

Controversies

Sabbath afternoon, July 13

The effect produced upon the people by the healing of the paralytic was as if heaven had opened and revealed the glories of the better world. As the man who had been cured passed through the throng, blessing God at every step and bearing his burden as if it were a feather's weight, the people fell back to give him room and with awe-stricken faces gazed upon him, whispering softly among themselves, "We have seen strange things today." Luke 5:26.

In the home of the paralytic there was great rejoicing when he returned to his family, carrying with ease the couch upon which he had been slowly borne from their presence but a short time before. They gathered round with tears of joy, hardly daring to believe their eyes. . . . Glad thanksgiving went up from that home, and God was glorified through His Son, who had restored hope to the hopeless and strength to the stricken one. This man and his family were ready to lay down their lives for Jesus. No doubt dimmed their faith, no unbelief marred their fealty to Him who had brought light into their darkened home.—The Ministry of Healing, pp. 78, 79.

Jesus knew that He could do the scribes and Pharisees no good, unless they would empty themselves of self-importance. He chose new bottles for His new wine of doctrine, and made fishermen and unlearned believers the heralds of His truth to the world. And yet, though His doctrine seemed new to the people, it was in fact not a new doctrine, but the revelation of the significance of that which had been taught from the beginning. It was His design that His disciples should take the plain, unadulterated truth for the guide of their life. They were not to add to His words, or give a forced meaning to His utterances. They were not to put a mystical interpretation upon the plain teaching of the Scriptures, and draw from theological stores to build up some man-made theory. It was through putting a mystical meaning upon the plain words of God, that sacred and vital truths were made of little significance, while the theories of men were made prominent.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1089.

Much fitful, spurious humility is seen among professed Christians. Some, determined to conquer self, place themselves as low as possible; but they try only in their own strength, and the next wave of praise or flattery carries them up out of sight. They are not willing to submit wholly to God, and He cannot work through them.

Take no glory whatever to yourself. Do not work with a divided mind, trying to serve God and self at the same time. Keep self out of sight. Let your words lead the weary and heavy-laden to Jesus, the compassionate Saviour. Work as seeing Him who is at your right hand, ready to give you strength for service. Your only safety is in entire dependence upon Christ.—*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 39.

Sunday, July 14

Healing a Paralytic

When the poor, suffering paralytic was brought to the Saviour, the urgency of the case seemed not to admit of a moment's delay, for already dissolution was doing its work upon the body. When those who bore him upon his bed saw that they could not come directly into the presence of Christ, they at once tore open the roof and let down the bed whereon the sick of the palsy lay. Our Saviour saw and understood his condition perfectly. He also knew that this wretched man had a sickness of the soul far more aggravating than bodily suffering. He knew that the greatest burden he had borne for months was on account of sins. The crowd of people waited with almost breathless silence to see how Christ would treat this case, apparently so hopeless, and were astonished to hear the words which fell from His lips: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."

These were the most precious words that could fall upon the ear of that sick sufferer, for the burden of sin had lain so heavily upon him that he could not find the least relief. Christ lifts the burden that so heavily oppressed him. . . . The mind being restored to peace and happiness, the suffering body can now be reached.—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 3, p. 168.

The rabbis had waited anxiously to see what disposition Christ would make of this case. They recollected how the man had appealed to them for help, and they had refused him hope or sympathy. Not satisfied with this, they had declared that he was suffering the curse of God for his sins. These things came fresh to their minds when they saw the sick man before them. They marked the interest with which all were watching the scene, and they felt a terrible fear of losing their own influence over the people. . . .

Fixing His glance upon them, beneath which they cowered, and drew back, Jesus said, "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins," He said, turning to the paralytic, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." . . .

The Pharisees were dumb with amazement and overwhelmed with defeat. They saw that here was no opportunity for their jealousy to inflame the multitude. The wonderful work wrought upon the man whom they had given over to the wrath of God had so impressed the people that the rabbis were for the time forgotten. They saw that Christ possessed a power which they had ascribed to God alone; yet the gentle dignity of His manner was in marked contrast to their own haughty bearing. They were disconcerted and abashed, recognizing, but not confessing, the presence of a superior being. . . . From the home of Peter . . . they went away to invent new schemes for silencing the Son of God.—The Desire of Ages, pp. 268–270.

Monday, July 15

Calling Levi and the Question of Fasting

In his grateful humility, Matthew desired to show his appreciation of the honor bestowed upon him, and, calling together those who had been his associates in business, in pleasure, and sin, he made a great feast for the Saviour. If Jesus would call him, who was so sinful and unworthy, He would surely accept his former companions who were, thought Matthew, far more deserving than himself. Matthew had a great longing that they should share the benefits of the mercies and grace of Christ. He desired them to know that Christ did not, as did the scribes and Pharisees, despise and hate the publicans and sinners. He wanted them to know Christ as the blessed Saviour.

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Jesus never refused an invitation to such a feast. The object ever before Him was to sow in the hearts of His hearers the seeds of truth, through His winning conversation to draw hearts to Himself. In His every act Christ had a purpose, and the lesson which He gave on this occasion was timely and appropriate. By this act He declared that even publicans and sinners were not excluded from His presence. Publicans and sinners could now bear the testimony that Christ honored them with His presence and conversed with them.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1120.

In the scribes, Pharisees, and rulers, Jesus found not the bottles for His new wine. He was obliged to turn from them to humble men, whose hearts were not filled with envy, covetousness, and self-righteousness. The lowly fishermen obeyed the call of the divine Teacher, while the scribes and Pharisees refused to become converted.

The disciples that Jesus called were uneducated, and were far from being perfect in character when Jesus united them with Himself; but they were willing to learn from the greatest Teacher the world ever knew. They were truly converted men, and became the new bottles into which Jesus could pour the new wine of His kingdom.—*Lift Him Up*, p. 259.

The rabbis had a saying that there is rejoicing in heaven when one who has sinned against God is destroyed; but Jesus taught that to God the work of destruction is a strange work. . . .

Every soul whom Christ has rescued is called to work in His name for the saving of the lost. This work had been neglected in Israel. Is it not neglected today by those who profess to be Christ's followers? . . .

When you turn from those who seem unpromising and unattractive, do you realize that you are neglecting the souls for whom Christ is seeking? At the very time when you turn from them, they may be in the greatest need of your compassion. In every assembly for worship, there are souls longing for rest and peace. They may appear to be living careless lives, but they are not insensible to the influence of the Holy Spirit. Many among them might be won for Christ.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 190, 191.

Tuesday, July 16

The Lord of the Sabbath

As the Jews departed from God, and failed to make the righteousness of Christ their own by faith, the Sabbath lost its significance to them. Satan was seeking to exalt himself and to draw men away from Christ, and he worked to pervert the Sabbath, because it is the sign of the power of Christ. The Jewish leaders accomplished the will of Satan by surrounding God's rest day with burdensome requirements. In the days of Christ the Sabbath had become so perverted that its observance reflected the character of selfish and arbitrary men rather than the character of the loving heavenly Father. The rabbis virtually represented God as giving laws which it was impossible for men to obey. . . . It was the work of Christ to clear away these misconceptions.—The Desire of Ages, p. 283.

The Jewish teachers prided themselves on their knowledge of the Scriptures, and in the Saviour's answer there was an implied rebuke for their ignorance of the Sacred Writings. "Have ye not read so much as this," He said, "what David did, when himself was an hungered, and they which were with him; how he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, . . . which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?" "And He said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." . . . Luke 6:3, 4; Mark 2:27, 28.

If it was right for David to satisfy his hunger by eating of the bread that had been set apart to a holy use, then it was right for the disciples to supply their need by plucking the grain upon the sacred hours of the Sabbath. . . .

The object of God's work in this world is the redemption of man; therefore that which is necessary to be done on the Sabbath in the accomplishment of this work is in accord with the Sabbath law. Jesus then crowned His argument by declaring Himself the "Lord of the Sabbath,"—One above all question and above all law.—The Desire of Ages, p. 285.

I cannot too strongly urge all our church members, all who are true missionaries, all who believe the third angel's message, all who turn away their feet from the Sabbath, to consider the message of the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah. The work of beneficence enjoined in this chapter is the work that God requires His people to do at this time. It is a work of His own appointment. . . . "thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in." Verse 12. God's memorial, the seventh-day Sabbath, the sign of His work in creating the world, has been displaced by the man of sin. God's people have a special work to do in repairing the breach that has been made in His law; and the nearer we approach the end, the more urgent this work becomes. All who love God will show that they bear His sign by keeping His commandments.—Welfare Ministry, p. 33.

Wednesday, July 17

Sandwich Story: Part 1

When Christ was upon this earth, the people flocked to hear Him. So simple and plain were His words that the most unlearned among the people could understand Him, and His hearers listened as if spellbound. This enraged the scribes and Pharisees. They were filled with envy because the people listened so attentively to the words of this new Teacher. They determined to break His hold upon the multitudes. They began by attacking His character, saying that He was born in sin, and that He cast out devils through the prince of the devils. Thus were fulfilled the words "They hated me without a cause" (John 15:25; cf. Psalm 69:4). The Jewish leaders maligned and persecuted the One who is chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely.—The Upward Look, p. 325.

There are none so hardened as those who have slighted the invitation of mercy, and done despite to the Spirit of grace. The most common manifestation of the sin against the Holy Spirit is in persistently slighting Heaven's invitation to repent. Every step in the rejection of Christ is a step toward the rejection of salvation, and toward the sin against the Holy Spirit.

In rejecting Christ the Jewish people committed the unpardonable sin; and by refusing the invitation of mercy, we may commit the same error. We offer insult to the Prince of life, and put Him to shame before the synagogue of Satan and before the heavenly universe when we refuse to listen to His delegated messengers, and instead listen to the agents of Satan, who would draw the soul away from Christ. So long as one does this, he can find no hope or pardon, and he will finally lose all desire to be reconciled to God.—The Desire of Ages, p. 324.

What constitutes the sin against the Holy Ghost? It is willfully attributing to Satan the work of the Holy Spirit. For example, suppose that one is a witness of the special work of the Spirit of God. He has convincing evidence that the work is in harmony with the Scriptures, and the Spirit witnesses with his spirit that it is of God. Afterward, however . . . he declares that that which he had before acknowledged to be the power of the Holy Spirit was the power of Satan. It is through the medium of His Spirit that God works upon the human heart; and when men willfully reject the Spirit and declare it to be from Satan, they cut off the channel by which God can communicate with them. By denying the evidence which God has been pleased to give them, they shut out the light which had been shining in their hearts, and as the result they are left in darkness. Thus the words of Christ are verified: "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" For a time, persons who have committed this sin may appear to be children of God; but when circumstances arise to develop character and show what manner of spirit they are of, it will be found that they are on the enemy's ground.—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 634.

Thursday, July 18

Sandwich Story: Part 2

The sons of Joseph were far from being in sympathy with Jesus in His work. The reports that reached them in regard to His life and labors filled them with astonishment and dismay. They heard that He devoted entire nights to prayer, that through the day He was thronged by great companies of people, and did not give Himself time so much as to eat. His friends felt that He was wearing Himself out by His incessant labor; they were unable to account for His attitude toward the Pharisees, and there were some who feared that His reason was becoming unsettled.

His brothers heard of this, and also of the charge brought by the Pharisees that He cast out devils through the power of Satan. They felt keenly the reproach that came upon them through their relation to Jesus. They knew what a tumult His words and works created, and were not only alarmed at His bold statements, but indignant at His denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees. They decided that He must be persuaded or constrained to cease this manner of labor, and they induced Mary to unite with them, thinking that through His love for her they might prevail upon Him to be more prudent.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 321.

While Jesus was still teaching the people, His disciples brought the message that His mother and His brothers were without, and desired to see Him. He knew what was in their hearts, and "He answered and said unto him that told Him, Who is My mother? and who are My brethren? And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For who-soever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother."

All who would receive Christ by faith were united to Him by a tie closer than that of human kinship. They would become one with Him, as He was one with the Father. As a believer and doer of His words, His mother was more nearly and savingly related to Him than through her natural relationship. His brothers would receive no benefit from their connection with Him unless they accepted Him as their personal Saviour.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 325.

Here and there an individual member of a family is true to the convictions of his conscience, and is compelled to stand alone. The line of demarcation is made distinct. One stands upon the Word of God, the others upon the traditions and sayings of men. . . .

The peace that Christ gave to His disciples, and for which we pray, is the peace that is born of truth, a peace that is not to be quenched because of division. Without may be wars and fightings, jealousies, envies, hatred, strife; but the peace of Christ is not that which the world giveth or taketh away.—*Our High Calling*, p. 328.

Friday, July 19

For Further Reading

Selected Messages, "Christ Holds Control," book 1, pp. 83, 84;
The Desire of Ages, "The Sabbath," pp. 281–289.