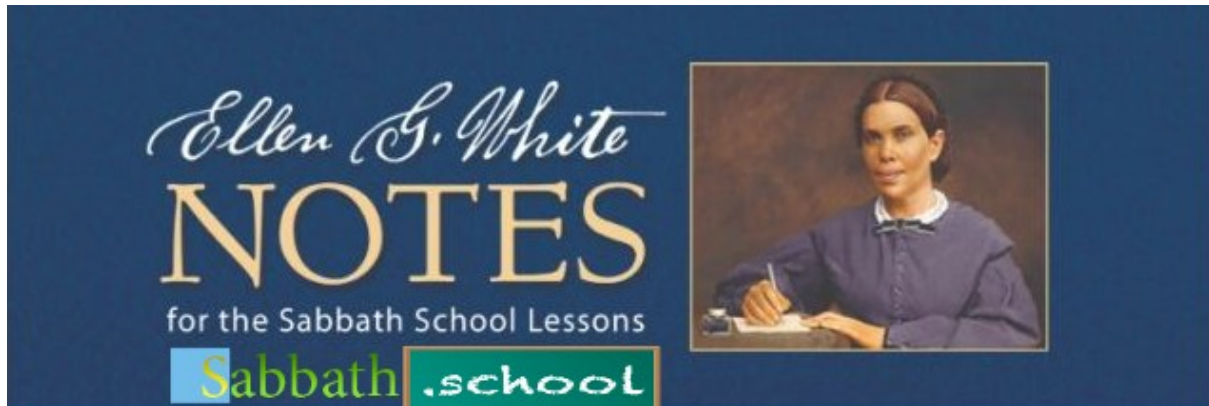


EGW Notes - Lesson 1

Persecuted but Not Forsaken



Sabbath Afternoon, December 27

The apostle Paul felt a deep responsibility for those converted under his labors. Above all things, he longed that they should be faithful, “that I may rejoice in the day of Christ,” he said, “that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.” [Philippians 2:16](#). He trembled for the result of his ministry. He felt that even his own salvation might be imperiled if he should fail of fulfilling his duty and the church should fail of co-operating with him in the work of saving souls. He knew that preaching alone would not suffice to educate the believers to hold forth the word of life. He knew that line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, they must be taught to advance in the work of Christ.

It is a universal principle that whenever one refuses to use his God-given powers, these powers decay and perish. Truth that is not lived, that is not imparted, loses its life-giving power, its healing virtue. Hence the apostle’s fear that he might fail of presenting every man perfect in Christ. Paul’s hope of heaven grew dim when he contemplated any failure on his part that would result in giving the church the mold of the human instead of the divine. His knowledge, his eloquence, his miracles, his view of eternal scenes when caught up to the third heaven—all would be unavailing if through unfaithfulness in his work those for whom he labored should fail of the grace of God. And so, by word of mouth and by letter, he pleaded with those who had accepted Christ, to pursue a course that would enable them to be “blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, . . . as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.” [Philippians 2:15, 16](#).

Every true minister feels a heavy responsibility for the spiritual advancement of the believers entrusted to his care, a longing desire that they shall be laborers together with God. He realizes that upon the faithful performance of his God-given work depends in a large degree the well-being of the church. Earnestly and untiringly he seeks to inspire the believers with a desire to win souls for Christ, remembering that every addition to the church should be one more agency for the carrying out of the plan of redemption.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 206, 207.

Sunday, December 28

Paul, the Prisoner of Jesus Christ

It is not because of any restriction on the part of God that the riches of His grace do not flow earthward to men. If all were willing to receive, all would become filled with His Spirit.

It is the privilege of every soul to be a living channel through which God can communicate to the world the treasures of His grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ. There is nothing that Christ desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and character. There is nothing that the world needs so much as the manifestation through humanity of the Saviour's love. All heaven is waiting for channels through which can be poured the holy oil to be a joy and blessing to human hearts.

“God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, . . . and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” ([Ephesians 2:4–7](#)).

Such are the words in which “Paul the aged,” “a prisoner of Jesus Christ,” writing from his prison house at Rome, endeavored to set before his brethren that which he found language inadequate to express in its fulness—“the unsearchable riches of Christ,” the treasure of grace freely offered to the fallen sons of men.

As your soul yearns after God, you will find more and still more of the unsearchable riches of His grace. As you contemplate these riches, you will come into possession of them, and will reveal the merits of the Saviour's sacrifice, the protection of His righteousness, the fulness of His wisdom, and His power to present you before the Father “without spot, and blameless” ([2 Peter 3:14](#)).—*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 187.

Thus, while apparently cut off from active labor, Paul exerted a wider and more lasting influence than if he had been free to travel among the churches as in former years. As a prisoner of the Lord, he had a firmer hold upon the affections of his brethren; and his words, written by one under bonds for the sake of Christ, commanded greater attention and respect than they did when he was personally with them. Not until Paul was removed from them, did the believers realize how heavy were the burdens he had borne in their behalf. Heretofore they had largely excused themselves from responsibility and burden bearing because they lacked his wisdom, tact, and indomitable energy; but now, left in their inexperience to learn the lessons they had shunned, they prized his warnings, counsels, and instructions as they had not prized his personal work. And as they learned of his courage and faith during his long imprisonment they were stimulated to greater fidelity and zeal in the cause of Christ.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 454.

Monday, December 29

Paul in Chains

Notwithstanding the prevailing iniquity, there was a line of holy men who, elevated and ennobled by communion with God, lived as in the companionship of heaven. They were men of massive intellect, of wonderful attainments. They had a great and holy mission—to develop a character of righteousness, to teach a lesson of godliness, not only to the men of their time, but for future generations. Only a few of the most prominent are mentioned in the Scriptures; but all through the ages God had faithful witnesses, truehearted worshipers.

How often those who trusted the word of God, though in themselves utterly helpless, have withstood the power of the whole world—Enoch, pure in heart, holy in life, holding fast his faith in the triumph of righteousness against a corrupt and scoffing generation; Noah and his household against the men of his time, men of the greatest physical and mental strength and the most debased in morals; the children of Israel at the Red Sea, a helpless, terrified multitude of slaves, against the mightiest army of the mightiest nation on the globe; David, a shepherd lad, having God's promise of the throne, against Saul, the established monarch, bent on holding fast his power; Shadrach and his companions in the fire, and Nebuchadnezzar on the throne; Daniel among the lions, his enemies in the high places of the kingdom; Jesus on the cross, and the Jewish priests and rulers forcing even the Roman governor to work their will; Paul in chains led to a criminal's death, Nero the despot of a world empire.

Such examples are not found in the Bible only. They abound in every record of human progress. The Vaudois and the Huguenots, Wycliffe and Huss, Jerome and Luther, Tyndale and Knox, Zinzendorf and Wesley, with multitudes of others have witnessed to the power of God's word against human power and policy in support of evil. These are the world's true nobility. This is its royal line. In this line the youth of today are called to take their places.—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 9.

Let us consider the experience of Paul for a little. At the very time when it seemed that the apostle's labors were most needed to strengthen the tried and persecuted church, his liberty was taken away, and he was bound in chains. But this was the time for the Lord to work, and precious were the victories won.

When to all appearance Paul was able to do the least, then it was that the truth found an entrance into the royal palace. Not Paul's masterly sermons before these great men, but his bonds attracted their attention. Through his captivity he was a conqueror for Christ. The patience and meekness with which he submitted to his long and unjust confinement set these men to weighing character. Sending his last message to his loved ones in the faith, Paul gathers up with his words the greetings from these saints in Caesar's household to the saints in other cities.—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 358.

Tuesday, December 30

Paul in Philippi

The greatest of human teachers, Paul accepted the lowliest as well as the highest duties. He recognized the necessity of labor for the hand as well as for the mind, and he wrought at a handicraft for his own support. His trade of tent making he pursued while daily preaching the gospel in the great centers of civilization. "These hands," he said, at parting with the elders of Ephesus, "have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me." [Acts 20:34](#).

While he possessed high intellectual endowments, the life of Paul revealed the power of a rarer wisdom. Principles of deepest import, principles concerning which the greatest minds of this time were ignorant, are unfolded in his teachings and exemplified in his life. He had that greatest of all wisdom, which gives quickness of insight and sympathy of heart, which brings man in touch with men, and enables him to arouse their better nature and inspire them to a higher life. .

. .

See him in the dungeon at Philippi, where, despite his pain-racked body, his song of praise breaks the silence of midnight. After the earthquake has opened the prison doors, his voice is again heard, in words of cheer to the heathen jailer, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here" ([Acts 16:28](#))—every man in his place, restrained by the presence of one fellow prisoner. And the jailer, convicted of the reality of that faith which sustains Paul, inquires the way of salvation, and with his whole household unites with the persecuted band of Christ's disciples. . . .

Thus passed his life, as described in his own words, "in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." [2 Corinthians 11:26, 27](#).

"Being reviled," he said, "we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we entreat;" "as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." [1 Corinthians 4:12, 13](#); [2 Corinthians 6:10](#).

In service he found his joy; and at the close of his life of toil, looking back on its struggles and triumphs, he could say, "I have fought a good fight." [2 Timothy 4:7](#).—*Education*, pp. 66–68.

Wednesday, December 31

Paul and Colossae

Surrounded by the practices and influences of heathenism, the Colossian believers were in danger of being drawn away from the simplicity of the gospel, and Paul, in warning them against this, pointed them to Christ as the only safe guide. . . . “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.” . . .

Christ had foretold that deceivers would arise, through whose influence “iniquity” should “abound,” and “the love of many” should “wax cold” ([Matthew 24:12](#)). He had warned the disciples that the church would be in more danger from this evil than from the persecution of her enemies. Again and again Paul warned the believers against these false teachers. This peril, above all others, they must guard against; for by receiving false teachers, they would open the door to errors by which the enemy would dim the spiritual perceptions and shake the confidence of those newly come to the faith of the gospel.

Christ was the standard by which they were to test the doctrines presented. All that was not in harmony with His teachings they were to reject. Christ crucified for sin, Christ risen from the dead, Christ ascended on high—this was the science of salvation that they were to learn and teach.

The warnings of the Word of God regarding the perils surrounding the Christian church belong to us today. As in the days of the apostles men tried by tradition and philosophy to destroy faith in the Scriptures, so today, by the pleasing sentiments of higher criticism, evolution, spiritualism, theosophy, and pantheism, the enemy of righteousness is seeking to lead souls into forbidden paths. To many the Bible is as a lamp without oil, because they have turned their minds into channels of speculative belief that bring misunderstanding and confusion.

The work of higher criticism, in dissecting, conjecturing, reconstructing, is destroying faith in the Bible as a divine revelation. It is robbing God’s Word of power to control, uplift, and inspire human lives. By spiritualism, multitudes are taught to believe that desire is the highest law, that license is liberty, and that man is accountable only to himself. . . . The power of a higher, purer, nobler life is our great need.—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 344.

The letter to the Colossians is filled with lessons of highest value to all who are engaged in the service of Christ, lessons that show the singleness of purpose and the loftiness of aim which will be seen in the life of him who rightly represents the Saviour. Renouncing all that would hinder him from making progress in the upward way or that would turn the feet of another from the narrow path, the believer will reveal in his daily life mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, forbearance, and the love of Christ. . . .

In his efforts to reach God’s ideal for him, the Christian is to despair of nothing. Moral and spiritual perfection, through the grace and power of Christ, is promised to all. Jesus is the source of power, the fountain of life. He brings us to His word, and from the tree of life presents to us leaves for the healing of sin-sick souls. He leads us to the throne of God, and puts into our mouth a prayer through which we are brought into close contact with Himself. In our behalf He set in operation the all-powerful agencies of heaven. At every step we touch His living power.—*Lift Him Up*, p. 264.

Thursday, January 1

The Churches of Philippi and Colossae

Paul in his letter to the Colossians sets forth the rich blessings granted to the children of God. He says: We “do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” ([Colossians 1:9–11](#)).

Again he writes of his desire that the brethren at Ephesus might come to understand the height of the Christian’s privilege. He opens before them, in the most comprehensive language, the marvelous power and knowledge that they might possess as sons and daughters of the Most High. It was theirs “to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man,” to be “rooted and grounded in love,” to “comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” But the prayer of the apostle reaches the climax of privilege when he prays that “ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” ([Ephesians 3:16–19](#)).

Here are revealed the heights of attainment that we may reach through faith in the promises of our heavenly Father, when we fulfill His requirements. Through the merits of Christ we have access to the throne of Infinite Power. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” ([Romans 8:32](#)). The Father gave His Spirit without measure to His Son, and we also may partake of its fullness. . . .

Through Jesus the fallen sons of Adam become “sons of God.” “Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren” ([Hebrews 2:11](#)). The Christian’s life should be one of faith, of victory, and joy in God. . . . Truly spoke God’s servant Nehemiah: “The joy of the Lord is your strength” ([Nehemiah 8:10](#)). And Paul says: “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” ([Philippians 4:4](#)). “Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” ([1 Thessalonians 5:16–18](#)). . . .

It is only as the law of God is restored to its rightful position that there can be a revival of primitive faith and godliness among His professed people.—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 215.

Friday, January 2

For Further Reading

In Heavenly Places, “Blessings Unlimited,” May 31, p. 158.

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you,” pp. 31–35.