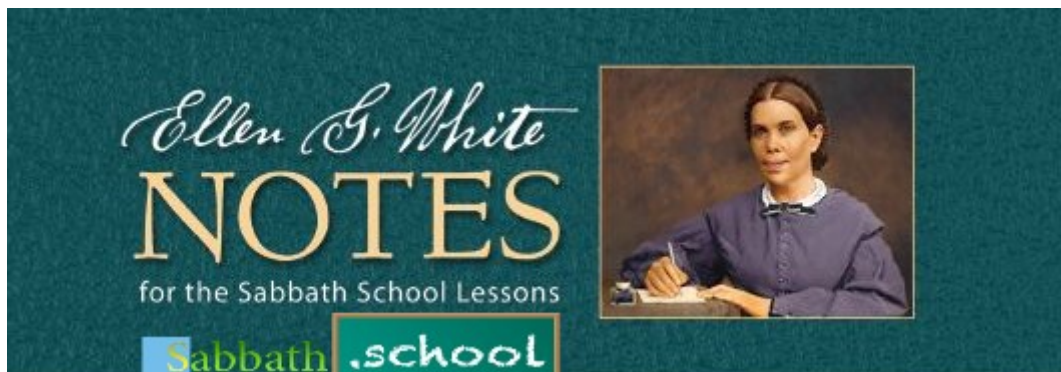


EGW Notes - Lesson 2

The Central Issue: Love or Selfishness?



Sabbath Afternoon, April 6

Amid national strife and ruin, the steps of the disciples would be beset with perils, and often their hearts would be oppressed by fear. They were to see Jerusalem a desolation, the temple swept away, its worship forever ended, and Israel scattered to all lands, like wrecks on a desert shore. Jesus said, "Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars." "Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows." Matthew 24:6-8. Yet Christ's followers were not to fear that their hope was lost or that God had forsaken the earth. The power and the glory belong unto Him whose great purposes would still move on unthwarted toward their consummation. In the prayer that breathes their daily wants, the disciples of Christ were directed to look above all the

power and dominion of evil, unto the Lord their God, whose kingdom ruleth over all and who is their Father and everlasting Friend.—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 120.

The twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew gives an outline of what is to come upon the world. We are living amid the perils of the last days. Those who are perishing in sin must be warned. The Lord calls upon everyone to whom He has entrusted the talent of means to act as His helping hand by giving their money for the advancement of His work. Our money is a treasure lent us by the Lord, and it is to be invested in the work of giving to the world the last message of mercy.

He who looks at earthly things as the chief good, he who spends his life in an effort to gain worldly riches, is indeed making a poor investment. Too late he will see that in which he has trusted crumbling into dust. It is only through self-denial, through the sacrifice of earthly riches, that the eternal riches can be obtained. It is through much tribulation that the Christian enters the kingdom of heaven. Constantly he is to war the good warfare, not laying down his weapons until Christ bids him rest. Only by giving all to Christ can he secure the inheritance that will endure through all eternity.—*This Day With God*, p. 152.

To the believer, death is but a small matter. Christ speaks of it as if it were of little moment. "If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death," "he shall never taste of death." To the Christian, death is but a sleep, a moment of silence and darkness. The life is hid with

Christ in God, and “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.”
John 8:51, 52; Colossians 3:4. . . .

The same power that raised Christ from the dead will raise His church, and glorify it with Him, above all principalities, above all powers, above every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in the world to come.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 787.

Sunday, April 7

A Brokenhearted Savior

Could it be that the magnificent temple, which was the nation’s glory, was soon to be a heap of ruins? The foreboding of evil was shared by the disciples, and they anxiously waited for some more definite statement from Jesus. . . .

Jesus did not answer His disciples by taking up separately the destruction of Jerusalem and the great day of His coming. He mingled the description of these two events. Had He opened to His disciples future events as He beheld them, they would have been unable to endure the sight. In mercy to them He blended the description of the two great crises, leaving the disciples to study out the meaning for themselves. When He referred to the destruction of Jerusalem, His prophetic words reached beyond that event to the final conflagration in that day when the Lord shall rise out of His place to punish the world for their iniquity. . . . This entire discourse was given, not for the disciples only, but for those who should live in the last scenes of this earth’s

history.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 627, 628.

The sin of the world today is the sin that brought destruction upon Israel. Ingratitude to God, the neglect of opportunities and blessings, the selfish appropriation of God's gifts—these were comprised in the sin that brought wrath upon Israel. They are bringing ruin upon the world today.

The tears which Christ shed upon Olivet as He stood overlooking the chosen city were not for Jerusalem alone. In the fate of Jerusalem He beheld the destruction of the world. . . .

In this crisis, where is the church to be found? . . .

Men are in peril. Multitudes are perishing. But how few of the professed followers of Christ are burdened for these souls. The destiny of a world hangs in the balance; but this hardly moves even those who claim to believe the most far-reaching truth ever given to mortals. There is a lack of that love which led Christ to leave His heavenly home and take man's nature that humanity might touch humanity and draw humanity to divinity. There is a stupor, a paralysis, upon the people of God, which prevents them from understanding the duty of the hour.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 302, 303.

[God] knows that in humanity we shall find no solace for our woe, and He pities us because we are so needy, yet so unwilling to make Him our confidant, our burden-bearer. He sees human beings slighting the love and mercy provided for them, and He says sadly, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40). . . .

He will never neglect those who come to Him. Of the poor, fainting soul, tired of looking to humanity only to be betrayed and forgotten, Christ says, "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me" (Isaiah 27:5).—*This Day With God*, p. 23.

Monday, April 8

Christians Providentially Preserved

The ruin of Jerusalem was a symbol of the final ruin that shall overwhelm the world. The prophecies that received a partial fulfillment in the overthrow of Jerusalem have a more direct application to the last days. We are now standing on the threshold of great and solemn events. A crisis is before us, such as the world has never witnessed. . . . The Majesty of heaven has the destiny of nations, as well as the concerns of His church, in His own charge. The divine Instructor is saying to every agent in the accomplishment of His plans, as He said to Cyrus, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me." Isaiah 45:5.—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 120.

In the vision of the prophet Ezekiel there was the appearance of a hand beneath the wings of the cherubim. This is to teach His servants that it is divine power which gives them success. Those whom God employs as His messengers are not to feel that His work is dependent upon them. Finite beings are not left to carry this burden of responsibility. He who slumbers

not, who is continually at work for the accomplishment of His designs, will carry forward His own work. He will thwart the purposes of wicked men, and will bring to confusion the counsels of those who plot mischief against His people. He who is the King, the Lord of hosts, sitteth between the cherubim, and amid the strife and tumult of nations He guards His children still. He who ruleth in the heavens is our Saviour. He measures every trial, He watches the furnace fire that must test every soul. When the strongholds of kings shall be overthrown, when the arrows of wrath shall strike through the hearts of His enemies, His people will be safe in His hands.—
Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, p. 121.

Looking down through long centuries of darkness and superstition, [John,] the aged exile saw multitudes suffering martyrdom because of their love for the truth. But he saw also that He who sustained His early witnesses would not forsake His faithful followers during the centuries of persecution that they must pass through before the close of time. “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer,” the Lord declared; “behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation: . . . be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”
Revelation 2:10.

And to all the faithful ones who were striving against evil, John heard the promises made: “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” “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.” Verse 7; 3:5.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 588.

Tuesday, April 9

Faithful Amid Persecution

The persecution that came upon the church in Jerusalem resulted in giving a great impetus to the work of the gospel. Success had attended the ministry of the word in that place, and there was danger that the disciples would linger there too long, unmindful of the Saviour’s commission to go to all the world. Forgetting that strength to resist evil is best gained by aggressive service, they began to think that they had no work so important as that of shielding the church in Jerusalem from the attacks of the enemy. Instead of educating the new converts to carry the gospel to those who had not heard it, they were in danger of taking a course that would lead all to be satisfied with what had been accomplished. To scatter His representatives abroad, where they could work for others, God permitted persecution to come upon them. Driven from Jerusalem, the believers “went everywhere preaching the word.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 105.

If the saints of the Old Testament bore so bright a testimony of loyalty, should not those upon whom is shining the accumulated light of centuries, bear a still more signal witness to the power of truth? The glory of the prophecies sheds their light upon our pathway. Type

has met antitype in the death of God's Son. Christ has risen from the dead, proclaiming over the rent sepulcher, "I am the resurrection, and the life." John 11:25. He has sent His Spirit into the world to bring all things to our remembrance. By a miracle of power He has preserved His written word through the ages.

The Reformers whose protest has given us the name of Protestant, felt that God had called them to give the light of the gospel to the world; and in the effort to do this they were ready to sacrifice their possessions, their liberty, even life itself. In the face of persecution and death the gospel was proclaimed far and near. The word of God was carried to the people; and all classes, high and low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, eagerly studied it for themselves. Are we, in this last conflict of the great controversy, as faithful to our trust as the early Reformers were to theirs?—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 626, 627.

The mysterious providence which permits the righteous to suffer persecution at the hand of the wicked has been a cause of great perplexity to many. . . . [But] God has given us sufficient evidence of His love, and we are not to doubt His goodness because we cannot understand the workings of His providence. Said the Saviour to His disciples, foreseeing the doubts that would press upon their souls in days of trial and darkness: "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." John 15:20. . . . Those who are called to endure torture and

martyrdom are but following in the steps of God's dear Son.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 47.

Wednesday, April 10

Caring for the Community

There can be no such thing as a narrow life for any soul connected with Christ. Those who love Jesus with heart and mind and soul and their neighbor as themselves have a broad field in which to use their ability and influence. There is no talent to be used for selfish gratification. Self must die, and our lives be hid with Christ in God. . . .

Those who are emptied of self, the thoughtful and conscientious, cannot raise their eyes to Christ, the living Saviour, without feelings of awe and the deepest humility. To behold Jesus continually will make the soul alive unto God. We shall love Jesus, we shall love the Father who sent Him into the world, for we see Him in a wondrous light, full of grace and truth. Jesus declares, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father" (Matthew 11:27); . . . "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). What for? That He may give gifts unto men, that they may lay all their powers under tribute to make known the wondrous love wherewith He hath loved us.—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 60.

All around us are heard the wails of a world's sorrow. On every hand are the needy and distressed. It is ours to aid in relieving and softening life's hardships and misery.

Practical work will have far more effect than mere sermonizing. We are to give food to the hungry, clothing to the naked, and shelter to the homeless. And we are called to do more than this. The wants of the soul, only the love of Christ can satisfy. If Christ is abiding in us, our hearts will be full of divine sympathy. The sealed fountains of earnest, Christlike love will be unsealed.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 417.

There are many from whom hope has departed. Bring back the sunshine to them. Many have lost their courage. Speak to them words of cheer. Pray for them. There are those who need the bread of life. Read to them from the word of God. Upon many is a soul sickness which no earthly balm can reach nor physician heal. Pray for these souls, bring them to Jesus. Tell them that there is a balm in Gilead and a Physician there. . . .

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. . . .

He desires that we shall reveal His own joy in our lives.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 418, 419.

Thursday, April 11

A Legacy of Love

During every hour of Christ's sojourn upon the earth, the love of God was flowing from Him in irrepressible streams. All who are imbued with His Spirit will love as He loved. The very principle that actuated Christ will actuate them in all their dealing one with another.

This love is the evidence of their discipleship. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples," said Jesus, "if ye have love one to another." When men are bound together, not by force or self-interest, but by love, they show the working of an influence that is above every human influence. Where this oneness exists, it is evidence that the image of God is being restored in humanity, that a new principle of life has been implanted. It shows that there is power in the divine nature to withstand the supernatural agencies of evil, and that the grace of God subdues the selfishness inherent in the natural heart.—*Lift Him Up*, p. 298.

This love, manifested in the church, will surely stir the wrath of Satan. Christ did not mark out for His disciples an easy path. "If the world hate you," He said, "ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours

also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me." The gospel is to be carried forward by aggressive warfare, in the midst of opposition, peril, loss, and suffering. But those who do this work are only following in their Master's steps.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 677.

Never should we pass by one suffering soul without seeking to impart to him of the comfort wherewith we are comforted of God.

All this is but a fulfillment of the principle of the law,—the principle that is illustrated in the story of the good Samaritan, and made manifest in the life of Jesus. His character reveals the true significance of the law, and shows what is meant by loving our neighbor as ourselves. And when the children of God manifest mercy, kindness, and love toward all men, they also are witnessing to the character of the statutes of heaven. They are bearing testimony to the fact that "the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." Psalm 19:7. And whoever fails to manifest this love is breaking the law which he professes to revere. For the spirit we manifest toward our brethren declares what is our spirit toward God. The love of God in the heart is the only spring of love toward our neighbor.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 505.

Friday, April 12

For Further Reading

The Faith I Live By, "Jesus' Resurrection and the New Life," p. 51;

The Upward Look, "Christlike Love Blends Heart With Heart," p. 104.