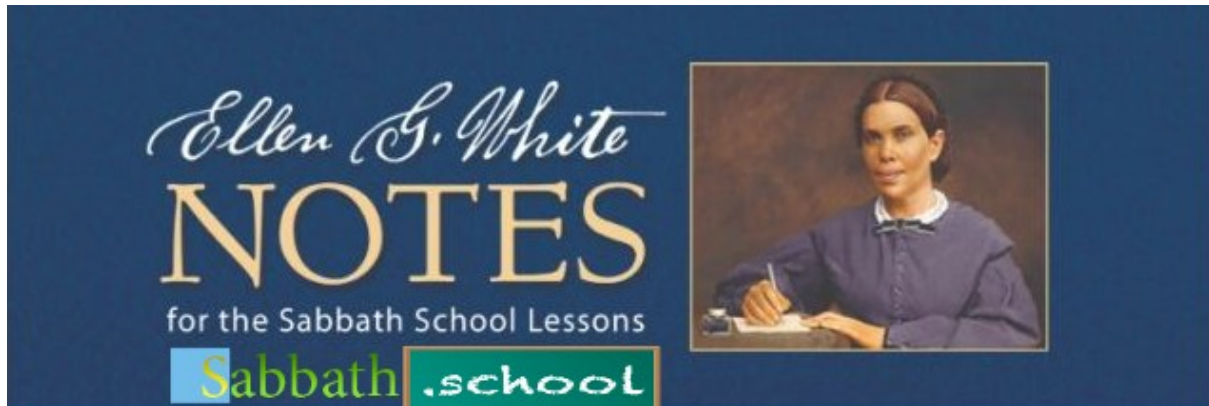


## EGW Notes - Lesson 2

### Reasons for Thanksgiving and Prayer



#### Sabbath Afternoon, January 3

Perseverance in prayer has been made a condition of receiving. We must pray always if we would grow in faith and experience. We are to be "instant in prayer," to "continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." [Romans 12:12](#); [Colossians 4:2](#). Peter exhorts believers to be "sober, and watch unto prayer." [1 Peter 4:7](#). Paul directs, "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." [Philippians 4:6](#). "But ye, beloved," says Jude, "praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God." [Jude 20, 21](#). Unceasing prayer is the unbroken union of the soul with God, so that life from God flows into our life; and from our life, purity and holiness flow back to God.

There is necessity for diligence in prayer; let nothing hinder you. Make every effort to keep open the communion between Jesus and your own soul. Seek every opportunity to go where prayer is wont to be made. Those who are really seeking for communion with God will be seen in the prayer meeting, faithful to do their duty and earnest and anxious to reap all the benefits they can gain. They will improve every opportunity of placing themselves where they can receive the rays of light from heaven.

We should pray in the family circle, and above all we must not neglect secret prayer, for this is the life of the soul. It is impossible for the soul to flourish while prayer is neglected. Family or public prayer alone is not sufficient. In solitude let the soul be laid open to the inspecting eye of God. Secret prayer is to be heard only by the prayer-hearing God. No curious ear is to receive the burden of such petitions. In secret prayer the soul is free from surrounding influences, free from excitement. Calmly, yet fervently, will it reach out after God. Sweet and abiding will be the influence emanating from Him who seeth in secret, whose ear is open to hear the prayer arising from the heart. By calm, simple faith the soul holds communion with God and gathers to itself rays of divine light to strengthen and sustain it in the conflict with Satan. God is our tower of strength.

Pray in your closet, and as you go about your daily labor let your heart be often uplifted to God. It was thus that Enoch walked with God. These silent prayers rise like precious incense before the throne of grace. Satan cannot overcome him whose heart is thus stayed upon God.—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 97, 98.

**Sunday, January 4**

### **Fellowship in the Gospel**

Paul's labors at Philippi resulted in the establishment of a church whose membership steadily increased. His zeal and devotion, and, above all, his willingness to suffer for Christ's sake, exerted a deep and lasting influence upon the converts. They prized the precious truths for which the apostles had sacrificed so much, and gave themselves with wholehearted devotion to the cause of their Redeemer.

That this church did not escape persecution is shown by an expression in Paul's letter to them. He says, "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in me." Yet such was their steadfastness in the faith that he declares, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now." [Philippians 1:29, 30, 3-5](#).

Terrible is the struggle that takes place between the forces of good and of evil in important centers where the messengers of truth are called upon to labor. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood," declares Paul, "but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world." [Ephesians 6:12](#). Till the close of time there will be a conflict between the church of God and those who are under the control of evil angels.

The early Christians were often called to meet the powers of darkness face to face. By sophistry and by persecution the enemy endeavored to turn them from the true faith. At the present time, when the end of all things earthly is rapidly approaching, Satan is putting forth desperate efforts to ensnare the world. He is devising many plans to occupy minds and to divert attention from the truths essential to salvation. In every city his agencies are busily organizing into parties those who are opposed to the law of God. The archdeceiver is at work to introduce elements of confusion and rebellion, and men are being fired with a zeal that is not according to knowledge.

Wickedness is reaching a height never before attained, and yet many ministers of the gospel are crying, "Peace and safety." But God's faithful messengers are to go steadily forward with their work. Clothed with the panoply of heaven, they are to advance fearlessly and victoriously, never ceasing their warfare until every soul within their reach shall have received the message of truth for this time.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 218-220.

**Monday, January 5**

**Paul's Prayer Requests**

By Epaphroditus, Paul sent the Philippian believers a letter, in which he thanked them for their gifts to him. Of all the churches, that of Philippi had been the most liberal in supplying Paul's wants. "Now ye Philippians know also," the apostle said in his letter, "that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God."

"Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all. . . . And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

The grace of God sustained Paul in his imprisonment, enabling him to rejoice in tribulation. With faith and assurance he wrote to his Philippian brethren that his imprisonment had resulted in the furtherance of the gospel. "I would ye should understand, brethren," he declared, "that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds with Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."

There is a lesson for us in this experience of Paul's, for it reveals God's way of working. The Lord can bring victory out of that which may seem to us discomfiture and defeat. We are in danger of forgetting God, of looking at the things which are seen, instead of beholding by the eye of faith the things which are unseen. When misfortune or calamity comes, we are ready to charge God with neglect or cruelty. If He sees fit to cut off our usefulness in some line, we mourn, not stopping to think that thus God may be working for our good. We need to learn that chastisement is a part of His great plan and that under the rod of affliction the Christian may sometimes do more for the Master than when engaged in active service.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 479–481.

**Tuesday, January 6**

### **Spiritual Discernment Applied**

We should be often in prayer. The outpouring of the Spirit of God came in answer to earnest prayer. But mark this fact concerning the disciples. The record says, “They were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost” ([Acts 2:1–4](#)).

They were not assembled to relate tidbits of scandal. They were not seeking to expose every stain they could find on a brother’s character. They felt their spiritual need, and cried to the Lord for the holy unction to help them in overcoming their own infirmities, and to fit them for the work of saving others. They prayed with intense earnestness that the love of Christ might be shed abroad in their hearts.

This is our great need today in every church in our land. For “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). That which was objectionable in the character is purified from the soul by the love of Jesus. All selfishness is expelled, all envy, all evil-speaking, is rooted out, and a radical transformation is wrought in the heart. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” ([Galatians 5:22, 23](#)). “The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace” ([James 3:18](#)).

Paul says that “as touching the law”—as far as outward acts were concerned—he was “blameless,” but when the spiritual character of the law was discerned, when he looked into the holy mirror, he saw himself a sinner. Judged by a human standard, he had abstained from sin, but when he looked into the depths of God’s law, and saw himself as God saw him, he bowed in humiliation, and confessed his guilt.—*Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 289.

Paul writes to his Corinthian brethren: “Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are yet not carnal, and walk as men?” It is impossible for minds distracted by envy and strife to comprehend the deep spiritual truths of God’s word. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” We cannot rightly understand or appreciate divine revelation without the aid of that Spirit by whom the word was given.

Those who are appointed to guard the spiritual interests of the church should be careful to set a right example, giving no occasion for envy, jealousy, or suspicion, ever manifesting that same spirit of love, respect, and courtesy which they desire to encourage in their brethren. Diligent heed should be given to the instructions of God’s word. Let every manifestation of animosity or unkindness be checked; let every root of bitterness be removed. When trouble arises between brethren, the Saviour’s rule should be strictly followed. All possible effort should be made to effect a reconciliation; but if the parties stubbornly persist in remaining at variance, they should be suspended till they can harmonize.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 241.

**Wednesday, January 7**

### **Gospel Fruit**

The experience of the apostle Paul in meeting the philosophers of Athens has a lesson for us. In presenting the gospel before the court of the Areopagus, Paul met logic with logic, science with science, philosophy with philosophy. The wisest of his hearers were astonished and silenced. His words could not be controverted. But the effort bore little fruit. Few were led to accept the gospel. Henceforth Paul adopted a different manner of labor. He avoided elaborate arguments and discussion of theories, and in simplicity pointed men and women to Christ as the Saviour of sinners. Writing to the Corinthians of his work among them, he said:

“I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. . . . My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” [1 Corinthians 2:1–5](#).

Again, in his letter to the Romans, he says:

“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” [Romans 1:16](#).

Let those who work for the higher classes bear themselves with true dignity, remembering that angels are their companions. Let them keep the treasure house of mind and heart filled with, “It is written.” Hang in memory’s hall the precious words of Christ. They are to be valued far above gold or silver. . . .

There are miracles to be wrought in genuine conversion, miracles that are not now discerned. The greatest men of the earth are not beyond the power of a wonder-working God. If those who are workers together with Him will do their duty bravely and faithfully, God will convert men who occupy responsible places, men of intellect and influence. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, many will be led to accept the divine principles. . . .

When converted to Christ, many will become agencies in the hand of God to work for others of their own class. They will feel that a dispensation of the gospel is committed to them for those who have made this world their all. Time and money will be consecrated to God, talent and influence will be devoted to the work of winning souls to Christ.

Only eternity will reveal what has been accomplished by this kind of ministry—how many souls, sick with doubt and tired of worldliness and unrest, have been brought to the great Restorer, who longs to save to the uttermost all that come unto Him. Christ is a risen Saviour, and there is healing in His wings.—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 214–216.

**Thursday, January 8**

**Prayer Power**

The great apostle Paul was firm where duty and principle were at stake; but courtesy was a marked trait of his character, and this gave him access to the highest class of society. Paul never doubted the ability of God or His willingness to give him the grace he needed to live the life of a Christian. . . . He does not live under a cloud of doubt, groping his way in the mist and darkness of uncertainty, complaining of hardship and trials. A voice of gladness, strong with hope and courage, sounds all along the line down to our time. Paul had a healthful religious experience. The love of Christ was his grand theme, and the constraining power that governed him.

When in the most discouraging circumstances, which would have had a depressing influence upon half-way Christians, he is firm of heart, full of courage and hope and cheer. . . . The same hope and cheerfulness is seen when he is upon the deck of the ship, the tempest beating about him, the ship going to pieces. He gives orders to the commander of the ship and preserves the lives of all on board. Although a prisoner, he is really the master of the ship, the freest and happiest man on board. . . .

When before kings and dignitaries of the earth, who held his life in their hands, he quailed not; for he had given his life to God, and it was hid in Christ. He softened, by his courtesy, the hearts of these men in power, men of fierce temper, wicked and corrupt though they were in heart and life. . . . Propriety of deportment, the grace of true politeness, marked all his conduct. When he stretched out his hand, as was his custom in speaking, the clanking chains caused him no shame or embarrassment. He looked upon them as tokens of honor, and rejoiced that he could suffer for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. . . . His reasoning was so clear and convincing that it made the profligate king tremble. . . . Grace, like an angel of mercy, makes his voice heard sweet and clear, repeating the story of the cross, the matchless love of Jesus.—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 352.

Paul knew that the higher Christian attainments can be reached only through much prayer and constant watchfulness, and this he tried to instill into their minds. But he knew also that in Christ crucified they were offered power sufficient to convert the soul and divinely adapted to enable them to resist all temptations to evil. With faith in God as their armor, and with His word as their weapon of warfare, they would be supplied with an inner power that would enable them to turn aside the attacks of the enemy.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 307.

**Friday, January 9**

**For Further Reading**

*Ye Shall Receive Power*, “Developing Spiritual Discernment,” April 5, p. 104.

*In Heavenly Places*, “Prayer in the Home,” March 24, p. 90.