

God Is Faithful!

Sabbath Afternoon, December 13

Not by seeking a holy mountain or a sacred temple are men brought into communion with heaven. Religion is not to be confined to external forms and ceremonies. The religion that comes from God is the only religion that will lead to God. In order to serve Him aright, we must be born of the divine Spirit. This will purify the heart and renew the mind, giving us a new capacity for knowing and loving God. It will give us a willing obedience to all His requirements. This is true worship. It is the fruit of the working of the Holy Spirit. By the Spirit every sincere prayer is indited, and such prayer is acceptable to God. Wherever a soul reaches out after God, there the Spirit's working is manifest, and God will reveal Himself to that soul. For such worshipers He is seeking. He waits to receive them, and to make them His sons and daughters. —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 189.

Our meetings for worship should be sacred, precious occasions. The prayer meeting is not a place where brethren are to censure and condemn one another, where there are to be unkind feelings and hard speeches. Christ will be driven from the assemblies where this spirit is manifested, and Satan will come in to take the lead. Nothing that savors of an unchristian, unloving spirit should be permitted to enter; for do we not assemble to seek mercy and forgiveness from the Lord? and the Saviour has plainly said: "With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." Who can stand before God and plead a faultless character, a blameless life? And how, then, dare any criticize and condemn their brethren? Those who themselves can hope for salvation only through the merits of Christ, who must seek forgiveness by virtue of His blood, are under the strongest obligation to exercise love, pity, and forgiveness toward their fellow sinners. . . .

Our meetings should be made intensely interesting. They should be pervaded with the very atmosphere of heaven. Let there be no long, dry speeches and formal prayers merely for the sake of occupying the time. All should be ready to act their part with promptness, and when their duty is done, the meeting should be closed. Thus the interest will be kept up to the last. This is offering to God acceptable worship. His service should be made interesting and attractive and not be allowed to degenerate into a dry form. We must live for Christ minute by minute, hour by hour, and day by day; then Christ will dwell in us, and when we meet together, His love will be in our hearts, welling up like a spring in the desert, refreshing all, and making those who are ready to perish, eager to drink of the waters of life. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 607, 609.

Sunday, December 14

All Came to Pass

In all ages God's appointed witnesses have exposed themselves to reproach and persecution for the truth's sake. Joseph was maligned and persecuted. . . . David, the chosen messenger of God, was hunted like a beast of prey by his enemies. . . . Stephen was stoned because he preached Christ and Him crucified. Paul was imprisoned, beaten with rods, stoned, and finally put to death. . . . 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 bear witness to the faithfulness of God's promises—of His abiding presence and sustaining grace. They testify to the power of faith to withstand the powers of the world.

The season of distress and anguish before us will require a faith that can endure weariness, delay, and hunger—a faith that will not faint though severely tried.

Many of all nations and of all classes, high and low, rich and poor, black and white, will be cast into the most unjust and cruel bondage. The beloved of God pass weary days, bound in chains, shut in by prison bars, sentenced to be slain, some apparently left to die of starvation in dark and loathsome dungeons. . . . No human hand is ready to lend them help.

Will the Lord forget His people in this trying hour? Did He forget faithful Noah when judgments were visited upon the antediluvian world? Did He forget Lot when the fire came down from heaven to consume the cities of the plain? . . . Did He forget Elijah when the oath of Jezebel threatened him with the fate of the prophets of Baal? Did He forget Jeremiah in the dark and dismal pit of his prison house? Did He forget the three worthies in the fiery furnace? or Daniel in the den of lions? . . .

Though enemies may thrust them into prison, yet dungeon walls cannot cut off the communication between their souls and Christ. One who sees their every weakness, who is acquainted with every trial, is above all earthly powers; and angels will come to them in lonely cells, bringing light and peace from heaven. —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 369.

The promises of God are like precious flowers scattered through a garden. The Lord would have us linger over them, looking closely into them, taking in their loveliness, and appreciating the favor that God has bestowed upon us by making such rich provisions for our needs. Were it not for contemplation of the promises of God, we could not understand the gracious love and compassion of God toward us or realize how rich were the treasures prepared for those who love Him. He would have the soul encouraged to repose in faith upon Him, the only sufficiency of the human agent. —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 125.

A Sign of Concern

All your happiness, peace, joy, and success in this life are dependent upon genuine, trusting faith in God. This faith will prompt true obedience to the commandments of God. Your knowledge and faith in God is the strongest restraint from every evil practice, and the motive to all good.

Believe in Jesus as one who pardons your sins, one who wants you to be happy in the mansions He has gone to prepare for you. He wants you to live in His presence; to have eternal life and a crown of glory. —*Messages to Young People*, p. 410.

Whatever is done to the glory of God is to be done with cheerfulness, not with sadness and gloom. There is nothing gloomy in the religion of Jesus. If Christians give the impression by a mournful attitude that they have been disappointed in their Lord, they misrepresent His character, and put arguments into the mouth of His enemies. Though in words they may claim God as their Father, yet in gloom and sorrow they present to the world the aspect of orphans.

Christ desires us to make His service appear attractive, as it really is. Let the self-denials and the secret heart trials be revealed to the compassionate Saviour. Let the burdens be left at the foot of the cross, and go on your way rejoicing in His love who first loved you. Men may never know of the work going on secretly between the soul and God, but the result of the Spirit's work upon the heart will be manifest to all; for He "that seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 88.

The birds of the air, the lilies of the field, the sower and the seed, the shepherd and the sheep—with these Christ illustrated immortal truth. He drew illustrations also from the events of life, facts of experience familiar to the hearers—the leaven, the hid treasure, the pearl, the fishing net, the lost coin, the prodigal son, the houses on the rock and the sand. In His lessons there was something to interest every mind, to appeal to every heart. Thus the daily task, instead of being a mere round of toil, bereft of higher thoughts, was brightened and uplifted by constant reminders of the spiritual and the unseen.

So we should teach. Let the children learn to see in nature an expression of the love and the wisdom of God; let the thought of Him be linked with bird and flower and tree; let all things seen become to them the interpreters of the unseen, and all the events of life be a means of divine teaching.

As they learn thus to study the lessons in all created things, and in all life's experiences, show that the same laws which govern the things of nature and the events of life are to control us; that they are given for our good; and that only in obedience to them can we find true happiness and success. —*To Be Like Jesus*, p. 245.

Clear Boundaries

Christ was the foundation of the whole Jewish economy. The death of Abel was in consequence of Cain's refusing to accept God's plan in the school of obedience to be saved by the blood of Jesus Christ typified by the sacrificial offerings pointing to Christ. Cain refused the shedding of blood which symbolized the blood of Christ to be shed for the world. This whole ceremony was prepared by God, and Christ became the foundation of the whole system. This is the beginning of its work as the schoolmaster to bring sinful human agents to a consideration of Christ the Foundation of the whole Jewish economy.

All who did service in connection with the sanctuary were being educated constantly in regard to the intervention of Christ in behalf of the human race. This service was designed to create in every heart a love for the law of God, which is the law of His kingdom. The sacrificial offering was to be an object lesson of the love of God revealed in Christ—in the suffering, dying victim, who took upon Himself the sin of which man was guilty, the innocent being made sin for us.

In the contemplation of this great theme of salvation we see Christ's work. Not only the promised gift of the Spirit, but also the nature and character of this sacrifice and intervention are subjects which should create in our hearts elevated, sacred, high ideas of the law of God, which holds its claims upon every human agency. The violation of that law in the small act of eating of the forbidden fruit, brought upon man and upon the earth the consequence of disobedience to the holy law of God. The nature of the intervention should ever make man afraid to do the smallest action in disobedience to God's requirement.

There should be a clear understanding of that which constitutes sin, and we should avoid the least approach to step over the boundaries from obedience to disobedience.

God would have every member of His creation understand the great work of the infinite Son of God in giving His life for the salvation of the world. "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" (1 John 3:1). —*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 233, 234.

God's long-suffering has ended. The world has rejected His mercy, despised His love, and trampled upon His law. The wicked have passed the boundary of their probation; the Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been at last withdrawn. Unsheltered by divine grace, they have no protection from the wicked one. Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. . . . The people of God will then be plunged into those scenes of affliction and distress described by the prophet as the time of Jacob's trouble. —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 339.

The Anger of the Lord

During a vision of the night, I stood on an eminence, from which I could see houses shaken like a reed in the wind. Buildings, great and small, were falling to the ground. Pleasure resorts, theaters, hotels, and the homes of the wealthy were shaken and shattered. Many lives were blotted out of existence, and the air was filled with the shrieks of the injured and the terrified.

The destroying angels of God were at work. One touch, and buildings, so thoroughly constructed that men regarded them as secure against every danger, quickly became heaps of rubbish. There was no assurance of safety in any place. . . . The awfulness of the scenes that passed before me I cannot find words to describe. It seemed that the forbearance of God was exhausted and that the judgment day had come.

The angel that stood at my side then instructed me that but few have any conception of the wickedness existing in our world today, and especially the wickedness in the large cities. He declared that the Lord has appointed a time when He will visit transgressors in wrath for persistent disregard of His law. . . . God's supreme rulership and the sacredness of His law must be revealed to those who persistently refused to render obedience to the King of kings. Those who choose to remain disloyal must be visited in mercy with judgments, in order that, if possible, they may be aroused to a realization of the sinfulness of their course. . . . While the divine Ruler bears long with perversity, He is not deceived and will not always keep silence. His supremacy, His authority as Ruler of the universe, must finally be acknowledged and the just claims of His law vindicated.

There are limits even to the forbearance of God, and many are exceeding these boundaries. They have overrun the limits of grace, and therefore God must interfere and vindicate His own honor. . . .

When the Lord comes forth as an avenger, He will also come as a protector of all those who have preserved the faith in its purity and kept themselves unspotted from the world. —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 51.

Those who bore the discouraging report and brought discouragement to the whole camp of Israel, when opposed because of their unfaithful witness, served the satanic powers in complete rebellion. And they carried the disappointed congregation with them, in that they believed their interpretation of the land. The congregation took the wrong side, and, inspired by satanic agencies, they cried out against the faithful spies, and bade them stone Joshua and Caleb, who dared to bear the truthful representation in regard to the land.

But there is always a defense provided for those who have borne witness for the truth. What was it that saved the lives of Joshua and Caleb? "And the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel." . . .

We have here a positive evidence that the anger of the Lord was awakened against the rebellious people—those who had been blessed with great light and precious opportunities to know the will of God, which was communicated to them by Christ Himself, their invisible Leader, enshrouded in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 119.

Thursday, December 18

Cling to God

Gold is tried in the fire, that it may be purified from dross; but faith that is purified by trial, is more precious than refined gold. Then let us look upon trials in a reasonable way. Let us not come through them with murmuring and discontent. Let us not make mistakes in getting out of them. In times of trial we must cling to God and His promises.

Some have said to me, "Do you not get discouraged at times when you are under trial?" And I have answered, "Yes, if by discouragement you mean sad or cast down." "Didn't you talk to any one of your feelings?" "No; there is a time for silence, a time to keep the tongue as with a bridle, and I was determined to utter no word of doubt or darkness, to bring no shade of gloom upon those with whom I was associated. I have said to myself, I will bear the Refiner's fire; I shall not be consumed. When I speak, it shall be of light; it shall be of faith and hope in God; it shall be of righteousness, of goodness, of the love of Christ my Saviour; it shall be to direct the minds of others toward heaven and heavenly things, to Christ's work in heaven for us, and our work upon earth for Him."

The refining furnace is to remove the dross. When the Refiner sees His image reflected in you perfectly, He will remove you from the furnace. You will not be left to be consumed or to endure the fiery ordeal any longer than is necessary for your purification. But it is necessary for you, in order to reflect the divine image, to submit to the process the Refiner chooses for you, that you may be cleansed, purified, and every spot and blemish removed—not even a wrinkle left in your Christian character. May the Lord help you . . . to choose to have the will and work of God accomplished in you. . . . Look up! Jesus lives. Jesus loves. Jesus pities, and He will receive you with all your burden of care and trouble if you will come to Him and lay your burden upon Him. He has promised He will never leave or forsake those who put their trust in Him. —*Our High Calling*, p. 312.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and He will never betray your trust. If you will ask help of God you need not ask in vain. In order to encourage us to have confidence and trust He comes near us by His holy Word and Spirit, and seeks in a thousand ways to win our confidence. But in nothing does He take more delight than in receiving the weak who come to Him for strength. If we will find heart and voice to pray, He will be sure to find an ear to hear and an arm to save.

There is not a single instance in which God has hidden His face from the supplication of His people. When every other resource failed He was a present help in every emergency. God bless you, poor, stricken, wounded soul. Cling to His hand; hold fast. He will take you, your children, and all your griefs and burdens if you will only cast them all upon Him. —*This Day With God*, p. 194.

Friday, December 19

For Further Reading

Conflict and Courage, "First Things First," December 30, p. 370.

That I May Know Him, "Standing Firm in Days of Peril," December 12, p. 352.