

Choose This Day!

Sabbath Afternoon, December 20

As Joshua felt the infirmities of age stealing upon him, and realized that his work must soon close, he was filled with anxiety for the future of his people. It was with more than a father's interest that he addressed them, as they gathered once more about their aged chief. . . .

By Joshua's direction the ark had been brought from Shiloh. The occasion was one of great solemnity, and this symbol of God's presence would deepen the impression he wished to make upon the people. After presenting the goodness of God toward Israel, he called upon them, in the name of Jehovah, to choose whom they would serve. The worship of idols was still to some extent secretly practiced, and Joshua endeavored now to bring them to a decision that should banish this sin from Israel. . . . Joshua desired to lead them to serve God, not by compulsion, but willingly. . . .

"As for me and my house," said Joshua, "we will serve Jehovah." The same holy zeal that inspired the leader's heart was communi-cated to the people. His appeals called forth the unhesitating response, "God forbid that we should forsake Jehovah, to serve other gods." . . . Joshua endeavored to lead his hearers to weigh well their words, and refrain from vows which they would be unprepared to fulfill. With deep earnestness they repeated the declaration: "Nay; but we will serve the Lord." Solemnly consenting to the witness against themselves that they had chosen Jehovah, they once more reiterated their pledge of loyalty: "The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey. . . ." Having written an account of this solemn transaction, he placed it, with the book of the law, in the side of the ark. . . .

Joshua's work for Israel was done. He had "wholly followed the Lord;" and in the book of God he is written, "The servant of Jehovah." The noblest testimony to his character as a public leader is the history of the generation that had enjoyed his labors: "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua." —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 125.

There will be a sharp conflict between those who are loyal to God and those who cast scorn upon His law. Reverence for God's law has been subverted. The religious leaders are teaching for doctrine the commandments of men. As it was in the days of ancient Israel, so it is in this age of the world. But because of the prevalence of disloyalty and transgression, will those who have revered the law of God now cherish less respect for it? Will they unite with the powers of earth to make it void? The loyal will not be carried away by the current of evil. They will not throw contempt on that which God has set apart as holy. They will not follow Israel's example of forgetfulness; they will call to remembrance God's dealings with His people in all ages, and will walk in the way of His commandments.

The test comes to everyone. There are only two sides. On which side are you? —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 120.

You Were There!

The people in general were slow to complete the work of driving out the heathen. The tribes had dispersed to their possessions, the army had disbanded, and it was looked upon as a difficult and doubtful undertaking to renew the war. But Joshua declared: "The Lord your God, He shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land, as the Lord your God hath promised unto you. Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left."

Joshua appealed to the people themselves as witnesses that, so far as they had complied with the conditions, God had faithfully fulfilled His promises to them. "Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls," he said, "that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." He declared to them that as the Lord had fulfilled His promises, so He would fulfill His threatenings. "It shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the Lord your God promised you; so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things. . . . When ye have transgressed the covenant of the Lord, . . . then shall the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which He hath given unto you." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 521, 522.

Abraham had no possession in the earth, "no, not so much as to set his foot on." He possessed great substance, and he used it to the glory of God and good of his fellow-men; but he did not look upon this world as his home. The Lord had called him to leave his idolatrous countrymen, with the promise of the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession; yet neither he nor his son nor his son's son received it.

When Abraham desired a burial-place for his dead, he had to buy it of the Canaanites. His sole possession in the land of promise was that rock-hewn tomb in the cave of Machpelah.

But the word of God had not failed; neither did it meet its final accomplishment in the occupation of Canaan by the Jewish people. . . . Abraham himself was to share the inheritance. . . . And the Bible plainly teaches that the promises made to Abraham are to be fulfilled through Christ. . . . God gave to Abraham a view of this immortal inheritance, and with this hope he was content. "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Of the posterity of Abraham it is written, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." We must dwell as pilgrims and strangers here if we would gain "a better country, that is, a heavenly." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 169, 170.

In Sincerity and Truth

Jesus is the ladder to heaven, . . . and God calls upon us to mount this ladder. But we cannot do this while we load ourselves down with earthly treasures. We wrong ourselves when we place our convenience and personal advantages before the things of God. There is no salvation in earthly possessions or surroundings. A man is not exalted in God's sight, or accredited by Him as possessing goodness, because he has earthly riches. If we gain a genuine experience in climbing, . . . we must leave every hindrance behind. Those who mount must place their feet firmly on every round of the ladder.

We are saved by climbing round after round of the ladder, looking to Christ, clinging to Christ, mounting step by step to the height of Christ, so that He is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity are the rounds of this ladder.

Courage, fortitude, faith, and implicit trust in God's power to save are needed. These heavenly graces do not come in a moment; they are acquired by the experience of years. But every sincere and earnest seeker will become a partaker of the divine nature. His soul will be filled with intense longing to know the fullness of that love which passes knowledge. As he advances in the divine life, he will be better able to grasp the elevated, ennobling truths of the Word of God, until, by beholding, he becomes changed, and is enabled to reflect the likeness of his Redeemer.

Child of God, angels are watching the character you develop, they are weighing your words and actions; therefore take heed to your ways, . . . prove whether you are in the love of God.

To love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves is genuine sanctification. —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 120.

Day by day, and hour by hour, there must be a vigorous process of self-denial and of sanctification going on within; and then the outward works will testify that Jesus is abiding in the heart by faith. Sanctification does not close the avenues of the soul to knowledge, but it comes to expand the mind, and to inspire it to search for truth, as for hidden treasure; and the knowledge of God's will advances the work of sanctification. There is a heaven, and O, how earnestly we should strive to reach it. I appeal to you . . . to believe in Jesus as your Saviour. Believe that He is ready to help you by His grace, when you come to Him in sincerity. You must fight the good fight of faith. You must be wrestlers for the crown of life. Strive, for the grasp of Satan is upon you; and if you do not wrench yourselves from him, you will be palsied and ruined. The foe is on the right hand, and on the left, before you, and behind you; and you must trample him under your feet. Strive, for there is a crown to be won.

Soon we shall witness the coronation of our King. Those whose lives have been hidden with Christ, those who on this earth have fought the good fight of faith, will shine forth with the Redeemer's glory in the kingdom of God. —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 124.

Tuesday, December 23

Free to Serve

The strength of an army is measured largely by the efficiency of the men in the ranks. A wise general instructs his officers to train every soldier for active service. He seeks to develop the highest efficiency on the part of all. If he were to depend on his officers alone he could never expect to conduct a successful campaign. He counts on loyal and untiring service from every man in his army. The responsibility rests largely upon the men in the ranks.

And so it is in the army of Prince Immanuel. Our General, who has never lost a battle, expects willing, faithful service from everyone who has enlisted under His banner. In the closing controversy now waging between the forces for good and the hosts of evil He expects all, laymen as well as ministers, to take part. All who have enlisted as His soldiers are to render faithful service as minutemen, with a keen sense of the responsibility resting upon them individually.

All who enter the army are not to be generals, captains, sergeants, or even corporals. All have not the care and responsibility of leaders. There is hard work of other kinds to be done. Some must dig trenches and build fortifications; some are to stand as sentinels, some to carry messages. While there are but few officers, it requires many soldiers to form the rank and file of the army; yet its success depends upon the fidelity of every soldier. One man's cowardice or treachery may bring disaster upon the entire army.

There is earnest work to be done by us individually if we would fight the good fight of faith. Eternal interests are at stake. We must put on the whole armor of righteousness, we must resist the devil, and we have the sure promise that he will be put to flight. The church is to conduct an aggressive warfare, to make conquests for Christ, to rescue souls from the power of the enemy. God and holy angels are engaged in this warfare. Let us please Him who has called us to be soldiers. —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 29.

True sanctification comes through the working out of the principle of love. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:16.) The lives of those in whose hearts Christ abides, will reveal practical godliness. The character will be purified, elevated, ennobled, and glorified. Pure doctrine will blend with works of righteousness; heavenly precepts will mingle with holy practices.

Those who would gain the blessing of sanctification must first learn the meaning of self-sacrifice. . . . It is the fragrance of our love for others that reveals our love for God. It is patience in service that brings rest to the soul. It is through humble, diligent, faithful toil that the welfare of Israel is promoted. God upholds and strengthens the one who is willing to follow in Christ's way. —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 560.

The Dangers of Idolatry

By Joshua's direction the ark had been brought from Shiloh. The occasion was one of great solemnity, and this symbol of God's presence would deepen the impression he wished to make upon the people. After presenting the goodness of God toward Israel, he called upon them, in the name of Jehovah, to choose whom they would serve. The worship of idols was still to some extent secretly practiced, and Joshua endeavored now to bring them to a decision that should banish this sin from Israel. "If it seem evil unto you to serve Jehovah," he said, "choose you this day whom ye will serve." Joshua desired to lead them to serve God, not by compulsion, but willingly. Love to God is the very foundation of religion. To engage in His service merely from hope of reward or fear of punishment would avail nothing. Open apostasy would not be more offensive to God than hypocrisy and mere formal worship.

The aged leader urged the people to consider, in all its bearings, what he had set before them, and to decide if they really desired to live as did the degraded idolatrous nations around them. If it seemed evil to them to serve Jehovah, the source of power, the fountain of blessing, let them that day choose whom they would serve—"the gods which your fathers served," from whom Abraham was called out, "or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell." These last words were a keen rebuke to Israel. The gods of the Amorites had not been able to protect their worshipers. Because of their abominable and debasing sins, that wicked nation had been destroyed, and the good land which they once possessed had been given to God's people. What folly for Israel to choose the deities for whose worship the Amorites had been destroyed! "As for me and my house," said Joshua, "we will serve Jehovah." The same holy zeal that inspired the leader's heart was communicated to the people. His appeals called forth the unhesitating response, "God forbid that we should forsake Jehovah, to serve other gods."

"Ye cannot serve the Lord," said Joshua: "for He is a holy God; . . . He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins." Before there could be any permanent reformation the people must be led to feel their utter inability in themselves to render obedience to God. They had broken His law, it condemned them as transgressors, and it provided no way of escape. While they trusted in their own strength and righteousness, it was impossible for them to secure the pardon of their sins; they could not meet the claims of God's perfect law, and it was in vain that they pledged themselves to serve God. It was only by faith in Christ that they could secure pardon of sin and receive strength to obey God's law. They must cease to rely upon their own efforts for salvation, they must trust wholly in the merits of the promised Saviour, if they would be accepted of God. —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 523, 524.

Thursday, December 25

Finishing Well

No stain rested upon the holy character of Joshua. He was a wise leader. His life was wholly devoted to God. Before he died he assembled the Hebrew host, and, following the example of Moses, he recapitulated their travels in the wilderness and also the merciful dealings of God with them. He then eloquently addressed them. He related to them that the king of Moab warred against them and called Balaam to curse them; but God “would not hearken unto Balaam, therefore he blessed you still.” He then said to them, “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

“And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods; for the Lord our God, He it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed.”

The people renewed their covenant with Joshua. They said unto him, “The Lord our God will we serve, and His voice will we obey.” Joshua wrote the words of their covenant in the book containing the laws and statutes given to Moses. Joshua was loved and respected by all Israel, and his death was much lamented by them. —*The Story of Redemption*, pp. 181, 182.

The soul that cherishes the love of Christ is full of freedom, light, and joy in Christ. In such a soul there are no divided thoughts. The whole man yearns after God. He goes not to men for counsel, to know what is duty, but to the Lord Jesus, the source of all wisdom. He searches the Word of God that he may find out what standard has been set up. . . .

The more we learn of Christ through His Word, the more we feel our need of Him in our experience. We should not rest until we can rest in wearing the yoke of Christ and lifting His burdens. The more faithful we are in service to Him, the more we shall love Him, the more we shall magnify Him. Every duty, large or small, that we perform, will be done with faithfulness, and as we follow on to know the Lord the greater will be our desire to glorify Him. —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 142.

Friday, December 26

For Further Reading

In Heavenly Places, "The Heavenly Father's Claim," May 1, p. 128.

That I May Know Him, "A Message for Boys and Girls," February 4, p. 41.