

God Fights for You

Sabbath Afternoon, October 25

Heathen nations had reproached the Lord and His people because the Hebrews had failed to take possession of Canaan, as they expected, soon after leaving Egypt. Their enemies had triumphed because Israel had wandered so long in the wilderness, and they had mockingly declared that the God of the Hebrews was not able to bring them into the Promised Land. The Lord had now signally manifested His power and favor in opening the Jordan before His people, and their enemies could no longer reproach them.

—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 486.

The utter destruction of the people of Jericho was but a fulfillment of the commands previously given through Moses concerning the inhabitants of Canaan: "Thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them." Deuteronomy 7:2. "Of the cities of these people, . . . thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth." Deuteronomy 20:16. To many these commands seem to be contrary to the spirit of love and mercy enjoined in other portions of the Bible, but they were in truth the dictates of infinite wisdom and goodness. God was about to establish Israel in Canaan, to develop among them a nation and government that should be a manifestation of His kingdom upon the earth. They were not only to be inheritors of the true religion, but to disseminate its principles throughout the world. The Canaanites had abandoned themselves to the foulest and most debasing heathenism, and it was necessary that the land should be cleared of what would so surely prevent the fulfillment of God's gracious purposes.

The inhabitants of Canaan had been granted ample opportunity for repentance. Forty years before, the opening of the Red Sea and the judgments upon Egypt had testified to the supreme power of the God of Israel. And now the overthrow of the kings of Midian, of Gilead and Bashan, had further shown that Jehovah was above all gods. The holiness of His character and His abhorrence of impurity had been evinced in the judgments visited upon Israel for their participation in the abominable rites of Baalpeor. All these events were known to the inhabitants of Jericho, and there were many who shared Rahab's conviction, though they refused to obey it, that Jehovah, the God of Israel, "is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath." Like the men before the Flood, the Canaanites lived only to blaspheme Heaven and defile the earth. And both love and justice demanded the prompt execution of these rebels against God and foes to man. —

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 492.

The Canaanites' Iniquity

At the taking of Jericho the mighty General of armies planned the battle in such simplicity that no human being could take the glory to himself. No human hand must cast down the walls of the city, lest man should take to himself the glory of victory. So today no human being is to take to himself glory for the work he accomplishes. The Lord alone is to be magnified. Oh, that men would see the necessity for looking to God for their orders! . . .

The Lord marshaled His armies about the doomed city; no human hand was raised against it; the hosts of heaven overthrew its walls, that God's name alone might have the glory. It was that proud city whose mighty bulwarks had struck terror to the unbelieving spies. Now in the capture of Jericho, God declared to the Hebrews that their fathers might have possessed the city forty years before, had they but trusted in Him.

Men's weakness shall find supernatural strength and help in every stern conflict to do the deeds of Omnipotence, and perseverance in faith and perfect trust in God will ensure success. While the vast confederacy of evil is arrayed against them He bids them to be brave and strong and fight valiantly for they have a heaven to win, and they have more than an angel in their ranks, the mighty General of armies leads on the armies of heaven. As on the occasion of the taking of Jericho, not one of the armies of Israel could boast of exercising their finite strength to overthrow the walls of the city, but the Captain of the Lord's host planned that battle in the greatest simplicity, that the Lord alone should receive the glory and man should not be exalted. God has promised us all power; for the promise is unto you and your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

There must be continual faith and trust in the Captain of our salvation. We must obey His orders. The walls of Jericho came down as a result of obeying orders. —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 118.

The fate of Balaam was similar to that of Judas, and their characters bear a marked resemblance to each other. Both these men tried to unite the service of God and mammon, and met with signal failure. Balaam acknowledged the true God, and professed to serve Him; Judas believed in Jesus as the Messiah, and united with His followers. But Balaam hoped to make the service of Jehovah the steppingstone to the acquirement of riches and worldly honor; and failing in this he stumbled and fell and was broken. Judas expected by his connection with Christ to secure wealth and promotion in that worldly kingdom which, as he believed, the Messiah was about to set up. The failure of his hopes drove him to apostasy and ruin. Both Balaam and Judas had received great light and enjoyed special privileges, but a single cherished sin poisoned the entire character and caused their destruction. . . .

One cherished sin will, little by little, debase the character, bringing all its nobler powers into subjection to the evil desire. The removal of one safeguard from the conscience, the indulgence of one evil habit, one neglect of the high claims of duty, breaks down the defenses of the soul and opens the way for Satan to come in and lead us astray. The only safe course is to let our prayers go forth daily from a sincere heart, as did David, "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not" (Psalm 17:5). —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 114.

The Supreme Judge

We have a powerful enemy, and not only does he hate every human being made in the image of God, but with bitterest enmity he hates God and His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ. When men give themselves over to be the slaves of Satan, he does not manifest the enmity toward them which he does to those who bear the name of Christ, and give themselves to the service of God. He hates them with a deadly hatred. He knows that he can grieve Jesus by bringing them under the power of his deceptions, by injuring them, by weakening their faith, by making them incapable of doing God service as they are required to serve under their Captain Jesus Christ. Satan will permit those to have a degree of rest who are bound as slaves to his chariot, for they are his willing captives; but his enmity is aroused when the message of mercy reaches his bondslaves, and they seek to wrench themselves away from his power, that they may follow the true Shepherd. Then it is that he seeks to bind them with additional chains to hold them in their captivity. The conflict between the soul and Satan begins when the captive begins to tug at the chain, and longs to be free; for it is then that the human agent begins to cooperate with heavenly intelligences, when faith takes hold on Christ. Then it is that the Stronger than the strong man armed, is the helper of the soul, and the poor captive is strengthened by the Holy Spirit to obtain his freedom.

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. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." 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. If you do not immediately receive what you have asked for, will you go on in sullenness and unbelief? 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." "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 299, 300.

Dispossession or Annihilation?

The city of Jericho was devoted to the most extravagant idolatry. The inhabitants were very wealthy, but all the riches that God had given them they counted as the gift of their gods. They had gold and silver in abundance; but, like the people before the Flood, they were corrupt and blasphemous, and insulted and provoked the God of heaven by their wicked works. God's judgments were awakened against Jericho. It was a stronghold. But the Captain of the Lord's host Himself came from heaven to lead the armies of heaven in an attack upon the city. Angels of God laid hold of the massive walls and brought them to the ground. God had said that the city of Jericho should be accursed and that all should perish except Rahab and her household. These should be saved because of the favor that Rahab showed the messengers of the Lord. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 264.

How does the Lord harden the hearts of men? In the same way in which the heart of Pharaoh was hardened. God sent this king a message of warning and mercy, but he refused to acknowledge the God of heaven, and would not render obedience to His commands. He asked, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?"

The Lord gave him evidence of His power by working signs and miracles before him. The great I AM acquainted Pharaoh with His mighty works, showing him that He was the ruler of heaven and earth, but the king chose to defy the God of heaven. He would not consent to break his proud, stubborn heart even before the King of kings, that he might receive the light; for he was determined to have his own way, and work out his rebellion. He chose to do his own will, and set aside the command of God, and the very evidence given him that Jehovah was above all the gods of the nations, above all the wise men and magicians, only served to blind his mind and harden his heart.

Had Pharaoh accepted the evidence of God's power given in the first plague, he would have been spared all the judgments that followed. But his determined stubbornness called for still greater manifestations of the power of God, and plague followed plague, until at last he was called to look upon the dead face of his own first born, and those of his kindred; while the children of Israel, whom he had regarded as slaves, were unharmed by the plagues, untouched by the destroying angel. God made it evident upon whom rested His favor, who were His people.

Every additional evidence of the power of God that the Egyptian monarch resisted, carried him on to a stronger and more persistent defiance of God. . . . This case is a clear illustration of the sin against the Holy Ghost. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Gradually the Lord withdrew His Spirit. Removing His restraining power, He gave the king into the hands of the worst of all tyrants—self. —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 89.

Wednesday, October 29

Free Choice

The very first effort of Satan to overthrow God's law—undertaken among the sinless inhabitants of heaven—seemed for a time to be crowned with success. A vast number of the angels were seduced; but Satan's apparent triumph resulted in defeat and loss, separation from God, and banishment from heaven.

When the conflict was renewed upon the earth, Satan again won a seeming advantage. By transgression, man became his captive, and man's kingdom also was betrayed into the hands of the archrebel. Now the way seemed open for Satan to establish an independent kingdom, and to defy the authority of God and His Son. But the plan of salvation made it possible for man again to be brought into harmony with God, and to render obedience to His law, and for both man and the earth to be finally redeemed from the power of the wicked one.

Again Satan was defeated, and again he resorted to deception, in the hope of converting his defeat into a victory. To stir up rebellion in the fallen race, he now represented God as unjust in having permitted man to transgress His law. "Why," said the artful tempter, "when God knew what would be the result, did He permit man to be placed on trial, to sin, and bring in misery and death?" And the children of Adam, forgetful of the long-suffering mercy that had granted man another trial, regardless of the amazing, the awful sacrifice which his rebellion had cost the King of heaven, gave ear to the tempter, and murmured against the only Being who could save them from the destructive power of Satan.

There are thousands today echoing the same rebellious complaint against God. They do not see that to deprive man of the freedom of choice would be to rob him of his prerogative as an intelligent being, and make him a mere automaton. It is not God's purpose to coerce the will. Man was created a free moral agent. Like the inhabitants of all other worlds, he must be subjected to the test of obedience; but he is never brought into such a position that yielding to evil becomes a matter of necessity. No temptation or trial is permitted to come to him which he is unable to resist. God made such ample provision that man need never have been defeated in the conflict with Satan.

—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 331.

Thursday, October 30

The Prince of Peace

Wherever the power of intellect, of authority, or of force is employed, and love is not manifestly present, the affections and will of those whom we seek to reach assume a defensive, repelling position, and their strength of resistance is increased. Jesus was the Prince of Peace. He came into the world to bring resistance and authority into subjection to Himself. Wisdom and strength He could command, but the means He employed with which to overcome evil were the wisdom and strength of love. . . .

“Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” Blessed results would appear as the fruit of such a course. “With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” Here are strong motives which should constrain us to love one -another with a pure heart, fervently. Christ is our example. He went about doing good. He lived to bless others. Love beautified and ennobled all his actions. We are not commanded to do to ourselves what we wish others to do unto us; we are to do unto others what we wish them to do to us under like circumstances. The measure we mete is always measured to us again. Pure love is simple in its operations, and is distinct from any other principle of action. . . . Love should be cherished and cultivated, for its influence is divine.

In Jesus you may love with fervor, with earnestness. This love may increase in depth and expand without limit. . . . Love to God will ensure love to your neighbor, and you will engage in the duties of life with a deep, unselfish interest. Pure principles should underlie your actions. Inward peace will bring even your thoughts into a healthful channel. . . .

Peace of mind, which comes from pure and holy motives and actions, will give free and vigorous spring to all the organs of the body. Inward peace and a conscience void of offense toward God will quicken and invigorate the intellect like dew distilled upon the tender plants. . . . The meditations are pleasing because they are sanctified. The serenity of mind which you may possess will bless all with whom you associate. This peace and calmness will, in time, become natural, and will reflect its precious rays upon all around you, to be again reflected upon you.

The more you taste this heavenly peace and quietude of mind, the more it will increase. It is an animated, living pleasure which does not throw all the moral energies into a stupor, but awakens them to increased activity. Perfect peace is an attitude of heaven which angels possess. —*Lift Him Up*, p. 94.

Friday, October 31

For Further Reading

The Upward Look, "Cast Your Burdens on Jesus," November 17, p. 335.
Christ Triumphant, "Truth Will Gain Victory Eventually," March 27, p. 93.