God of heaven, and the church is only half awake to the situation. There needs to be much more prayer, much more of earnest effort, among professed believers.

– *Evangelism, pp. 362, 363.*

Friday, August 11 For Further Reading

The Upward Look, “Stewards of God’s Grace,” p. 379;

Testimony Treasures, “Steadfastness Needed,” vol. 1, pp. 462, 463.

Stewards of God's Grace

Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. Matthew 10:8. {UL 379.1}

Those who walk in the narrow way must follow the directions of the Guidebook. Thus only can they reach the gates of the City of God.... {UL 379.2}

God has put men and women in possession of precious gifts. To different ones He has given different gifts. Not all have the same strength of character or the same depth of knowledge. But each one is to use his gifts in the Master's service, however small this gift may seem to be. The faithful steward trades wisely on the goods entrusted to him. {UL 379.3}

The endowments of mind and body are to be carefully guarded. Our gifts are not to be weakened by self-indulgence. Every power is to be carefully preserved, that it may always be ready for instant use. No part of the physical organism is to be weakened by misuse. Each part, however small, has an influence on the whole. The abuse of one nerve or muscle lessens the usefulness of the whole body. Those for whom Christ has given His life should bring their habits and practices into conformity to His will. {UL 379.4}

God's Word declares, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20). But God does not desire the death of anyone. At infinite cost He provided for man a second probation. He "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). {UL 379.5}

Should not those to whom the light of truth for this time has come place themselves in close connection with God, using their capabilities to advance the work of soul saving? Should not the one who possesses an understanding of the Scriptures impart the knowledge given him to those who know not the truth?

{UL 379.6}

Upon every believer in present truth rests the responsibility of working for sinners. God points them to their special work—the proclamation of the third angel’s message. They are to show their appreciation of God’s great gift by consecrating themselves to the work for which Christ gave His life. They are to be stewards of the grace of God, dispensing to others the blessings bestowed on them. {UL 379.7}

He who has found comfort in the Word of God is to share this comfort with others. Thus only can he continue to receive comfort.—Manuscript 147, December 31, 1903, “The Narrow Way.” {UL 379.8}

Steadfastness Needed

There are some in the church who need to cling to the pillars of our faith, to settle down and find rock bottom, instead of drifting on the surface of excitement and moving from impulse. There are spiritual dyspeptics in the church. They are self-made invalids; their spiritual debility is the result of their own wavering course. They are tossed about here and there by the changing winds of doctrine, and are often confused and thrown into uncertainty because they move entirely by feeling. They are sensational Christians, ever hungering for something new and diverse; strange doctrines confuse their faith, and they are worthless to the cause of truth/ {1TT 462.1}

God calls for men and women of stability, of firm purpose, who can be relied upon in seasons of danger and trial, who are as firmly rooted and grounded in the truth as the eternal hills, who cannot be swayed to the right or to the left, but who move straight onward and are always found on the right side. There are some, who, in time of religious peril, may almost always be looked for in the ranks of the enemy; if they have any influence, it is on the wrong side. They do not feel under moral obligation to give all their strength to the truth they profess. Such will be rewarded according to their works. {1TT 462.2}

Those who do little for the Saviour in the salvation of souls, and in keeping themselves right before God, will gain but little spiritual muscle. We need continually to use the strength we have that it may develop and increase. As disease is the result of the violation of natural laws, so is spiritual declension the result of a continued transgression of the law of God. And yet the very transgressors may profess to keep all of God's commandments. {1TT 463.1}

We must come nearer to God, place ourselves in closer connection with heaven, and carry out the principles of the law in the minutest actions of our everyday lives in order to be spiritually whole. God has given His servants ability, talents to be used for His glory, not to lie idle or be wasted. He has given them light and a knowledge of His will to be communicated to others, and in imparting to others we become living channels of light. If we do not exercise our spiritual strength we become feeble, as the limbs of the body become powerless when the invalid is compelled to remain long inactive. It is use that gives power.

{1TT 463.2}