

Lesson 10
Sabbath Afternoon, November 28
Prophetic Authority and Relevance

In the commission to His disciples, Christ not only outlined their work, but gave them their message. Teach the people, He said, "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The disciples were to teach what Christ had taught. That which He had spoken, not only in person, but through all the prophets and teachers of the Old Testament, is here included. Human teaching is shut out. There is no place for tradition, for man's theories and conclusions, or for church legislation. No laws ordained by ecclesiastical authority are included in the commission. None of these are Christ's servants to teach. "The law and the prophets," with the record of His own words and deeds, are the treasure committed to the disciples to be given to the world. Christ's name is their watchword, their badge of distinction, their bond of union, the authority for their course of action, and the source of their success. Nothing that does not bear His superscription is to be recognized in His kingdom.

The gospel is to be presented, not as a lifeless theory, but as a living force to change the life. God desires that the receivers of His grace shall be witnesses to its power. Those whose course has been most offensive to Him He freely accepts; when they repent, He imparts to them His divine Spirit, places them in the highest positions of trust, and sends them forth into the camp of the disloyal to proclaim His boundless mercy. He would have His servants bear testimony to the fact that through His grace men may possess Christlikeness of character, and may rejoice in the assurance of His great love. He would have us bear testimony to the fact that He cannot be satisfied until the human race are reclaimed and reinstated in their holy privileges as His sons and daughters.

In Christ is the tenderness of the shepherd, the affection of the parent, and the matchless grace of the compassionate Saviour. His blessings He presents in the most alluring terms. He is not content merely to announce these blessings; He presents them in the most attractive way, to excite a desire to possess them. So His servants are to present the riches of the glory of the unspeakable Gift. The wonderful love of Christ will melt and subdue hearts, when the mere reiteration of doctrines would accomplish nothing. . . . Christ is sitting for His portrait in every disciple. Every one God has predestinated to be "conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:29). In every one Christ's long-suffering love, His holiness, meekness, mercy, and truth are to be manifested to the world. —*Lift Him Up*, p. 220.

Jesus was the light of the world. He came forth from God with a message of hope and salvation to the fallen children of Adam. If men and women would but receive Him as their personal Savior, He promised to restore to them the image of God, and to redeem all that had been lost through sin. He presented to human beings the truth, without one thread of interwoven error. When He taught, His words came with authority; for He spoke with positive knowledge of the truth.

The teaching of mortals is wholly different from the teaching of Christ. There is a constant tendency on the part of humans to present their own theories and opinions as matter worthy of attention, even when they have no foundation in truth. They are very tenacious for their erroneous ideas and idle opinions. They will hold firmly to the traditions of humanity, and defend them as vigorously as if they were the veritable truth. Jesus declared that everyone that was of the truth would hear His voice.

How much more power would attend the preaching of the Word today if ministers dwelt less upon human theories and arguments and far more upon the lessons of Christ and upon practical godliness. He who had stood in the counsel of God, who had dwelt in His presence, was well acquainted with the origin and elements of truth, and understood its relation and importance to humanity. He presented to the world the plan of salvation, and unfolded truth of the highest order, even the words of eternal life.

Patriarchs, prophets, and apostles spoke as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost, and they plainly stated that they spoke not by their own power, nor in their own name. They desired that no credit might be ascribed to them, that no one might regard them as the originators of anything whereof they might glory. They were jealous for the honor of God, to whom all praise belongs. They declared that their ability and the messages they brought were given them as delegates of the power of God. God was their authority and sufficiency. . . .

Christ is the Author of all truth. Every brilliant conception, every thought of wisdom, every capacity and talent of human beings, is the gift of Christ. He borrowed no new ideas from humanity; for He originated all. —*To Be Like Jesus*, p. 224.

The divine command given to Moses found him self-distrustful, slow of speech, and timid. He was overwhelmed with a sense of his incapacity to be a mouthpiece for God to Israel. But having once accepted the work, he entered upon it with his whole heart, putting all his trust in the Lord. . . . God blessed his ready obedience, and he became eloquent, hopeful, self-possessed, and well fitted for the greatest work ever given to man. This is an example of what God does to strengthen the character of those who trust Him fully and give themselves unreservedly to His commands.

A man will gain power and efficiency as he accepts the responsibilities that God places upon him, and with his whole soul seeks to qualify himself to bear them aright. However humble his position or limited his ability, that man will attain true greatness who, trusting to divine strength, seeks to perform his work with fidelity. —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 87.

Monday, November 30
The Authority of Jesus

In the scribes, Pharisees, and rulers, Jesus found not the bottles for His new wine. He was obliged to turn from them to humble men, whose hearts were not filled with envy, covetousness, and self-righteousness. The lowly fishermen obeyed the call of the divine Teacher, while the scribes and Pharisees refused to become converted.

The disciples that Jesus called were uneducated, and were far from being perfect in character when Jesus united them with Himself; but they were willing to learn from the greatest Teacher the world ever knew. They were truly converted men, and became the new bottles into which Jesus could pour the new wine of His kingdom. But though they were converted to Christ, yet, because of their limited earthly comprehension—the result of the teaching they had had from the Jews—they were unable fully to understand the spiritual nature of the truth He could impart. The burden of His instruction was the necessity of His followers having pure and holy hearts, for holiness alone would fit them to become subjects of His heavenly kingdom.

The divine Sower scattered grains of precious seed, which we cannot see until a skillful laborer, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, gathers them together and presents them to us as a complete system of truth, unfolding the depths of divine love. For all ages Jesus, the author of truth, through prophets and people, had presented- truth upon truth to the Jews, from the pillar of cloud and fire. But the truth He had given had become mingled with error, and it was necessary to separate from the companionship of heresy and evil. It was necessary to readjust it in the framework of the gospel, in order that it might shine forth in its original luster and illuminate the moral darkness of the world. Wherever He found a gem of truth that had been lost from its setting, or had been marred with error, He reset it, and stamped upon it the signature of Jehovah. He proved Himself to be the word and the wisdom of God.

The commonplace matters of time and earth had engrossed the minds of the people at the time of Christ, just as Satan had designed that they should. Sin had expelled from the heart the love of God, and instead of the love of God there was found in the heart the love of the world, the love of sinful indulgence of evil passions. Christ alone could adjust the claims between heaven and earth. Man's vision had become blinded, because he did not keep in view the spiritual and eternal world. . . . In the person and work of Christ the holiness of God is revealed; for Christ came to reveal the Father. —*Lift Him Up*, p. 259.

Tuesday, December 01
Biblical Authority

Those who are placed in positions of trust must have the authority of action, but they are never to use this authority as a power to refuse help to the needy and helpless. It is never to be exercised to discourage or depress one struggling soul. Let those to whom have been given positions of influence ever remember that God desires them to carry out the mind of Christ. . . .

True godliness is measured by the work done. Profession is nothing; position is nothing; a character like the character of Christ is the evidence we are to bear that God has sent His Son into the world. Those who profess to be Christians, yet do not act as Christ would were He in their place, greatly injure the cause of God. They misrepresent their Saviour, and are standing under false colors.

The true disciple, in whose heart Christ abides, shows forth to the world Christ's love for humanity. He is God's helping hand. The glow of spiritual health thrills his whole being as he receives from the Saviour grace to give to others. . . .

Pure and undefiled religion is not a sentiment, but a doing of works of love and mercy. This religion is necessary to health and happiness. It enters the polluted soul-temple, and with a scourge drives out the sinful intruder. Taking the throne, it consecrates all by its presence, illuminating the heart with the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. It opens the windows of the soul heavenward, letting in the sunshine of God's love. With it comes serenity and composure. Physical, mental, and moral strength increase, because the atmosphere of heaven, as a living, active agency, fills the soul.

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When Christians do not reveal Christ, of what value are they? Are they not like savorless salt, "good for nothing"? But when they reveal in their lives the saving properties of the truth, poor, sin-hardened souls are not left to perish in corruption. Good works are seen; for the living principles of righteousness cannot be hidden. The gospel acted is like salt which contains all its savor. It is powerful in the saving of souls. —*This Day With God*, p. 25.

I beseech of you to look away from yourself unto Christ, and live. Put your trust in the One who loves human agencies. Let your dependence be wholly on Christ. He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto Him. Believe, believe that Christ will pardon all your transgressions and forgive all your sins. Humble yourself as a little child, and Christ will receive you and bless you and strengthen you. Do not think unbelief or talk unbelief, but take God at His word, and leave yourself in His hands, to be taught and led of Him. . . .

Comfort your heart, . . . by believing that the Lord wants you to be saved, and that you are His child. Do not think that your mind must be in a certain state of feeling or else you are not accepted of God. Your faith must rely not on feeling, but on the promises of God. Walk by faith in a "Thus saith the Lord." Rest your case with the Lord, and believe in His Word. Believe, oh, believe the Word of the Lord, and walk by faith, not by sight. Consecrate yourself anew to God. Be loyal and true to a "Thus saith the Lord," and stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ doth make you free. —*The Upward Look*, p. 37.

The principle for which the disciples stood so fearlessly when, in answer to the command not to speak any more in the name of Jesus, they declared, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye," is the same that the adherents of the gospel struggled to maintain in the days of the Reformation. When in 1529 the German princes assembled at the Diet of Spires, there was presented the emperor's decree restricting religious liberty, and prohibiting all further dissemination of the reformed doctrines. It seemed that the hope of the world was about to be crushed out. Would the princes accept the decree? Should the light of the gospel be shut out from the multitudes still in darkness? Mighty issues for the world were at stake. Those who had accepted the reformed faith met together, and their unanimous decision was, "Let us reject this decree. In matters of conscience the majority has no power."—Merle d'Aubigne, *History of the Reformation*, b. 13, ch. 5.

This principle we in our day are firmly to maintain. The banner of truth and religious liberty held aloft by the founders of the gospel church and by God's witnesses during the centuries that have passed since then, has, in this last conflict, been committed to our hands. The responsibility for this great gift rests with those whom God has blessed with a knowledge of His word. We are to receive this word as supreme authority. We are to recognize human government as an ordinance of divine appointment, and teach obedience to it as a sacred duty, within its legitimate sphere. But when its claims conflict with the claims of God, we must obey God rather than men. God's word must be recognized as above all human legislation. A "Thus saith the Lord" is not to be set aside for a "Thus saith the church" or a "Thus saith the state." The crown of Christ is to be lifted above the diadems of earthly potentates.

We are not required to defy authorities. Our words, whether spoken or written, should be carefully considered, lest we place ourselves on record as uttering that which would make us appear antagonistic to law and order. We are not to say or do anything that would unnecessarily close up our way. We are to go forward in Christ's name, advocating the truths committed to us. If we are forbidden by men to do this work, then we may say, as did the apostles, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 68, 69.

The Israelites, having again separated themselves from God by idolatry, were grievously oppressed by these enemies. The property and even the lives of the people were in constant danger. Hence the villages and lonely dwellings were deserted, and the people congregated in the walled cities. The high roads were unoccupied, and the people went from place to place by unfrequented byways. At the places for drawing water, many were robbed and even murdered, and to add to their distress, the Israelites were unarmed. Among forty thousand men, not a sword or a spear could be found. . .

Deborah celebrated the triumph of Israel in a most sublime and impassioned song. She ascribed to God all the glory of their deliverance, and bade the people praise Him for His wonderful works.
— *Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 259.

We may learn valuable lessons from the experience of the prophet Elisha. Elisha was chosen by the Lord as Elijah's helper, and through test and trial he proved himself true to his trust. He was willing to be and do anything the Lord directed. He did not seek to shun the humblest service, but was as faithful in the performance of smaller duties as of larger responsibilities. He was always willing to serve in any position to which the Lord pointed him, however disagreeable it might be to his natural inclinations. And at every step he learned lessons of humility and service. . . .

"And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." He did not ask for worldly honor, for a high place among the great men of the earth. That for which he craved was a double portion of the Spirit given to the one God was about to honor with translation. He knew that nothing but a double portion of the Spirit that had rested on Elijah could fit him to fill the place Elijah had filled, because Elijah had the experience and wisdom of age, which cannot by any method be imparted to the young. . . .

When the Lord in His providence sees fit to remove from His work those to whom He has given wisdom, He helps and strengthens their successors, if they will look to Him for aid and will walk in His ways. They may be even wiser than their predecessors; for they may profit by their experience and learn wisdom from their mistakes. — *Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 265.

Friday, December 04
For Further Reading

That I May Know Him, "Christ the Revelation of God," February 1, p. 38.
Ye Shall Receive Power, "John the Baptist," September 21, p. 273.