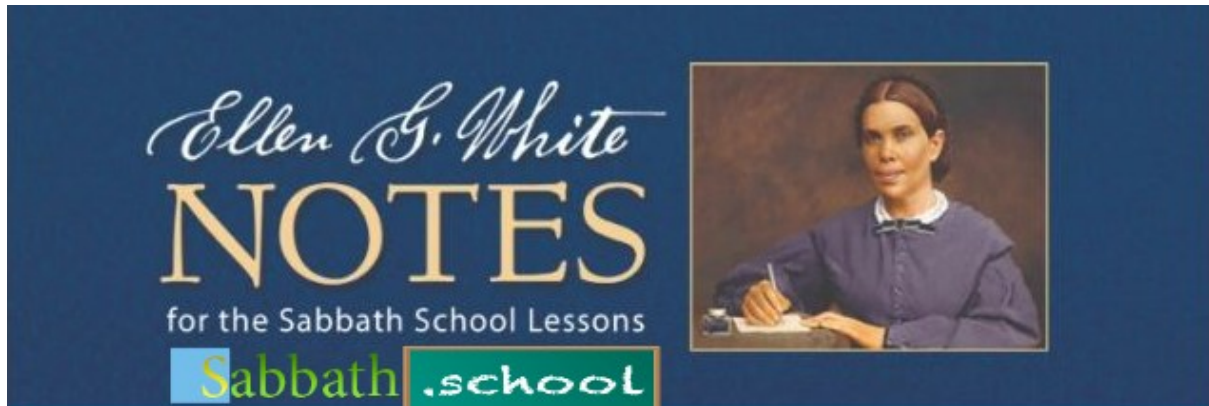


EGW Notes - Lesson 3

Life and Death



Sabbath Afternoon, January 10

The only safeguard against evil is the indwelling of Christ in the heart through faith in His righteousness. It is because selfishness exists in our hearts that temptation has power over us. But when we behold the great love of God, selfishness appears to us in its hideous and repulsive character, and we desire to have it expelled from the soul. As the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ, our hearts are softened and subdued, the temptation loses its power, and the grace of Christ transforms the character.

Christ will never abandon the soul for whom He has died. The soul may leave Him and be overwhelmed with temptation, but Christ can never turn from one for whom He has paid the ransom of His own life. Could our spiritual vision be quickened, we should see souls bowed under oppression and burdened with grief, pressed as a cart beneath sheaves and ready to die in discouragement. We should see angels flying swiftly to aid these tempted ones, who are standing as on the brink of a precipice. The angels from heaven force back the hosts of evil that encompass these souls, and guide them to plant their feet on the sure foundation. The battles waging between the two armies are as real as those fought by the armies of this world, and on the issue of the spiritual conflict eternal destinies depend.

To us, as to Peter, the word is spoken, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." ([Luke 22:31, 32](#).) Thank God, we are not left alone. He who "so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" ([John 3:16](#)), will not desert us in the battle with the adversary of God and mankind. "Behold," He says, "I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you." ([Luke 10:19](#).)

Live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold you firmly by a hand that will never let go. Know and believe the love that God has to us, and you are secure; that love is a fortress impregnable to all the delusions and assaults of Satan.—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 118, 119.

For the conversion of one sinner the minister should tax his resources to the utmost. The soul that God has created and Christ has redeemed is of great value because of the possibilities before it, the spiritual advantages that have been granted it, the capabilities that it may possess if vitalized by the word of God, and the immortality it may gain through the hope presented in the gospel. And if Christ left the ninety and nine that He might seek and save one lost sheep, can we be justified in doing less? Is not a neglect to work as Christ worked, to sacrifice as He sacrificed, a betrayal of sacred trusts, an insult to God?

The heart of the true minister is filled with an intense longing to save souls. Time and strength are spent, toilsome effort is not shunned; for others must hear the truths that brought to his own soul such gladness and peace and joy. The Spirit of Christ rests upon him. He watches for souls as one that must give an account. With his eyes fixed on the cross of Calvary, beholding the uplifted Saviour, relying on His grace, believing that He will be with him until the end, as his shield, his strength, his efficiency, he works for God. With invitations and pleadings, mingled with the assurances of God's love, he seeks to win souls to Jesus, and in heaven he is numbered among those who are "called, and chosen, and faithful." [Revelation 17:14](#).—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 370, 371.

Sunday, January 11

“Christ Will Be Magnified”

The Bible has little to say in praise of men. Little space is given to recounting the virtues of even the best men who have ever lived. This silence is not without purpose; it is not without a lesson. All the good qualities that men possess are the gift of God; their good deeds are performed by the grace of God through Christ. Since they owe all to God the glory of whatever they are or do belongs to Him alone; they are but instruments in His hands. More than this—as all the lessons of Bible history teach—it is a perilous thing to praise or exalt men; for if one comes to lose sight of his entire dependence on God, and to trust to his own strength, he is sure to fall. Man is contending with foes who are stronger than he. . . . It is impossible for us in our own strength to maintain the conflict; and whatever diverts the mind from God, whatever leads to self-exaltation or to self-dependence, is surely preparing the way for our overthrow. The tenor of the Bible is to inculcate distrust of human power and to encourage trust in divine power.

The truly converted soul is illuminated from on high. . . . His words, his motives, his actions, may be misinterpreted and falsified; but he does not mind it because he has greater interests at stake. . . . He is not ambitious for display; he does not crave the praise of men. His hope is in heaven, and he keeps straight on, with his eye fixed on Jesus. He does right because it is right.

By their good works, Christ’s followers are to bring glory, not to themselves, but to Him through whose grace and power they have wrought. It is through the Holy Spirit that every good work is accomplished, and the Spirit is given to glorify, not the receiver, but the Giver. When the light of Christ is shining in the soul, the lips will be filled with praise and thanksgiving to God. Your prayers, your performance of duty, your benevolence, your self-denial, will not be the theme of your thought or conversation. Jesus will be magnified, self will be hidden, and Christ will appear as all in all.—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 365.

When men and women can more fully comprehend the magnitude of the great sacrifice which was made by the Majesty of heaven in dying in man’s stead, then will the plan of salvation be magnified, and reflections of Calvary will awaken tender, sacred, and lively emotions in the Christian’s heart. Praises to God and the Lamb will be in their hearts and upon their lips. Pride and self-esteem cannot flourish in the hearts that keep fresh in memory the scenes of Calvary. This world will appear of but little value to those who appreciate the great price of man’s redemption, the precious blood of God’s dear Son. All the riches of the world are not of sufficient value to redeem one perishing soul. Who can measure the love Christ felt for a lost world as He hung upon the cross, suffering for the sins of guilty men? This love was immeasurable, infinite.—*Lift Him Up*, p. 43.

Monday, January 12

To Die Is Gain

How many years have we been in the Lord's garden? And what profit have we brought to the Master? How are we meeting the inspecting eye of God? Are we increasing in reverence, love, humility, confidence in God? Do we cherish gratitude for all His mercies? Are we seeking to bless those around us? Do we manifest the spirit of Jesus in our families? Are we teaching His Word to our children, and making known to them the wonderful works of God? The Christian must represent Jesus by both being good and doing good. Then there will be a fragrance about the life, a loveliness of character, which will reveal the fact that he is a child of God, an heir of heaven.

Brethren, be no longer slothful servants. Every soul must battle against inclination. Christ came not to save men in their sins, but from their sins. He has made it possible for us to possess a holy character; do not, then, be content with defects and deformities. But while we are to seek earnestly for perfection of character, we must remember that sanctification is not the work of a moment, but of a lifetime. Said Paul, "I die daily" ([1 Corinthians 15:31](#)). Day by day the work of overcoming must go forward. Every day we are to resist temptation, and gain the victory over selfishness in all its forms.

Day by day we should cherish love and humility, and cultivate in ourselves all those excellencies of character which will please God and fit us for the blessed society of heaven. To all who are seeking to accomplish this work, the promise is very precious, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels" ([Revelation 3:5](#)).—*Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 353.

The one who stands nearest to Christ will be he who on earth has drunk most deeply of the spirit of His self-sacrificing love,—love that "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, . . . seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil" ([1 Corinthians 13:4, 5](#)),—love that moves the disciple, as it moved our Lord, to give all, to live and labor and sacrifice, even unto death, for the saving of humanity. This spirit was made manifest in the life of Paul. He said, "For to me to live is Christ;" for his life revealed Christ to men; "and to die is gain,"—gain to Christ; death itself would make manifest the power of His grace, and gather souls to Him. "Christ shall be magnified in my body," he said, "whether it be by life or by death." [Philippians 1:21, 20](#).—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 549.

Tuesday, January 13

Being Confident

To Paul the cross was the one object of supreme interest. Ever since he had been arrested in his career of persecution against the followers of the crucified Nazarene he had never ceased to glory in the cross. At that time there had been given him a revelation of the infinite love of God, as revealed in the death of Christ; and a marvelous transformation had been wrought in his life, bringing all his plans and purposes into harmony with heaven. From that hour he had been a new man in Christ. He knew by personal experience that when a sinner once beholds the love of the Father, as seen in the sacrifice of His Son, and yields to the divine influence, a change of heart takes place, and henceforth Christ is all and in all.

At the time of his conversion, Paul was inspired with a longing desire to help his fellow men to behold Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of the living God, mighty to transform and to save. Henceforth his life was wholly devoted to an effort to portray the love and power of the Crucified One. His great heart of sympathy took in all classes. "I am debtor," he declared, "both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise" ([Romans 1:14](#)). Love for the Lord of glory, whom he had so relentlessly persecuted in the person of His saints, was the actuating principle of his conduct, his motive power. If ever his ardor in the path of duty flagged, one glance at the cross and the amazing love there revealed was enough to cause him to gird up the loins of his mind and press forward in the path of self-denial. . . .

In the power of the Spirit, Paul related the story of his own miraculous conversion and of his confidence in the Old Testament Scriptures. . . . His words were spoken with solemn earnestness . . . that he loved with all his heart the crucified and risen Saviour. They saw that his mind was centered in Christ, that his whole life was bound up with his Lord. . . .

Paul realized that his sufficiency was not in himself, but in the presence of the Holy Spirit, whose gracious influence filled his heart, bringing every thought into subjection of Christ. He spoke of himself as "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" ([2 Corinthians 4:10](#)). In the apostle's teachings Christ was the central figure. "I live," he declared; "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" ([Galatians 2:20](#)). Self was hidden; Christ was revealed and exalted.—*Lift Him Up*, p. 246.

Wednesday, January 14

Stand Fast in Unity

In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul sets before them the “mystery of the gospel” ([Ephesians 6:19](#)), the “unsearchable riches of Christ” (chap. 3:8), and then assures them of his earnest prayers for their spiritual prosperity:

“I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able 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, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (verses 14–19).

He writes to his Corinthian brethren also, “to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus . . . : Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” ([1 Corinthians 1:2–7](#)).

These words are addressed not only to the church at Corinth but to all the people of God to the close of time. Every Christian may enjoy the blessing of sanctification.

The apostle continues in these words: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (verse 10). Paul would not have appealed to them to do that which was impossible. Unity is the sure result of Christian perfection. . . .

The apostle himself was endeavoring to reach the same standard of holiness which he set before his brethren. . . . Paul did not hesitate to enforce, upon every suitable occasion, the importance of Bible sanctification. He says: “Ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification” ([1 Thessalonians 4:2, 3](#)).

“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. . . . Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” ([Philippians 2:12–15](#)).—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 98.

Thursday, January 15

United and Fearless

Felix had never before listened to the truth, and as the Spirit of God sent conviction to his soul, he became deeply agitated. Conscience, now aroused, made her voice heard, and Felix felt that Paul's words were true. Memory went back over the guilty past. With terrible distinctness there came up before him the secrets of his early life of profligacy and bloodshed, and the black record of his later years. He saw himself licentious, cruel, rapacious. Never before had the truth been thus brought home to his heart. Never before had his soul been so filled with terror. The thought that all the secrets of his career of crime were open before the eye of God, and that he must be judged according to his deeds, caused him to tremble with dread.

But instead of permitting his convictions to lead him to repentance, he sought to dismiss these unwelcome reflections. The interview with Paul was cut short. "Go thy way for this time," he said; "when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

How wide the contrast between the course of Felix and that of the jailer of Philippi! The servants of the Lord were brought in bonds to the jailer, as was Paul to Felix. The evidence they gave of being sustained by a divine power, their rejoicing under suffering and disgrace, their fearlessness when the earth was reeling with the earthquake shock, and their spirit of Christlike forgiveness, sent conviction to the jailer's heart, and with trembling he confessed his sins and found pardon. Felix trembled, but he did not repent. The jailer joyfully welcomed the Spirit of God to his heart and to his home; Felix bade the divine Messenger depart. The one chose to become a child of God and an heir of heaven; the other cast his lot with the workers of iniquity.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 425, 426.

"Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." No fear of giving offense, no desire for friendship or applause, could lead Paul to withhold the words that God had given him for their instruction, warning, or correction. From His servants today God requires fearlessness in preaching the word and in carrying out its precepts. The minister of Christ is not to present to the people only those truths that are the most pleasing, while he withholds others that might cause them pain. He should watch with deep solicitude the development of character. If he sees that any of his flock are cherishing sin he must as a faithful shepherd give them from God's word the instruction that is applicable to their case. Should he permit them in their self-confidence to go on unwarned, he would be held responsible for their souls. The pastor who fulfills his high commission must give his people faithful instruction on every point of the Christian faith, showing them what they must be and do in order to stand perfect in the day of God. He only who is a faithful teacher of the truth will at the close of his work be able to say with Paul, "I am pure from the blood of all men."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 393.

Friday, January 16

For Further Reading

Conflict and Courage, "Mark and Demas," December 9, p. 349.

Reflecting Christ, "Paul's Triumphant Testimony," December 28, p. 376.