

# The Enemy Within

Sabbath Afternoon, November 1

God can make the humblest followers of Christ more precious than fine gold, even than the golden wedge of Ophir, if they yield themselves to His transforming hand. They should be determined to make the noblest use of every faculty and opportunity. The Word of God should be their study and their guide in deciding what is the highest and best in all cases. The one faultless character, the perfect Pattern set before them in the gospel, should be studied with deepest interest. The one lesson essential to learn is that goodness alone is true greatness. . . .

The weakest follower of Christ has entered into an alliance with Infinite Power. In many cases God can do little with men and women of learning, because they feel no need of leaning upon Him who is the source of all wisdom. . . .

If you trust in your own strength and wisdom, you will surely fail. God calls for complete and entire consecration, and anything short of this He will not accept. The more difficult your position, the more you need Jesus. The love and fear of God kept Joseph pure and untarnished in the king's court. . . .

It is impossible to stand upon a lofty height without danger. The tempest leaves unharmed the modest flower of the valley, while it wrestles with the lofty tree upon the mountain height. There are many people whom God could have used in poverty—He could have made them useful there, and crowned them with glory -hereafter—but prosperity ruined them. They were dragged down to the pit, because they forgot to be humble—forgot that God was their strength—and became independent and self-sufficient. —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 94.

In thus sifting the matter to the bottom, the Lord reveals the fact that He is acquainted with the hidden things of dishonesty, however people may think that they are hidden. In all the transaction, Achan manifested a determination not to acknowledge his sin; but now the Lord fastened his sin upon him. Had Joshua declared Achan's sin, many might have sympathized with the guilty one as he protested that he was innocent, and they might, in their human judgment, have thought he was misused and maltreated. It is thus that many do today when people are reproved for sin, for they drop God out of their reckoning. This is the reason that Joshua addressed Achan as he did. He said, "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me."

The Lord had told Joshua just what Achan had done, but so many are led by human sympathy, and the wrongdoer is so often excused, that the Lord meant to give Israel a lesson that should also be of benefit to us in our day. Therefore Joshua entreated the young man to tell him what he had done. —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 138.

# Breach of the Covenant

God was very particular in regard to Jericho, lest the people should be charmed with the things that the inhabitants had worshiped and their hearts be diverted from God. He guarded His people by most positive commands; yet notwithstanding the solemn injunction from God by the mouth of Joshua, Achan ventured to transgress. His covetousness led him to take of the treasures that God had forbidden him to touch because the curse of God was upon them. And because of this man's sin the Israel of God were as weak as water before their enemies.

Joshua and the elders of Israel were in great affliction. They lay before the ark of God in most abject humility because the Lord was wroth with His people. They prayed and wept before God. The Lord spoke to Joshua: "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 264.

Those who make a profession of Christianity and yet fail to have true piety are false lights, false signboards pointing in a wrong direction. . . . They fail to bring the principles of the truth they profess to believe into their life practices, and regard their sins and errors as trifling things. When Achan stole the golden wedge and the Babylonish garment, he also thought it was a trifling matter. . . .

Because of this one man's sin, the presence of the Lord was withdrawn from the armies of Israel. The Lord would not serve with their sins. When the children of Israel went up against Ai, they were defeated. . . .

When they came back in disgrace, overcome by the enemy, "Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads. And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan! O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?"

You can see by the prayer of Joshua, if you have spiritual discernment, that that which was esteemed by Achan as a very little thing was the cause of great anguish and sorrow to the responsible men of Israel. . . . Achan, the guilty party, did not feel the burden. He took it very coolly. —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 137.

# The Sin of Achan

Achan had fostered covetousness and deception in his heart, until his perceptions of sin had become blunted, and he fell an easy prey to temptation. Those who venture to indulge in a known sin will be more readily overcome the second time. The first transgression opens the door to the tempter, and he gradually breaks down all resistance and takes full possession of the citadel of the soul. Achan had listened to oft-repeated warnings against the sin of covetousness. The law of God, pointed and positive, had forbidden stealing and all deception, but he continued to cherish sin. As he was not detected and openly rebuked, he grew bolder; warnings had less and less effect upon him, until his soul was bound in chains of darkness.

Shame, defeat, and death were brought upon Israel by one man's sin. That protection which had covered their heads in the time of battle was withdrawn. Various sins that are cherished and practiced by professed Christians bring the frown of God upon the church. . . .

The influence most to be feared by the church is not that of open opposers, infidels, and blasphemers, but of inconsistent professors of Christ. These are the ones who keep back the blessing of the God of Israel and bring weakness upon the church, a reproach that is not easily wiped away. . . .

Christianity is not to be merely paraded on the Sabbath and displayed in the sanctuary; it is for every day in the week and for every place. Its claims must be recognized and obeyed in the workshop, at home, and in business transactions with brethren and with the world. . . .

It is better to die than to sin; better to want than to defraud; better to hunger than to lie. Let all who are tempted meet Satan with the words: "Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee" (Psalm 128:1, 2). —*Conflict and Courage*, April 23, p. 119.

The sin of one man caused Israel to be beaten before the enemy. Something more than prayer was required. They were to get up and cleanse the camp of Israel.

Have you considered why it was that all who were connected with Achan were also subjects of the punishment of God? It was because they had not been trained and educated according to the directions given them in the great standard of the law of God. Achan's parents had educated their son in such a way that he felt free to disobey the Word of the Lord; the principles inculcated in his life led him to deal with his children in such a way that they also were corrupted. . . . The punishment . . . reveals the fact that all were involved in the transgression.

The history of Achan teaches the solemn lesson that for one man's sin the displeasure of God will rest upon a people or a nation till the transgression is searched out and punished. Sin is corrupting in its nature. One man infected with its deadly leprosy may communicate the taint to thousands. Those who occupy responsible positions as guardians of the people are false to their trust if they do not faithfully search out and reprove sin. . . .

The love of God will never lead to the belittling of sin; it will never cover or excuse an unconfessed wrong. . . . It has to do with all our acts and thoughts and feelings. It follows us, and reaches every secret spring of action. By indulgence in sin, men are led to lightly regard the law of God. Many conceal their transgressions from their fellow men, and flatter themselves that God will not be strict to mark iniquity. But His law is the great standard of right, and with it every act of life must be compared in that day when God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil. Purity of heart will lead to purity of life. All excuses for sin are vain. Who can plead for the sinner when God testifies against him? —*Conflict and Courage*, April 24, p. 120.

Tuesday, November 4

# Fateful Choices

Achan acknowledged his guilt, but when it was too late for the confession to benefit himself. He had seen the armies of Israel return from Ai defeated and disheartened; yet he did not come forward and confess his sin. He had seen Joshua and the elders of Israel bowed to the earth in grief too great for words. Had he then made confession, he would have given some proof of true penitence; but he still kept silence. He had listened to the proclamation that a great crime had been committed, and had even heard its character definitely stated. But his lips were sealed. Then came the solemn investigation. How his soul thrilled with terror as he saw his tribe pointed out, then his family and his household! But still he uttered no confession, until the finger of God was placed upon him. Then, when his sin could no longer be concealed, he admitted the truth. How often are similar confessions made. There is a vast difference between admitting facts after they have been proved and confessing sins known only to ourselves and to God. Achan would not have confessed had he not hoped by so doing to avert the consequences of his crime. But his confession only served to show that his punishment was just. There was no genuine repentance for sin, no contrition, no change of purpose, no abhorrence of evil.

So confessions will be made by the guilty when they stand before the bar of God, after every case has been decided for life or death. . . . When the records of heaven shall be opened, the Judge will not in words declare to man his guilt, but will cast one penetrating, convicting glance, and every deed, every transaction of life, will be vividly impressed upon the memory of the wrongdoer. The person will not . . . need to be hunted out . . . but his own lips will confess his shame. The sins hidden from the knowledge of men will then be proclaimed to the whole world.

If you have sins to confess, lose no time. These moments are golden. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). —*Conflict and Courage*, April 25, p. 121.

# The Door of Hope

As Joshua withdrew from the armies of Israel to meditate and pray for God's special presence to attend him, he saw a Man of lofty stature, clad in warlike garments, with a drawn sword in His hand. Joshua did not recognize Him as one of the warriors of Israel, and yet He had no appearance of being an enemy. In his zeal he accosted Him, saying: "Art Thou for us, or for our adversaries? And He said, Nay; but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto Him, What saith my Lord unto His servant? And the Captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so." . . .

It was the Son of God who stood as an armed warrior before the leader of Israel. It was the One who had conducted the Hebrews through the wilderness, enshrouded in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. In order to impress the mind of Joshua that He was no less than Christ, the Exalted One, He said: "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot." He then instructed Joshua what course to pursue in order to take Jericho. All the men of war should be commanded to compass the city once each day for six days, and on the seventh day they should march around Jericho seven times.

Accordingly Joshua gave orders to the priests and the people as the Lord directed him. He marshaled the hosts of Israel in perfect order. . . .

For six days the host of Israel performed their circuit around the city. The seventh day came, and, with the first dawn of light, Joshua marshaled the armies of the Lord. Now they were directed to march seven times around Jericho, and, at a mighty note of the trumpets, to shout with a loud voice, for God had then given them the city. . . .

Suddenly the vast army halts. The trumpets break forth in a blast that shakes the very earth. The united voices of all Israel rend the air with a mighty shout. The walls of solid stone, with their massive towers and battlements, totter and heave from their foundations and, with a crash like a thousand thunders, fall in shapeless ruin to the earth. The inhabitants and the army of the enemy, paralyzed with terror and amazement, offer no resistance, and Israel marches in and takes captive the mighty city of Jericho.

How easily the armies of heaven brought down the walls that had seemed so formidable to the spies who brought the false report! The word of God was the only weapon used. The Mighty One of Israel had said: "I have given into thine hand Jericho." If a single warrior had brought his strength to bear against the walls, the glory of God would have been lessened and His will frustrated. But the work was left to the Almighty; and had the foundation of the battlements been laid in the center of the earth, and their summits reached the arch of heaven, the result would have been the same when the Captain of the Lord's host led His legions of angels to the attack. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 159, 160, 161.

# A Witness to God's Power

Those who closely connect with God may not be prosperous in the things of this life; they may often be sorely tried and afflicted. Joseph was maligned and persecuted because he preserved his virtue and integrity. David, that chosen messenger of God, was hunted like a beast of prey by his wicked enemies. Daniel was cast into a den of lions because he was true and unyielding in his allegiance to God. Job was deprived of his worldly possessions and so afflicted in body that he was abhorred by his relatives and friends, yet he preserved his integrity and faithfulness to God. Jeremiah would speak the words which God had put into his mouth, and his plain testimony so enraged the king and princes that he was cast into a loathsome pit. Stephen was stoned because he would preach Christ and Him crucified. Paul was imprisoned, beaten with rods, stoned, and finally put to death because he was a faithful messenger to carry the gospel to the Gentiles. The beloved John was banished to the Isle of Patmos “for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

These examples of human steadfastness, in the might of divine power, are a witness to the world of the faithfulness of God's -promises—of His abiding presence and sustaining grace. As the world looks upon these humble men, it cannot discern their moral value with God. It is a work of faith to calmly repose in God in the darkest hour—however severely tried and tempest-tossed, to feel that our Father is at the helm. The eye of faith alone can look beyond the things of time and sense to estimate the worth of eternal riches.

The great military commander conquers nations and shakes the armies of half the world, but he dies of disappointment and in exile. The philosopher who ranges through the universe, everywhere tracing the manifestations of God's power and delighting in their harmony, often fails to behold in these marvelous wonders the Hand that formed them all. “Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.” No hope of glorious immortality lights up the future of the enemies of God. But those heroes of faith have the promise of an inheritance of greater value than any earthly riches—an inheritance that will satisfy the longings of the soul. They may be unknown and unacknowledged of the world, but they are enrolled as citizens in the record books of heaven. An exalted greatness, an enduring, eternal weight of glory, will be the final reward of those whom God has made heirs of all things. —*Lift Him Up*, p. 328.

Friday, November 7

## For Further Reading

*The Upward Look*, "True Love Cannot Be Hidden," April 22, p. 126.

*To Be Like Jesus*, "God's Word and Love Will Open Hearts to Jesus," November 27, p. 348.