

Lesson 2

Covenantal Love

Sabbath Afternoon, January 4

God has a deep and earnest love for every member of the human family; not one is forgotten, not one is left helpless and deceived to be overcome by the enemy. And if those who have enlisted in the army of Christ will put on the whole armor of God, and wear it, they will be proof against all the assaults of the enemy. Those who really desire to be taught of God, and to walk in His way, have the sure promise that if they feel their lack of wisdom and ask of God, He will give liberally, and upbraid not. The apostle says, "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed." . . . God is behind every promise, and we cannot dishonor Him more than by questioning and hesitating, by asking and not believing, and then by talking doubt. . . .

Believe; believe that God will do just what He has promised. Keep your prayers ascending, and watch, work, and wait. Fight the good fight of faith. Say to your heart, "God has invited me to come. He has heard my prayer. He has pledged His word that he will receive me, and He will fulfil His promise. I can trust God; for He so loved me that He gave His only-begotten Son to die for me. The Son of God is my Redeemer." —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 299, 300.

God has given us Jesus, and in Him is the revelation of God. Our Redeemer says: "If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father." If we know God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, unspeakable gladness will come to the soul. Oh, how we need the divine presence! —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 169.

God's appointments and grants in our behalf are without limit. The throne of grace is itself the highest attraction, because occupied by One who permits us to call Him Father. But Jehovah did not deem the plan of salvation complete while invested only with His love. He has placed at His altar an Advocate clothed in His nature. As our intercessor, Christ's office work is to introduce us to God as His sons and daughters. He intercedes in behalf of those who receive Him. With His own blood He has paid their ransom. By virtue of His own merits He gives them power to become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King. And the Father demonstrates His infinite love for Christ by receiving and welcoming Christ's friends as His friends. He is satisfied with the atonement made. He is glorified by the incarnation, the life, death, and mediation, of His Son. —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 14.

Sunday, January 5

The Everlasting Love of God

Heaven's plan of salvation is broad enough to embrace the whole world. God longs to breathe into prostrate humanity the breath of life. And He will not permit any soul to be disappointed who is sincere in his longing for something higher and nobler than anything the world can offer. Constantly He is sending His angels to those who, while surrounded by circumstances the most discouraging, pray in faith for some power higher than themselves to take possession of them and bring deliverance and peace. In various ways God will reveal Himself to them and will place them in touch with providences that will establish their confidence in the One who has given Himself a ransom for all, "that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments." Psalm 78:7. . . .

God hath spoken: "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." Isaiah 42:16. —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 377, 378.

Our God has heaven and earth at His command, and He knows just what we need. We can see only a little way before us; "but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Hebrews 4:13.

Above the distractions of the earth He sits enthroned; all things are open to His divine survey; and from His great and calm eternity He orders that which His providence sees best.

Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father's notice. Satan's hatred against God leads him to delight in destroying even the dumb creatures. It is only through God's protecting care that the birds are preserved to gladden us with their songs of joy. But He does not forget even the sparrows. "Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." Matthew 10:31. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 272, 273.

The word of God is to have a sanctifying effect on our association with every member of the human family. The leaven of truth will not produce the spirit of rivalry, the love of ambition, the desire to be first. True, heaven-born love is not selfish and changeable. It is not dependent on human praise. The heart of him who receives the grace of God overflows with love for God and for those for whom Christ died. Self is not struggling for recognition. He does not love others because they love and please him, because they appreciate his merits, but because they are Christ's purchased possession. If his motives, words, or actions are misunderstood or misrepresented, he takes no offense, but pursues the even tenor of his way. He is kind and thoughtful, humble in his opinion of himself, yet full of hope, always trusting in the mercy and love of God. —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 101.

Monday, January 6

Covenantal Love

The test of a genuine Christian is given in the word of God. Says Jesus, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. . . . If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings: and the word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me."

Here are the conditions upon which every soul will be elected to eternal life. Your obedience to God's commandments will prove your right to an inheritance with the saints in light. God has elected a certain excellence of character; and everyone who, through the grace of Christ, shall reach the standard of His requirement, will have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of glory. All who would reach this standard of character, will have to employ the means that God has provided to this end. If you would inherit the rest that remaineth for the children of God, you must become a co-laborer with God. You are elected to wear the yoke of Christ,—to bear His burden, to lift His cross. You are to be diligent "to make your calling and election sure." Search the Scriptures, and you will see that not a son or a daughter of Adam is elected to be saved in disobedience to God's law. The world makes void the law of God; but Christians are chosen to sanctification through obedience to the truth. They are elected to bear the cross, if they would wear the crown. —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 125.

As John beholds the height, the depth, and the breadth of the Father's love toward our perishing race, he is filled with admiration and reverence. He cannot find suitable language to express this love, but he calls upon the world to behold it: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." What a value this places upon man! Through transgression the sons of men became subjects of Satan. Through the infinite sacrifice of Christ, and faith in His name, the sons of Adam become the sons of God. By assuming human nature, Christ elevates humanity. Fallen men are granted another trial and are placed where, through connection with Christ, they may educate, improve, and elevate themselves, that they may indeed become worthy of the name "sons of God."

Such love is without a parallel. Jesus requires that those who have been bought by the price of His own life shall make the best use of the talents which He has given them. They are to increase in the knowledge of the divine will, and constantly improve in intellect and morals, until they shall attain to a perfection of character but little lower than that of the angels. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 563.

Tuesday, January 7

Conditional Relationship

Holding up Christ as our only source of strength, presenting His matchless love in having the guilt of the sins of men charged to His account and His own righteousness imputed to man, in no case does away with the law or detracts from its dignity. Rather, it places it where the correct light shines upon and glorifies it. This is done only through the light reflected from the cross of Calvary. The law is complete and full in the great plan of salvation, only as it is presented in the light shining from the crucified and risen Saviour. This can be only spiritually discerned. It kindles in the heart of the beholder ardent faith, hope, and joy that Christ is his righteousness. This joy is only for those who love and keep the words of Jesus, which are the words of God. — *Selected Messages, book 3, p. 176.*

It will be the greatest mystery to [the believer] that Jesus should have made so great a sacrifice to redeem him. He will exclaim, with humble mien and quivering lip, "He loved me. He gave himself for me. He became poor that I, through his poverty, might be made rich. The man of sorrows did not spurn me, but poured out his inexhaustible, redeeming love that my heart might be made clean; and he has brought me back into loyalty and obedience to all his commandments. His condescension, his humiliation, his crucifixion, are the crowning miracles in the marvelous exhibition of the plan of salvation. That the just should die for the unjust, the pure for the impure, is beyond all manifestations of human love; and all this he has done to make it possible to impart to me his own righteousness, that I may keep the law I have transgressed. For this I adore him. I will proclaim him to all sinners. I will cry, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!' " —"The Knowledge of Christ and Self Leads to Humility," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, October 16, 1888, par. 11.*

In the beginning, God was revealed in all the works of creation. It was Christ that spread the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth. It was His hand that hung the worlds in space, and fashioned the flowers of the field. "His strength setteth fast the mountains." "The sea is His, and He made it." Psalm 65:6; 95:5. It was He that filled the earth with beauty, and the air with song. And upon all things in earth, and air, and sky, He wrote the message of the Father's love.

Now sin has marred God's perfect work, yet that handwriting remains. Even now all created things declare the glory of His excellence. There is nothing, save the selfish heart of man, that lives unto itself. . . . The flowers breathe fragrance and unfold their beauty in blessing to the world. The sun sheds its light to gladden a thousand worlds. —*The Desire of Ages, p. 20.*

Wednesday, January 8

Mercy Forfeited

In the parable, when the debtor pleaded for delay, with the promise, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all," the sentence was revoked. The whole debt was canceled. And he was soon given an opportunity to follow the example of the master who had forgiven him. Going out, he met a fellow servant who owed him a small sum. He had been forgiven ten thousand talents; the debtor owed him a hundred pence. But he who had been so mercifully treated, dealt with his fellow laborer in an altogether different manner. . . .

When [he had pled] with his Lord for mercy, he had no true sense of the greatness of his debt. He did not realize his helplessness. He hoped to deliver himself. "Have patience with me," he said, "and I will pay thee all." So there are many who hope by their own works to merit God's favor. They do not realize their helplessness. They do not accept the grace of God as a free gift, but are trying to build themselves up in self-righteousness. Their own hearts are not broken and humbled on account of sin, and they are exacting and unforgiving toward others. Their own sins against God, compared with their brother's sins against them, are as ten thousand talents to one hundred pence—nearly one million to one; yet they dare to be unforgiving. —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 245.

If the Lord should deal with the human family as men deal with one another, we should have been consumed; but He is long-suffering, of tender pity, forgiving our transgressions and sins. When we seek Him with the whole heart, He will be found of us. . . .

But the mercy of Christ in forgiving the iniquities of men teaches us that there must be free forgiveness of wrongs and sins that are committed against us by our fellow men. Christ gave this lesson to His disciples to correct the evils that were being taught and practiced in the precepts and examples of those who were interpreting the Scriptures at that time." . . .

Man can be saved only through the wonderful forbearance of God in the forgiveness of his many sins and transgressions. But those who are blessed by the mercy of God should exercise the same spirit of forbearance and forgiveness toward those who constitute the Lord's family. —*The Upward Look*, p. 43.

[God] has a Father's heart, and He bears long with His children. In His dealings with the children of Israel He pleaded with them in mercy and love. Patiently He set their sins before them, and in forbearance waited for them to see and acknowledge their wrongs. When they repented and confessed their sins, He forgave them; and though the offense was oft repeated, there were no taunting words spoken, no resentment expressed.

Christ plainly stated that though one sin again and again, he is to be forgiven if he repents, even should he sin till seventy times seven. —*The Upward Look*, p. 298.

Thursday, January 9

You Have Freely Received; Freely Give

Those who live in close fellowship with Christ will be promoted by Him to positions of trust. The servant who does the best he can for his Master is admitted to familiar [relationship] with the One whose commands he loves to obey. In the faithful discharge of duty we may become one with Christ, for those who are obeying God's commands may speak to Him freely. The one who talks most familiarly with his divine leader has the most exalted conception of His greatness and is the most obedient to His commands.

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. . . . Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth . . . I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

The character of the one who comes to God in faith will bear witness that the Saviour has entered into his life, directing all, pervading all. Such a one is continually asking, "Is this Thy will and way, O my Saviour?" Constantly he looks to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of his faith. He consults the will of his divine Friend in reference to all his actions, for he knows that in this confidence is his strength. He has made it a habit to lift up the heart to God in every perplexity. —*That I May Know Him*, p. 296.

The Lord loves you, and just as long as you will follow in the footsteps of Jesus, you will walk securely. It is essential that every soul that names the name of Christ should make straight paths for his feet. Why? Lest the lame be turned out of the way. It is a terrible, terrible thing to give a soul a wrong example, and to lead him in a crooked course by the way in which you may walk. . . .

Jesus is rich in grace. Draw, constantly draw from Him, for you may have rich supplies. —*The Upward Look*, p. 275.

Those who identify their interests wholly with Christ will want to serve him, and the more they work the works of Christ in seeking to bless others, the more will Jesus impart his light and his love to them, that they may communicate it to others. Be guarded that you do not try to teach others unless you are a daily learner in the school of Christ yourself. We must repeat his lessons; we must manifest his spirit of kindness, patience, forbearance, and love. You cannot impart to others that which you have not yourself. Keep the light and love of God burning in your hearts, that you may help others; for more zeal, greater devotion, and more steady, earnest faith is needed. You must do much watching and praying, as well as searching of the Scriptures if you learn the precious lessons of faith. You must guard against making feelings a criterion; this of itself is no evidence that you are a child of God, or that you are not. "By their fruits ye shall know them." It is obedience and faith that unite us with Jesus Christ. You must learn the simple art of taking God at his word. Then you have solid ground beneath your feet. —*"The Mirror," The Youth's Instructor*, August 18, 1886, par. 6.

Friday, January 10

For Further Reading

In Heavenly Places, "In Right Relationship to God," p. 32;

In Heavenly Places, "Not to Condemn But to Save," p. 16.