

EGW Notes - Lesson 10

Mission to the Unreached: Part 1



Sabbath Afternoon, December 2

The Lord Jesus is looking upon every soul with intense interest. He has declared that the spiritual character of His church is to be carefully maintained. The church is in the world, and is to do a work for the world. . . .

Today the truth is to be proclaimed to all nations and kindreds and tongues and peoples. Christ desires us to labor in a way that will not arouse prejudice, for when prejudice is aroused, some are cut off from hearing the truth.

We are still in this world, where these barriers exist, and we must work in a way that will enable us to reach all classes. Let not the present obstructions worry you and destroy your faith and confidence in God.—*This Day With God*, p. 269.

The apostle [Paul] was not deceived by that which he saw in this center of learning [Athens]. His spiritual nature was so alive to the attraction of heavenly things that the joy and glory of the riches which will never perish made valueless in his eyes the pomp and splendor with which he was surrounded. As he saw the magnificence of Athens he realized its seductive power over lovers of art and science, and his mind was deeply impressed with the importance of the work before him. .

..

He “disputed . . . in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.” But his principal work in Athens was to bear the tidings of salvation to those who had no intelligent conception of God and of His purpose in behalf of the fallen race. The apostle was soon to meet paganism in its most subtle, alluring form.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 234.

Unless the members of God’s church today have a living connection with the Source of all spiritual growth, they will not be ready for the time of reaping. Unless they keep their lamps trimmed and burning, they will fail of receiving added grace in times of special need.

Those only who are constantly receiving fresh supplies of grace, will have power proportionate to their daily need and their ability to use that power. Instead of looking forward to some future time when, through a special endowment of spiritual power, they will receive a miraculous fitting up for soul winning, they are yielding themselves daily to God, that He may make them vessels meet for His use. Daily they are improving

the opportunities for service that lie within their reach. Daily they are witnessing for the Master wherever they may be, whether in some humble sphere of labor in the home, or in a public field of usefulness.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 55.

Sunday, December 3

A Hebrew in Athens

The unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica, filled with jealousy and hatred of the apostles, and not content with having driven them from their own city, followed them to Berea and aroused against them the excitable passions of the lower class. Fearing that violence would be done to Paul if he remained there, the brethren sent him to Athens, accompanied by some of the Bereans who had newly accepted the faith.

Thus persecution followed the teachers of truth from city to city. The enemies of Christ could not prevent the advancement of the gospel, but they succeeded in making the work of the apostles exceedingly hard. Yet in the face of opposition and conflict, Paul pressed steadily forward, determined to carry out the purpose of God as revealed to him in the vision at Jerusalem: “I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.” Acts 22:21.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 232, 233.

The city of Athens was the metropolis of heathendom. Here Paul did not meet with an ignorant, credulous populace, as at Lystra, but with a people famous for their intelligence and culture. Everywhere statues of their

gods and of the deified heroes of history and poetry met the eye, while magnificent architecture and paintings represented the national glory and the popular worship of heathen deities. The senses of the people were entranced by the beauty and splendor of art. On every hand sanctuaries and temples, involving untold expense, reared their massive forms. Victories of arms and deeds of celebrated men were commemorated by sculpture, shrines, and tablets. All these made Athens a vast gallery of art.

As Paul looked upon the beauty and grandeur surrounding him, and saw the city wholly given to idolatry, his spirit was stirred with jealousy for God, whom he saw dishonored on every side, and his heart was drawn out in pity for the people of Athens, who, notwithstanding their intellectual culture, were ignorant of the true God.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 233, 234.

A union with Christ by living faith is enduring; every other union must perish. Christ first chose us, paying an infinite price for our redemption; and the true believer chooses Christ as first, and last, and best in everything. But this union costs us something. It is a relation of utter dependence to be entered into by a proud being. All who form this union must feel their need of the atoning blood of Christ. They must have a change of heart. They must submit their own will to the will of God. There will be a struggle with outward and internal obstacles. There must be a painful work of detachment, as well as a work of attachment. Pride, selfishness, vanity, worldliness—sin in all its forms—must be overcome, if we would enter into a union with Christ. The reason why many

find the Christian life so deplorably hard, why they are so fickle, so variable, is, they try to attach themselves to Christ without detaching themselves from these cherished idols.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1143.

Monday, December 4

Paul in the Areopagus

The great men of Athens were not long in learning of the presence in their city of a singular teacher who was setting before the people doctrines new and strange. Some of these men sought Paul out and entered into conversation with him. Soon a crowd of listeners gathered about them. Some were prepared to ridicule the apostle as one who was far beneath them both socially and intellectually, and these said jeeringly among themselves, “What will this babbler say?” Others, “because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection,” said, “He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods.”

Among those who encountered Paul in the market place were “certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics;” but they, and all others who came in contact with him, soon saw that he had a store of knowledge even greater than their own. His intellectual power commanded the respect of the learned; while his earnest, logical reasoning and the power of his oratory held the attention of all in the audience. His hearers recognized the fact that he was no novice, but was able to meet all classes with convincing arguments in support

of the doctrines he taught. Thus the apostle stood undaunted, meeting his opposers on their own ground, matching logic with logic, philosophy with philosophy, eloquence with eloquence.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 235.

As Paul searched the Scriptures, he learned that throughout the ages “not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence.” 1 Corinthians 1:26-29. And so, viewing the wisdom of the world in the light of the cross, Paul “determined not to know anything, . . . save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” 1 Corinthians 2:2.

Throughout his later ministry, Paul never lost sight of the Source of his wisdom and strength. Hear him, years afterward, still declaring, “For to me to live is Christ.” Philippians 1:21. And again: “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, . . . that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings.” Philippians 3:8-10.—*The Acts of the Apostles*,

pp. 127, 128.

Do we expect to dwell with Christ in the eternal world? Then we must dwell with him here, that he may help us in every time of trial and temptation, and make us ready for his coming in the clouds of heaven. . . . We cannot keep Christ so apart from our lives as we do, and yet be fitted for his companionship in heaven. He is to be the all in all of heaven, and must be our all in all upon earth.—*Review and Herald*, May 5, 1891.

Tuesday, December 5

Paul and the Unknown God

See Paul at Athens before the council of the Areopagus. . . . Mark how, with the tact born of divine love, he points to Jehovah as the “Unknown God,” whom his hearers have ignorantly worshiped; and in words quoted from a poet of their own, he pictures Him as a Father whose children they are. Hear him, in that age of caste, when the rights of man as man were wholly unrecognized, as he sets forth the great truth of human brotherhood, declaring that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.” Then he shows how, through all the dealings of God with man, run like a thread of gold His purposes of grace and mercy.—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 312.

Standing in the midst of Mars’ Hill, Paul presented before the people of Athens the majesty of the living God in contrast with their idolatrous worship.

“Ye men of Athens,” he said, “I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our beings; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device” (Acts 17:22-29).—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 292.

God looks for fruit in His church—fruit that responds to the lessons of Christ, worthy of the truth we profess to believe, and revealing the wisdom and mercy of Christ. The Lord calls for a converted ministry, a ministry that will meet the people where they are, that will agree with them wherever they can, but that will not deny the truth. We are not to keep ourselves shut within four walls, so that our light cannot come to others. There is common ground where we may meet those not of our faith, where we may agree in principles and in regard to the lesson of

Christ. Few will become combative over these holy principles.—Manuscript 104, 1898.

Wednesday, December 6

Introducing a New God

In words of matchless beauty and tenderness, the apostle Paul set before the sages of Athens the divine purpose in the creation and distribution of races and nations. “God that made the world and all things therein,” declared the apostle, “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him.” Acts 17:24-27.

God has made plain that whosoever will, may come “into the bond of the covenant.” Ezekiel 20:37. In the creation it was His purpose that the earth should be inhabited by beings whose existence would be a blessing to themselves and to one another, and an honor to their Creator. All who will may identify themselves with this purpose. Of them it is spoken, “This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.” Isaiah 43:21.—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 500.

True reverence for God is inspired by a sense of His infinite greatness and a realization of His presence. With this sense of the Unseen, every heart should be deeply impressed. The hour and place of prayer are sacred, because God is there. And as reverence is manifested in

attitude and demeanor, the feeling that inspires it will be deepened. “Holy and reverend is His name,” the psalmist declares. Psalm 111:9. Angels, when they speak that name, veil their faces. With what reverence, then, should we, who are fallen and sinful, take it upon our lips!—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 48.

Paul was deeply anxious that the humiliation of Christ should be seen and realized. He was convinced that if men could be led to consider the amazing sacrifice made by the Majesty of heaven, selfishness would be banished from their hearts. The apostle lingers over point after point, that we may in some measure comprehend the wonderful condescension of the Saviour in behalf of sinners. He directs the mind first to the position which Christ occupied in heaven in the bosom of His Father; he reveals Him afterward as laying aside His glory, voluntarily subjecting Himself to the humbling conditions of man’s life, assuming the responsibilities of a servant, and becoming obedient unto death, and that the most ignominious and revolting, the most agonizing—the death of the cross. Can we contemplate this wonderful manifestation of the love of God without gratitude and love, and a deep sense of the fact that we are not our own? Such a Master should not be served from grudging, selfish motives.—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 501.

The love of Christ is a golden chain that binds finite, human beings who believe in Jesus Christ to the Infinite God. The love that the Lord has for His children passeth knowledge. No science can define or explain it. No

human wisdom can fathom it. The more we feel the influence of this love, the more meek and humble shall we be.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1141.

Thursday, December 7

Crossing a Line

[Paul] was in a position where he might easily have said that which would have irritated his proud listeners and brought himself into difficulty. Had his oration been a direct attack upon their gods and the great men of the city, he would have been in danger of meeting the fate of Socrates. But with a tact born of divine love, he carefully drew their minds away from heathen deities, by revealing to them the true God, who was to them unknown.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 241.

With words borrowed from a poet of their own [Paul] pictured the infinite God as a Father, whose children they were. “In Him we live, and move, and have our being,” he declared; “as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device. . . .

As Paul spoke of the resurrection from the dead, “some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.” . . .

Among those who listened to the words of Paul were some to whose minds the truths presented brought conviction, but they would not humble themselves to acknowledge God and to accept the plan of salvation. No eloquence of words, no force of argument, can convert the sinner. The power of God alone can apply the truth to the heart. He who persistently turns from this power cannot be reached. The Greeks sought after wisdom, yet the message of the cross was to them foolishness because they valued their own wisdom more highly than the wisdom that comes from above.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 238, 239.

God's promise is, "Ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13.

The whole heart must be yielded to God, or the change can never be wrought in us by which we are to be restored to His likeness. By nature we are alienated from God. The Holy Spirit describes our condition in such words as these: "Dead in trespasses and sins;" "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint;" "no soundness in it." We are held fast in the snare of Satan, "taken captive by him at his will." Ephesians 2:1; Isaiah 1:5, 6; 2 Timothy 2:26. God desires to heal us, to set us free. But since this requires an entire transformation, a renewing of our whole nature, we must yield ourselves wholly to Him.—*Steps to Christ*, p. 43.

Every man is free to choose what power he will have to rule over him. None have fallen so low, none are so vile, but that they may find deliverance in Christ. The

demoniac, in place of prayer, could utter only the words of Satan; yet the heart's unspoken appeal was heard. No cry from a soul in need, though it fail of utterance in words, will be unheeded. Those who consent to enter into covenant with God are not left to the power of Satan or to the infirmity of their own nature.—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 93.

Friday, December 8

For Further Reading

Selected Messages, "A Heaven to Win," book 1, pp. 96, 97;

Patriarchs and Prophets, "Satan's Enmity Against the Law," pp. 331–342.