

## Lesson 9

Saturday, August 22

Love-driven Ministry

“Consider the lilies.” Every flower that opens its petals to the sunshine obeys the same great laws that guide the stars, and how simple and beautiful and how sweet its life! Through the flowers, God would call our attention to the loveliness of Christlike character. He who has given such beauty to the blossoms desires far more that the soul should be clothed with the beauty of the character of Christ.

Consider, says Jesus, how the lilies grow; how, springing from the cold, dark earth, or from the mud of the river bed, the plants unfold in loveliness and fragrance. Who would dream of the possibilities of beauty in the rough brown bulb of the lily? But when the life of God, hidden therein, unfolds at His call in the rain and the sunshine, men marvel at the vision of grace and loveliness. Even so will the life of God unfold in every human soul that will yield itself to the ministry of His grace, which, free as the rain and the sunshine, comes with its benediction to all. It is the word of God that creates the flowers, and the same word will produce in you the graces of His Spirit.

God’s law is the law of love. He has surrounded you with beauty to teach you that you are not placed on earth merely to delve for self, to dig and build, to toil and spin, but to make life bright and joyous and beautiful with the love of Christ—like the flowers, to gladden other lives by the ministry of love.

Fathers and mothers, let your children learn from the flowers. Take them with you into garden and field and under the leafy trees, and teach them to read in nature the message of God’s love. Let the thoughts of Him be linked with bird and flower and tree. Lead the children to see in every pleasant and beautiful thing an expression of God’s love for them. Recommend your religion to them by its pleasantness. Let the law of kindness be in your lips.

Teach the children that because of God’s great love their natures may be changed and brought into harmony with His. Teach them that He would have their lives beautiful with the graces of the flowers. Teach them, as they gather the sweet blossoms, that He who made the flowers is more beautiful than they. Thus the tendrils of their hearts will be entwined about Him. He who is “altogether lovely” will become to them as a daily companion and familiar friend, and their lives will be transformed into the image of His purity. —

*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, pp. 97, 98.*

Sunday, August 23  
Thanksgiving

God desires His obedient children to claim His blessing and to come before Him with praise and thanksgiving. God is the Fountain of life and power. . . . He has done for His chosen people that which should inspire every heart with thanksgiving, and it grieves Him that so little praise is offered. He desires to have a stronger expression from His people, showing that they know they have reason for joy and gladness.

The dealings of God with His people should be often repeated. How frequently were the waymarks set up by the Lord in His dealings with ancient Israel! Lest they should forget the history of the past, He commanded Moses to frame these events into song, that parents might teach them to their children. . . . For His people in this generation the Lord has wrought as a wonder-working God. The past history of the cause of God needs to be often brought before the people, young and old. We need often to recount God's goodness and to praise Him for His wonderful works. . . .

The church of God below is one with the church of God above. Believers on the earth and the beings in heaven who have never -fall----en-- constitute one church. Every heavenly intelligence is interested in the assemblies of the saints who on earth meet to worship God. In the inner court of heaven they listen to the testimony of the witnesses for Christ in the outer court on earth, and the praise and thanksgiving from the worshipers below is taken up in the heavenly anthem, and praise and rejoicing sound through the heavenly courts because Christ has not died in vain for the fallen sons of Adam. While angels drink from the fountainhead, the saints on earth drink of the pure streams flowing from the throne, the streams that make glad the city of our God. Oh, that we could all realize the nearness of heaven to earth! . . . In every assembly of the saints below are angels of God, listening to the testimonies, songs, and prayers. Let us remember that our praises are supplemented by the choirs of the angelic host above. —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 75.

Let praise and thanksgiving be expressed in song. When -tempted, instead of giving utterance to our feelings, let us by faith lift up a song of thanksgiving to God. . . .

Song is a weapon that we can always use against discouragement. As we thus open the heart to the sunlight of the Saviour's presence, we shall have health and His blessing.

"Give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good:

For His mercy endureth forever.

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so,

Whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy." . . .

"In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." 1 Thessalonians 5:18. This command is an assurance that even the things which appear to be against us will work for our good. God would not bid us be thankful for that which would do us harm. —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 254, 255.

Monday, August 24  
Simplicity and Sincerity

Our conscience must be purged from dead works to serve the living God. Sanctification means perfect love, perfect obedience, entire conformity to the will of God. If our lives are conformed to the life of Christ through the sanctification of mind, soul, and body, our example will have a powerful influence on the world. We are not perfect, but it is our privilege to cut away from the entanglements of self and sin, and go on unto perfection. . . .

Great possibilities, high and holy attainments, are placed within the reach of all who have true faith. Shall we not anoint our eyes with eyesalve, that we may discern the wondrous things here brought before us? Why do we not with persevering earnestness, work out this prayer, advancing onward and upward, reaching the standard of holiness? We are laborers together with God, and we must work in harmony with one another and with God, "for it is God which worketh in. . . [us] both to will and to do of his good pleasure." . . .

The Lord takes no pleasure in seeing us spiritually weak. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." We have conflicts and trials to meet, but we need not fail or be discouraged. . . .

God can only be honored when we who profess to believe in Him are conformed to His image. We are to represent to the world the beauty of holiness, and we shall never enter the gates of the city of God until we perfect a Christlike character. If we, with trust in God, strive for sanctification, we shall receive it. Then as witnesses for Christ, we are to make known what the grace of God has wrought in us. —*Our Father Cares*, p. 293.

The greatest disquietude we can have is uncertainty. The acceptance of the blessings of God brings righteousness and peace. The fruit of righteousness is quietness and assurance forever. We must have simplicity and Godlike sincerity. We must have that wisdom which cometh from above. Our Christian experience must be animated by piety, and instinct with the divine life. —*The Upward Look*, p. 99.

Tuesday, August 25  
Changing Plans for Love

About this time there came to Ephesus members of the household of Chloe, a Christian family of high repute in Corinth. Paul asked them regarding the condition of things, and they told him that the church was rent by divisions. The dissensions that had prevailed at the time of Apollos's visit had greatly increased. False teachers were leading the members to despise the instructions of Paul. The doctrines and ordinances of the gospel had been perverted. Pride, idolatry, and sensualism, were steadily increasing among those who had once been zealous in the Christian life.

As this picture was presented before him, Paul saw that his worst fears were more than realized. But he did not because of this give way to the thought that his work had been a failure. With "anguish of heart" and with "many tears" he sought counsel from God. Gladly would he have visited Corinth at once, had this been the wisest course to pursue. But he knew that in their present condition the believers would not profit by his labors, and therefore he sent Titus to prepare the way for a visit from himself later on. Then, putting aside all personal feelings over the course of those whose conduct revealed such strange perverseness, and keeping his soul stayed upon God, the apostle wrote to the church at Corinth one of the richest, most instructive, most powerful of all his letters.

With remarkable clearness he proceeded to answer the various questions brought forward by the church, and to lay down general principles, which, if heeded, would lead them to a higher spiritual plane. They were in peril, and he could not bear the thought of failing at this critical time to reach their hearts. Faithfully he warned them of their dangers and reproved them for their sins. He pointed them again to Christ and sought to kindle anew the fervor of their early devotion.

The apostle's great love for the Corinthian believers was revealed in his tender greeting to the church. He referred to their experience in turning from idolatry to the worship and service of the true God. He reminded them of the gifts of the Holy Spirit which they had received, and showed that it was their privilege to make continual advancement in the Christian life until they should attain to the purity and holiness of Christ. "In everything ye are enriched by Him," he wrote, "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: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 300, 301.

Wednesday, August 26  
Forgiveness and Reaffirmation of Love

No church officer should advise, no committee should recommend, nor should any church vote, that the name of a wrongdoer shall be removed from the church books, until the instruction given by Christ has been faithfully followed. When this instruction has been followed, the church has cleared herself before God. The evil must then be made to appear as it is, and must be removed, that it may not become more and more widespread. The health and purity of the church must be preserved, that she may stand before God unsullied, clad in the robes of Christ's righteousness.

If the erring one repents and submits to Christ's discipline, he is to be given another trial. And even if he does not repent, even if he stands outside the church, God's servants still have a work to do for him. They are to seek earnestly to win him to repentance. And, however aggravated may have been his offense, if he yields to the striving of the Holy Spirit and, by confessing and forsaking his sin, gives evidence of repentance, he is to be forgiven and welcomed to the fold again. His brethren are to encourage him in the right way, treating him as they would wish to be treated were they in his place, considering themselves lest they also be tempted.

"Verily I say unto you," Christ continued, "whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Verse 18.

This statement holds its force in all ages. On the church has been conferred the power to act in Christ's stead. It is God's instrumentality for the preservation of order and discipline among His people. To it the Lord has delegated the power to settle all questions respecting its prosperity, purity, and order. Upon it rests the responsibility of excluding from its fellowship those who are unworthy, who by their un-Christlike conduct would bring dishonor on the truth. Whatever the church does that is in accordance with the directions given in God's word will be ratified in heaven.

Matters of grave import come up for settlement by the church. God's ministers, ordained by Him as guides of His people, after doing their part are to submit the whole matter to the church, that there may be unity in the decision made.

The Lord desires His followers to exercise great care in dealing with one another. They are to lift up, to restore, to heal. But there is to be in the church no neglect of proper discipline. The members are to regard themselves as pupils in a school, learning how to form characters worthy of their high calling. In the church here below, God's children are to be prepared for the great reunion in the church above. Those who here live in harmony with Christ may look forward to an endless life in the family of the redeemed. —*Councils for the Church*, pp. 257, 258.

Thursday, August 27  
Triumph in Christ

“Abide in me” are words of great significance. Abiding in Christ means a living, earnest, refreshing faith that works by love and purifies the soul. It means a constant receiving of the spirit of Christ, a life of unreserved surrender to His service. Where this union exists, good works will appear. The life of the vine will manifest itself in fragrant fruit on the branches. The continual supply of the grace of Christ will bless you and make you a blessing, till you can say with Paul, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Galatians 2:20).

The sacred union with Christ will unite the brethren in the most endearing bonds of Christian fellowship. Their hearts will be touched with divine compassion one for another. . . . Coldness, variance, strife, are entirely out of place among the disciples of Christ. They have accepted the one faith. They have joined to serve the one Lord, to endure in the same warfare, to strive for the same object, and to triumph in the same cause. They have been bought with the same precious blood, and have gone forth to preach the same message of salvation. . . .

Those who are constantly drawing strength from Christ will possess His spirit. They will not be careless in word or deportment. An abiding sense of how much their salvation has cost in the sacrifice of the beloved Son of God will rest upon their souls. Like a fresh and vivid transaction the scenes of Calvary will present themselves to their minds and their hearts will be subdued and made tender by this wonderful manifestation of the love of Christ to them. They will look upon others as the purchase of His precious blood, and those who are united with Him will seem noble and elevated and sacred because of this connection. The death of Christ on Calvary should lead us to estimate souls as He did. His love has magnified the value of every man, woman, and child. —*That I May Know Him*, p. 132.

The experience that I had last night has impressed me very deeply. I seemed to have Christ close beside me. I was filled with hope and courage and faith and love for souls. I pleaded with God to sustain me, and He lifted me up, and made me to triumph in Him. I know that the Lord will work for His people when they will sanctify their souls by obeying the truth. Then the whole being, body, mind, and soul, will be in harmony with God. Loving God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves, we shall possess a freedom crowned with glory.

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). —*The Upward Look*, p. 241.

Friday, August 28  
For Further Reading

*Sons and Daughters of God, "We Are Witnesses for God,"* September 24, p. 274.

*God's Amazing Grace, "A Life-giving Atmosphere,"* August 18, p. 238.