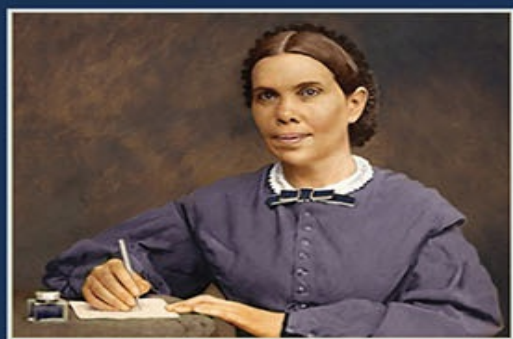


A Companion to the Adult Bible Study Guide

Ellen White Notes on God's Love and Justice

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E. G. White
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God's Love and Justice

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Lesson 1

God Loves Freely

Sabbath Afternoon, December 28

Three times after His resurrection, Christ tested Peter. “Simon, son of Jonas,” He said, “lovest thou me more than these?” . . .

This heart-searching question was necessary in the case of Peter, and it is necessary in our case. The work of restoration can never be thorough unless the roots of evil are reached. Again and again the shoots have been clipped, while the root of bitterness has been left to spring up and defile many; but the very depth of the hidden evil must be reached, the moral senses must be judged, and judged again, in the light of the divine presence. The daily life will testify whether or not the work is genuine.

When, the third time, Christ said to Peter, “Lovest thou me?” the probe reached the soul center. Self-judged, Peter fell upon the Rock, saying, “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.”—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 1151, 1152.

The heart of God yearns over His earthly children with a love stronger than death. In giving up His Son, He has poured out to us all heaven in one gift. The Saviour’s life and death and intercession, the ministry of angels, the pleading of the Spirit, the Father working above and through all, the unceasing interest of heavenly beings,—all are enlisted in behalf of man’s redemption.

Oh, let us contemplate the amazing sacrifice that has been made for us! Let us try to appreciate the labor and energy that Heaven is expending to reclaim the lost, and bring them back to the Father’s house. Motives stronger, and agencies more powerful, could never be brought into operation; the exceeding rewards for right-doing, the enjoyment of heaven,

the society of the angels, the communion and love of God and His Son, the elevation and extension of all our powers throughout eternal ages—are these not mighty incentives and encouragements to urge us to give the heart’s loving service to our Creator and Redeemer?—*Steps to Christ*, p. 21.

All the paternal love which has come down from generation to generation through the channel of human hearts . . . are but as a tiny rill to the boundless ocean when compared with the infinite, exhaustless love of God. Tongue cannot utter it; pen cannot portray it. You may meditate upon it every day of your life; you may search the Scriptures diligently in order to understand it; you may summon every power and capability that God has given you, in the endeavor to comprehend the love and compassion of the heavenly Father; and yet there is an infinity beyond. You may study that love for ages; yet you can never fully comprehend the length and the breadth, the depth and the height, of the love of God in giving His Son to die for the world. Eternity itself can never fully reveal it.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 740.

Sunday, December 29: Beyond Reasonable Expectations

Christ, the Light of the world, veiled the dazzling splendor of His divinity and came to live as a man among men, that they might, without being consumed, become acquainted with their Creator. . . .

Christ came to teach human beings what God desires them to know. In the heavens above, in the earth, in the broad waters of the ocean, we see the handiwork of God. All created things testify to His power, His wisdom, His love. Yet not from the stars or the ocean or the cataract can we learn of the personality of God as it was revealed in Christ.

God saw that a clearer revelation than nature was needed to portray both His personality and His character. He sent His Son into the world to manifest, so far as could be endured by human sight, the nature and the attributes of the invisible God.—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 419.

[To] hearts that have become purified through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, all is changed. These can know God. Moses was hid in the cleft of the

rock when the glory of the Lord was revealed to him; and it is when we are hid in Christ that we behold the love of God. . . .

By faith we behold Him here and now. In our daily experience we discern His goodness and compassion in the manifestation of His providence. We recognize Him in the character of His Son. The Holy Spirit takes the truth concerning God and Him whom He hath sent, and opens it to the understanding and to the heart. The pure in heart see God in a new and endearing relation, as their Redeemer; and while they discern the purity and loveliness of His character, they long to reflect His image. They see Him as a Father longing to embrace a repenting son, and their hearts are filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory.—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 26.

It was John's deep love for Christ which led him always to desire to be close by His side. The Saviour loved all the Twelve, but John's was the most receptive spirit. He was younger than the others, and with more of the child's confiding trust he opened his heart to Jesus. Thus he came more into sympathy with Christ, and through him the Saviour's deepest spiritual teaching was communicated to the people. . . .

John could talk of the Father's love as no other of the disciples could. He revealed to his fellow men that which he felt in his own soul, representing in his character the attributes of God. The glory of the Lord was expressed in his face. The beauty of holiness which had transformed him shone with a Christlike radiance from his countenance. In adoration and love he beheld the Saviour until likeness to Christ and fellowship with Him became his one desire, and in his character was reflected the character of his Master.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 545.

Monday, December 30: Unrequited Love

The Lord did not give Israel up without first doing all that could be done to lead them back to their allegiance to Him. Through long, dark years when ruler after ruler stood up in bold defiance of Heaven and led Israel deeper and still deeper into idolatry, God sent message after message to His backslidden people. Through His prophets He gave them every opportunity to stay the tide of apostasy and to return to Him. During the years that were

to follow the rending of the kingdom, Elijah and Elisha were to live and labor, and the tender appeals of Hosea and Amos and Obadiah were to be heard in the land. Never was the kingdom of Israel to be left without noble witnesses to the mighty power of God to save from sin.—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 107, 108.

The love of God is a golden chain, binding finite human beings to Himself. This love passes our knowledge. Human science can not explain it. Human wisdom can not fathom it. Parents love their children, but the love of God is larger, broader, deeper, than human love can possibly be. All the paternal love that has come down from generation to generation, through the channel of human hearts, all the springs of tenderness that have opened in the sons of men, are but as a tiny rill to the boundless ocean, when compared with the infinite, exhaustless love of God. Tongue can not utter it; pen can not portray it. You may meditate upon it every day of your life; you may search the Scriptures diligently in an effort to understand it; you may summon every power and capability that God has given you; and yet there is an infinity beyond. You may study that love for ages, and yet you can never fully comprehend the length and breadth and depth and height, of the love of God. . . .

The Lord's children are never absent from His mind.—“The Love of God,” *Signs of the Times*, July 13, 1904.

Satan is determined that men shall not see the love of God which led Him to give His only-begotten Son to save a lost race; for it is the goodness of God that leads men to repentance. O how shall we succeed in setting forth before the world the deep, precious love of God? In no other way we can compass it except by exclaiming, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:1). Let us say to sinners, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). By presenting Jesus as the representative of the Father, we shall be able to dispel the shadow that Satan has cast upon our pathway, in order that we shall not see the mercy and inexpressible love of God as manifested in Jesus Christ. Look at the cross of Calvary. It is a standing pledge of the boundless love, the measureless mercy of the heavenly Father.—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 156.

Tuesday, December 31: Love Freely Given

God's created works testify to His love and power. He has called the world into being, with all that it contains. God is a lover of the beautiful; and in the world which He has fitted up for us He has not only given us everything necessary for our comfort, but He has filled the heavens and the earth with beauty. We see His love and care in the rich fields of autumn, and His smile in the glad sunshine. His hand has made the castle-like rocks and the towering mountains. The lofty trees grow at His command; He has spread earth's green velvet carpet and dotted it with shrubs and flowers. . . .

The same creative energy that brought the world into existence is still exerted in upholding the universe and continuing the operations of nature. The hand of God guides the planets in their orderly march through the heavens. It is not because of inherent power that year by year the earth continues her motion round the sun and produces her bounties. The word of God controls the elements. He covers the heavens with clouds and prepares rain for the earth. He makes the valleys fruitful and "grass to grow upon the mountains;" Psalm 147:8.—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 185.

Before the foundations of the earth were laid, the Father and the Son had united in a covenant to redeem man if he should be overcome by Satan. They had clasped Their hands in a solemn pledge that Christ should become the surety for the human race. This pledge Christ has fulfilled. When upon the cross He cried out, "It is finished," He addressed the Father. The compact had been fully carried out. Now He declares: Father, it is finished. I have done Thy will, O My God. I have completed the work of redemption. If Thy justice is satisfied, "I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am" (John 19:30; 17:24).

The voice of God is heard proclaiming that justice is satisfied. Satan is vanquished. Christ's toiling, struggling ones on earth are "accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6). Before the heavenly angels and the representatives of unfallen worlds, they are declared justified. . . .

Songs of triumph mingle with the music from angel harps, till heaven seems to overflow with joy and praise. Love has conquered. The lost is found.—*Lift Him Up*, p. 103.

Christ's death proves God's great love for man. It is our pledge of salvation. To remove the cross from the Christian would be like blotting the sun from the sky. The cross brings us near to God, reconciling us to Him. With the relenting compassion of a father's love, Jehovah looks upon the suffering that His Son endured in order to save the race from eternal death, and accepts us in the Beloved. . . .

Through the cross we learn that the heavenly Father loves us with a love that is infinite.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 210.

Wednesday, January 1: Many Are Called, but Few Are Chosen

Every man is free to choose what power he will have to rule over him. None have fallen so low, none are so vile, but that they can find deliverance in Christ. The demoniac, in place of prayer, could utter only the words of Satan; yet the heart's unspoken appeal was heard. No cry from a soul in need, though it fail of utterance in words, will be unheeded. Those who will consent to enter into covenant relation with the God of heaven are not left to the power of Satan or to the infirmity of their own nature. They are invited by the Saviour, "Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me." Isaiah 27:5.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 258.

The Lord God has provided a banquet for the whole human race. It is represented in the parable as a great supper where there is provided a festival for every soul. All connected with this supper may enjoy the heavenly feast, which is the gospel. This feast is open to all who will receive it. All are invited and urged to come.

All who are partakers of the wedding feast, the gospel feast, by this act say that they have accepted Christ as their personal Saviour. They wear His distinguishing dress. They have accepted the truth as it is in Jesus, which is the robe of Christ's righteousness. Only those do honor to Christ who accept the invitation, "Come, for all things are now ready; come to the marriage supper of the Lamb." These put on the white linen, the clean, pure character, showing that they no longer live their old citizen life that they lived in their ignorance. Their speech is changed. Their conversation is in

altogether another line.—*The Upward Look*, p. 304.

We should consider the great sacrifice that was made in our behalf to purchase for us the robe of righteousness woven in the loom of heaven. He has invited us to the wedding feast, and has provided for every one of us the wedding garment. The robe of righteousness has been purchased at infinite cost, and how daring is the insult to Heaven when one presents himself as a candidate for entrance at the wedding feast when wearing his own citizen's dress of self-righteousness! How greatly he dishonors God, openly showing contempt for the sacrifice made on Calvary!

No one will taste of the marriage supper of the Lamb who has not on a wedding garment. But John writes, “. . . 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.” Then, before it is eternally too late, let each one go to the heavenly Merchantman for the white raiment, the eyesalve, the gold tried in the fire, and the oil of heavenly grace.

—*That I May Know Him*, p. 264.

Thursday, January 2: Crucified for Us

Christ did not come as the Jews expected. He did not come in a manner to glorify them as a nation. . . . Christ's message was, “The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.” The Jews refused to receive Christ, because He did not come in accordance with their expectations. The ideas of finite men were held as infallible, because hoary with age.

This is the danger to which the church is now exposed. . . . [Many] are not willing to be deprived of the garments of their own self-righteousness. They are not willing to exchange their own righteousness, which is unrighteousness, for the righteousness of Christ, which is pure, unadulterated truth. The Holy Spirit flatters no man, neither does it work according to the devising of any man. Finite, sinful men are not to work the Holy Spirit. When it shall come as a reprover, through any human agent whom God shall choose, it is man's place to hear and obey its voice. —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 64.

Christ died for every son and daughter of Adam; and when the Son of God has expressed such amazing love, making this great sacrifice for the sinner, in order that through faith in Him he need not perish but have everlasting life, how can the subject of this great love be indifferent and stand in sin and disobedience, and not heartily confess Christ without one moment's delay? How can anyone love to do evil? . . . In doing the will of Him who loves the world, and who gave His only-begotten Son to die for them, they strengthen every faculty of the soul, and increase their own happiness and peace.

The Lord has greatly honored men, by giving Jesus Christ to recover them from Satan's claims. . . . [Jesus has said,] "My grace is sufficient for thee." Everyone who seeks to do well in his own finite strength, will find his efforts a failure; but those who accept Christ by faith, will find Him a personal Saviour.—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 291, 292.

[Christ's] great sacrifice was not made in order to create in the Father's heart a love for man, not to make Him willing to save. No, no! "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." John 3:16. The Father loves us, not because of the great propitiation, but He provided the propitiation because He loves us. Christ was the medium through which He could pour out His infinite love upon a fallen world. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." 2 Corinthians 5:19. God suffered with His Son. In the agony of Gethsemane, the death of Calvary, the heart of Infinite Love paid the price of our redemption. . . .

None but the Son of God could accomplish our redemption; for only He who was in the bosom of the Father could declare Him. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it manifest. Nothing less than the infinite sacrifice made by Christ in behalf of fallen man could express the Father's love to lost humanity.—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 13, 14.

Friday, January 3: For Further Reading

The Acts of the Apostles, "A Faithful Under-Shepherd," pp. 114–118;
The Story of Redemption, "Man's Freedom of Choice," pp. 37–39.

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.

Lesson 3

To Be Pleasing to God

Sabbath Afternoon, January 11

It is the glory of the gospel that it is founded upon the principle of restoring in the fallen race the divine image by a constant manifestation of benevolence. This work began in the heavenly courts. There God decided to give human beings unmistakable evidence of the love with which He regarded them. He “so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16.

The Godhead was stirred with pity for the race, and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit gave Themselves to the working out of the plan of redemption. In order fully to carry out this plan, it was decided that Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, should give Himself an offering for sin. What line can measure the depth of this love? God would make it impossible for man to say that He could have done more. With Christ He gave all the resources of heaven, that nothing might be wanting in the plan for man’s uplifting. Here is love—the contemplation of which should fill the soul with inexpressible gratitude! Oh, what love, what matchless love!—*Counsels on Health*, p. 222.

In order to strengthen our confidence in God, Christ teaches us to address Him by a new name, a name entwined with the dearest associations of the human heart. He gives us the privilege of calling the infinite God our Father. This name, spoken to Him and of Him, is a sign of our love and trust toward Him, and a pledge of His regard and relationship to us. Spoken when asking His favor or blessing, it is as music in His ears. . . .

God regards us as His children. He has redeemed us out of the careless world and has chosen us to become members of the royal family, sons and

daughters of the heavenly King. He invites us to trust in Him with a trust deeper and stronger than that of a child in his earthly father. Parents love their children, but the love of God is larger, broader, deeper, than human love can possibly be. It is immeasurable.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 141, 142.

Be ambitious, for the Master's glory, to cultivate every grace of character. In every phase of your character building you are to please God. This you may do; for Enoch pleased Him though living in a degenerate age. And there are Enochs in this our day.

Stand like Daniel, that faithful statesman, a man whom no temptation could corrupt. Do not disappoint Him who so loved you that He gave His own life to cancel your sins. He says, "Without Me ye can do nothing." John 15:5. Remember this. If you have made mistakes, you certainly gain a victory if you see these mistakes and regard them as beacons of warning. Thus you turn defeat into victory, disappointing the enemy and honoring your Redeemer.

—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 332.

Sunday, January 12: More Valuable Than You Can Imagine

Arise and go to your Father. He will meet you a great way off. If you take even one step toward Him in repentance, He will hasten to enfold you in His arms of infinite love. His ear is open to the cry of the contrite soul. The very first reaching out of the heart after God is known to Him. . . . Even before the prayer is uttered or the yearning of the heart made known, grace from Christ goes forth to meet the grace that is working upon the human soul.

Your heavenly Father will take from you the garments defiled by sin. . . . Even so God will clothe you with "the garments of salvation," and cover you with "the robe of righteousness." Isaiah 61:10. . . .

He will bring you into His banqueting house, and His banner over you shall be love. (Song of Solomon 2:4.) "If thou wilt walk in My ways," He declares, "I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by"—even among the holy angels that surround His throne. (Zechariah 3:7).—*Christ's*

Object Lessons, pp. 206, 207.

The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 97.

When the father comes out to remonstrate with [his eldest son], the pride and malignity of his nature are revealed. He dwells upon his own life in his father's house as a round of unrequited service. . . . When he should have found an abiding joy in his father's presence, his mind has rested upon the profit to accrue from his circumspect life. His words show that it is for this he has foregone the pleasures of sin. . . .

Yet the father deals tenderly with him. "Son," he says, "thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." Through all these years of your brother's outcast life, have you not had the privilege of companionship with me? . . .

Was the elder brother brought to see his own mean, ungrateful spirit? Did he come to see that though his brother had done wickedly, he was his brother still? Did the elder brother repent of his jealousy and hardheartedness? Concerning this, Christ was silent. For the parable was still enacting, and it rested with His hearers to determine what the outcome should be.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 207–209.

Monday, January 13: Rejoicing With Gladness

"As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." Isaiah 62:5. "He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing." Zephaniah 3:17. And heaven and earth shall unite in the Father's song of rejoicing: "For this My son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 207.

In both the Old and the New Testament, the marriage relation is employed to represent the tender and sacred union that exists between Christ and His people. To the mind of Jesus the gladness of the wedding festivities pointed forward to the rejoicing of that day when He shall bring home His bride to the Father's house, and the redeemed with the Redeemer shall sit down to the marriage supper of the Lamb. He says, "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; . . . but thou shalt be called My Delight; . . . for the Lord delighteth in thee." "He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing." Isaiah 62:5, 4, margin; Zephaniah 3:17.

When the vision of heavenly things was granted to John the apostle, he wrote: "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready." "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." Revelation 19:6, 7, 9.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 151.

It should be our aim to bring all the pleasantness possible into our lives, and to do all the kindness possible to those around us. Kind words are never lost. Jesus records them as if spoken to Himself. Sow the seeds of kindness, of love, and of tenderness, and they will blossom and bear fruit.

"Christ also hath loved us," writes Paul, "and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour." This is the oblation of a life-gift in our behalf, that we may be all that He desires us to be—representatives of Him, expressing the fragrance of His character, His own pure thoughts, His divine attributes as manifested in His sanctified human life, in order that others may behold Him in His human form, and, comprehending God's wonderful design, be led to desire to be like Christ—pure, undefiled, wholly acceptable to God, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1118.

Tuesday, January 14: Pleasing God?

We must not only pray in Christ's name, but by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This explains what is meant when it is said that the Spirit "maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered." Romans 8:26. Such prayer God delights to answer. When with earnestness and intensity we breathe a prayer in the name of Christ, there is in that very intensity a pledge from God that He is about to answer our prayer "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Ephesians 3:20.

Christ has said, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Mark 11:24. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." John 14:13. And the beloved John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, speaks with great plainness and assurance: "If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." 1 John 5:14, 15. Then press your petition to the Father in the name of Jesus. God will honor that name.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 147.

What is needed in this, our time of danger, is fervent prayer, mingled with earnest faith, a reliance upon God when Satan casts his shadow over God's people. Let everyone bear in mind that God delights to listen to the supplications of His people; for the prevailing iniquity calls for more earnest prayer, and God has promised that He will avenge His own elect, who cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them. . . .

I am so thankful at this time that we can have our minds taken off from the difficulties that surround us, and the oppression that is to come upon the people of God, and can look up to the heaven of light and power. If we place ourselves on the side of God, of Christ and the heavenly intelligences, the broad shield of Omnipotence is over us, the mighty God of Israel is our helper, and we need not fear. Those who touch the people of God, touch the apple of His eye.—*Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 372, 373.

Jesus is the great light which lights up every man that comes into the world. All heaven is interested in the conflict that is going on in this world between truth and error, light and darkness. The great Source of all light is constantly shining, and those who will catch His rays, and will reflect them upon others, will be light-bearers in this darkened world. We are not pleasing God when we permit our minds to dwell upon our imperfections,

mourning constantly over our condition, with our eyes directed continually upon our mistakes and errors. Come to Jesus; He is the light of the world. Take hold of His strength by faith and make peace with Him. Shall you talk of your weakness?—No; no: for that pleases the enemy. Dwell upon the great help that has been provided for you in Jesus, your Redeemer.
—“Are You Light-bearers?” *Australasian Union Conference Record*, May 6, 1907.

Wednesday, January 15: Living Stones

There is no encouragement given for unbelief. The Lord manifests His grace and His power over and over again, and this should teach us that it is always profitable under all circumstances to cherish faith, to talk faith, to act faith. We are not to have our hearts and hands weakened by allowing the suggestions of suspicious minds to plant in our hearts the seeds of doubt and distrust [Hebrews 3:12 quoted].

The Lord works in cooperation with the will and action of the human agent. It is the privilege and duty of every man to take God at His word, to believe in Jesus as his personal Saviour, and to respond eagerly, immediately, to the gracious propositions which He makes. He is to study to believe and obey the divine instruction in the Scriptures. He is to base his faith not on feeling but upon the evidence and the Word of God.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 924.

Everything that God could do, He has done to manifest His great love and mercy. . . . He “so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Then rest in the assurance of the love of God. Not because we first loved Him did God love us; but “while we were yet sinners,” Christ died for us, making full and abundant provision for our redemption. Although by our disobedience we have merited God’s displeasure and condemnation, yet He has not forsaken us, leaving us to grapple with the power of the enemy in our own finite strength. Heavenly angels fight our battles for us, and cooperating with them, we may be victorious over the powers of evil. As we draw nigh to Him by faith, He draws nigh to us, adopting us into His

family, and making us His sons and daughters.—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 53.

[Christ] knew from the beginning, of the apostasy of Satan and of the fall of Adam through the deceptive power of the apostate. The plan of salvation was designed to redeem the fallen race, to give them another trial. Christ was appointed to the office of Mediator from the creation of God, set up from everlasting to be our substitute and surety. Before the world was made, it was arranged that the divinity of Christ should be enshrouded in humanity. “A body,” said Christ, “hast thou prepared me” (Hebrews 10:5). . . .

To bring humanity into Christ, to bring the fallen race into oneness with divinity, is the work of redemption. Christ took human nature that men might be one with Him as He is one with the Father, that God may love man as He loves His only-begotten Son, that men may be partakers of the divine nature, and be complete in Him.—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 250.

Thursday, January 16: A Worthy Goal

The word that was spoken to Jesus at the Jordan, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” embraces humanity. God spoke to Jesus as our representative. With all our sins and weaknesses, we are not cast aside as worthless. “He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” Ephesians 1:6. The glory that rested upon Christ is a pledge of the love of God for us. It tells us of the power of prayer,—how the human voice may reach the ear of God, and our petitions find acceptance in the courts of heaven. By sin, earth was cut off from heaven, and alienated from its communion; but Jesus has connected it again with the sphere of glory. His love has encircled man, and reached the highest heaven. The light which fell from the open portals upon the head of our Saviour will fall upon us as we pray for help to resist temptation. The voice which spoke to Jesus says to every believing soul, This is My beloved child, in whom I am well pleased.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 113.

“If Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.” How many a sin-burdened soul has echoed that prayer. And to all, the pitying

Saviour's answer is, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." It is faith that connects us with heaven, and brings us strength for coping with the powers of darkness. In Christ, God has provided means for subduing every sinful trait, and resisting every temptation, however strong. But many feel that they lack faith, and therefore they remain away from Christ. Let these souls, in their helpless unworthiness, cast themselves upon the mercy of their compassionate Saviour. Look not to self, but to Christ. He who healed the sick and cast out demons when He walked among men is the same mighty Redeemer today. Faith comes by the word of God. Then grasp His promise, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." John 6:37. Cast yourself at His feet with the cry, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." You can never perish while you do this—never.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 428, 429.

In your association with others, put yourself in their place. Enter into their feelings, their difficulties, their disappointments, their joys, and their sorrows. Identify yourself with them, and then do to them as, were you to exchange places with them, you would wish them to deal with you. This is the true rule of honesty. . . . It is a principle of heaven, and will be developed in all who are fitted for its holy companionship.

The golden rule is the principle of true courtesy, and its truest illustration is seen in the life and character of Jesus. Oh, what rays of softness and beauty shone forth in the daily life of our Saviour! What sweetness flowed from His very presence! The same spirit will be revealed in His children. Those with whom Christ dwells will be surrounded with a divine atmosphere. . . . Their faces will reflect light from His, brightening the path for stumbling and weary feet.

—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 134, 135.

Friday, January 17: For Further Reading

The Desire of Ages, "Who Are My Brethren?" pp. 321–327;
My Life Today, "Partakers Through God's Promises," p. 274.

Lesson 4

God Is Passionate and Compassionate

Sabbath Afternoon, January 18

Christ's love is deep and earnest, flowing like an irrepressible stream to all who will accept it. There is no selfishness in His love. If this heaven-born love is an abiding principle in the heart, it will make itself known, not only to those we hold most dear in sacred relationship, but to all with whom we come in contact. It will lead us to bestow little acts of attention, to make concessions, to perform deeds of kindness, to speak tender, true, encouraging words. It will lead us to sympathize with those whose hearts hunger for sympathy.—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 101.

God does not deal with us as finite men deal with one another. His thoughts are thoughts of mercy, love, and tenderest compassion. . . .

Satan is ready to steal away the blessed assurances of God. He desires to take every glimmer of hope and every ray of light from the soul; but you must not permit him to do this. Do not give ear to the tempter. . . . The parable [of the prodigal son] tells you how the wanderer will be received: "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Luke 15:18–20.

But even this parable, tender and touching as it is, comes short of expressing the infinite compassion of the heavenly Father. The Lord declares by His prophet, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Jeremiah 31:3. While the sinner is yet far from the Father's house, wasting his substance in a strange country, the Father's heart is yearning over him; and every longing awakened in the soul to return to God is but the tender pleading of His Spirit, wooing, entreating, drawing the wanderer to his Father's heart of love.—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 53, 54.

Our heavenly Father . . . hates sin, but He loves the sinner, and He gave Himself in the person of Christ, that all who would might be saved and have eternal blessedness in the kingdom of glory. What stronger or more tender language could have been employed than He has chosen in which to express His love toward us? He declares, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Isaiah 49:15. . . .

As you read the promises, remember they are the expression of unutterable love and pity. The great heart of Infinite Love is drawn toward the sinner with boundless compassion. "We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." Ephesians 1:7. Yes, only believe that God is your helper. He wants to restore His moral image in man. As you draw near to Him with confession and repentance, He will draw near to you with mercy and forgiveness.—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 54, 55.

Sunday, January 19: More Than a Mother's Love

You have probably heard of the sad story of the mother who, with her husband and child, attempted to cross the Green Mountains in midwinter. Their progress was arrested by night and a storm. The husband went for help and lost his way in the darkness and the drifted snow, and was long in returning. The mother felt the chill of death coming upon her, and she bared her bosom to the freezing blast and the falling snow, that she might give all that remained of her own life to save that of her child. When the morning came, the living babe was found wrapped in the mother's shawl . . . wondering why she did not awaken from her sleep.

Here is seen love stronger than death, that binds the mother's heart to her child. And yet God says that the mother will sooner forget her child than that He will forget a soul that trusts in Him. That the Lord loves us is enough to call forth deepest gratitude, every hour of our lives. God's love is speaking to you. . . . Only trust the love of Jesus, and you will realize the deepest joy.—Letter 12, August 9, 1873, to Edson and Emma White.

Christ's love for His children is as strong as it is tender. It is a love stronger than death, for He died for us. It is a love more true than that of a mother for her children. The mother's love may change, but Christ's love is

changeless. “I am persuaded,” Paul says, “that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38, 39).

In every trial we have strong consolation. Is not our Saviour touched with the feeling of our infirmities? Has He not been tempted in all points like as we are? And has He not invited us to take every trial and perplexity to Him? Then let us not make ourselves miserable over tomorrow’s burdens. . . . He who gives strength for today will give strength for tomorrow.—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 269.

In the gracious blessings which our heavenly Father has bestowed upon us, we may discern innumerable evidences of a love that is infinite, and a tender pity surpassing a mother’s yearning sympathy for her wayward child. When we study the divine character in the light of the cross, we see mercy, tenderness, and forgiveness blended with equity and justice. In the language of John we exclaim, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”

We see in the midst of the throne One bearing in hands, and feet, and side the marks of suffering endured to reconcile man to God, and God to man. Matchless mercy reveals to us a Father, infinite, dwelling in light unapproachable, yet receiving us to Himself through the merits of His Son. —*Reflecting Christ*, p. 284.

Monday, January 20: Gut-Wrenching Love

The Saviour manifested divine compassion toward the Syrophenician woman. His heart was touched as He saw her grief. He longed to give her an immediate assurance that her prayer was heard; but He desired to teach His disciples a lesson, and for a time He seemed to neglect the cry of her tortured heart. . . .

It was Christ Himself who put into that mother’s heart the persistence which would not be repulsed. It was Christ who gave the pleading widow courage and determination before the judge. It was Christ who, centuries before, in the mysterious conflict by the Jabbok, had inspired Jacob with the

same persevering faith. And the confidence which He Himself had implanted, He did not fail to reward.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 175, 176.

It is Satan's work to fill men's hearts with doubt. He leads them to look upon God as a stern judge. He tempts them to sin, and then to regard themselves as too vile to approach their heavenly Father or to excite His pity. The Lord understands all this. Jesus assures His disciples of God's sympathy for them in their needs and weaknesses. Not a sigh is breathed, not a pain felt, not a grief pierces the soul, but the throb vibrates to the Father's heart. . . .

God is bending from His throne to hear the cry of the oppressed. To every sincere prayer He answers, "Here am I." He uplifts the distressed and downtrodden. In all our afflictions He is afflicted. In every temptation and every trial the angel of His presence is near to deliver.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 356.

In losing sight of the true character of Jehovah, the Israelites were without excuse. Often had God revealed Himself to them as one "full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth." Psalm 86:15. "When Israel was a child," He testified, "then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt." Hosea 11:1.

Tenderly had the Lord dealt with Israel in their deliverance from Egyptian bondage and in their journey to the Promised Land. "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old. Isaiah 63:9. . . .

It was upon his knowledge of the long-sufferance of Jehovah and of His infinite love and mercy, that Moses based his wonderful plea for the life of Israel when, on the borders of the Promised Land, they refused to advance in obedience to the command of God. At the height of their rebellion the Lord had declared, "I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them;" . . . But the prophet pleaded the marvelous providences and promises of God in behalf of the chosen nation. And then, as the strongest of all pleas, he urged the love of God for fallen man.—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 311, 312.

Tuesday, January 21: The Compassion of Jesus

When Christ saw the multitudes that gathered about Him, “He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.” Christ saw the sickness, the sorrow, the want and degradation of the multitudes that thronged His steps. To Him were presented the needs and woes of humanity throughout the world. Among the high and the low, the most honored and the most degraded, He beheld souls who were longing for the very blessings He had come to bring, souls who needed only a knowledge of His grace to become subjects of His kingdom. “Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.” Matthew 9:36-38.

Today the same needs exist. The world is in need of workers who will labor as Christ did for the suffering and the sinful. There is indeed a multitude to be reached. The world is full of sickness, suffering, distress, and sin. It is full of those who need to be ministered unto—the weak, the helpless, the ignorant, the degraded.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 254.

Whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. Your spirit will be braced for endurance. The way will be open for you to disentangle yourself from embarrassment and difficulty. The weaker and more helpless you know yourself to be, the stronger will you become in His strength. The heavier your burdens, the more blessed the rest in casting them upon your Burden Bearer.

Circumstances may separate friends; the restless waters of the wide sea may roll between us and them. But no circumstances, no distance, can separate us from the Saviour. Wherever we may be, He is at our right hand, to support, maintain, uphold, and cheer. Greater than the love of a mother for her child is Christ’s love for His redeemed. It is our privilege to rest in His love, to say, “I will trust Him; for He gave His life for me.”

Human love may change, but Christ’s love knows no change. When we cry to Him for help, His hand is stretched out to save.—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 72.

“The Lord’s portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle

stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.” Deuteronomy 32:9-12. Thus He brought the Israelites unto Himself, that they might dwell as under the shadow of the Most High. Miraculously preserved from the perils of the wilderness wandering, they were finally established in the Land of Promise as a favored nation.—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 17.

Wednesday, January 22: A Jealous God?

Our God is a jealous God; He is not to be trifled with. . . .

We can never by searching find out God. He does not lay open His plans to prying, inquisitive minds. We must not attempt to lift with presumptuous hand the curtain behind which He veils His majesty. The apostle exclaims, “How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” It is a proof of His mercy that there is the hiding of His power, that He is enshrouded in the awful clouds of mystery and obscurity; for to lift the curtain that conceals the Divine Presence is death. No mortal mind can penetrate the secrecy in which the Mighty One dwells and works. We can comprehend no more of His dealings with us and the motives that actuate Him than He sees fit to reveal. He orders everything in righteousness, and we are not to be dissatisfied and distrustful, but to bow in reverent submission. He will reveal to us as much of His purposes as it is for our good to know; and beyond that we must trust the hand that is omnipotent, the heart that is full of love.—*Lift Him Up*, p. 361.

In His dealings with the human race, God bears long with the impenitent. He uses His appointed agencies to call men to allegiance, and offers them His full pardon if they will repent. But because God is long-suffering, men presume on His mercy. . . . The patience and long-suffering of God, which should soften and subdue the soul, has an altogether different influence upon the careless and sinful. It leads them to cast off restraint, and strengthens them in resistance. . . .

Very few realize the sinfulness of sin; they flatter themselves that God is too good to punish the offender. But the cases of Miriam, Aaron, David, and many others show that it is not a safe thing to sin against God in deed, in

word, or even in thought. God is a being of infinite love and compassion, but He also declares Himself to be a “consuming fire, even a jealous God.”—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1166.

Marriage, a union for life, is a symbol of the union between Christ and His church. The spirit that Christ manifests toward the church is the spirit that husband and wife are to manifest toward each other.

Neither husband nor wife is to make a plea for rulership. The Lord has laid down the principle that is to guide in this matter. The husband is to cherish his wife as Christ cherishes the church. And the wife is to respect and love her husband. Both are to cultivate the spirit of kindness, being determined never to grieve or injure the other. . . .

Let not your married life be one of contention. If you do you will both be unhappy. Be kind in speech and gentle in action, giving up your own wishes. . . . Bring into your united life the fragrance of Christlikeness.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, pp. 46, 47.

Thursday, January 23: Compassion and Passionate

Love is not simply an impulse, a transitory emotion, dependent upon circumstances; it is a living principle, a permanent power. The soul is fed by the streams of pure love that flow from the heart of Christ, as a well-spring that never fails. O, how is the heart quickened, how are its motives ennobled, its affections deepened, by this communion! Under the education and discipline of the Holy Spirit, the children of God love one another, truly, sincerely, unaffectedly,—“without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” And this because the heart is in love with Jesus. Our affection for one another springs from our common relation to God. We are one family, we love one another as He loved us. . . .

To love as Christ loved means to manifest unselfishness at all times and in all places, by kind words and pleasant looks. Genuine love is a precious attribute of heavenly origin, which increases its fragrance in proportion as it is dispensed to others.—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 101.

The Saviour overcame to show man how he may overcome. All the

temptations of Satan, Christ met with the word of God. By trusting in God's promises, He received power to obey God's commandments, and the tempter could gain no advantage. To every temptation His answer was, "It is written." So God has given us His word wherewith to resist evil. Exceeding great and precious promises are ours, that by these we "might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Peter 1:4.

Bid the tempted one look not to circumstances, to the weakness of self, or to the power of temptation, but to the power of God's word. All its strength is ours. "Thy word," says the psalmist, "have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee." "By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." Psalm 119:11; 17:4.—*Temperance*, p. 107.

There can be no growth or fruitfulness in the life that is centered in self. If you have accepted Christ as a personal Saviour, you are to forget yourself, and try to help others. Talk of the love of Christ, tell of His goodness. Do every duty that presents itself. Carry the burden of souls upon your heart, and by every means in your power seek to save the lost. As you receive the Spirit of Christ—the Spirit of unselfish love and labor for others—you will grow and bring forth fruit. The graces of the Spirit will ripen in your character. Your faith will increase, your convictions deepen, your love be made perfect. More and more you will reflect the likeness of Christ in all that is pure, noble, and lovely.

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Galatians 5:22, 23. This fruit can never perish, but will produce after its kind a harvest unto eternal life.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 67, 68.

Friday, January 24: For Further Reading

The Upward Look, "Look," p. 180;

Messages to Young People, "Not Feeling but a Changed Life," pp. 72, 73.

Lesson 5

The Wrath of Divine Love

Sabbath Afternoon, January 25

Christ's indignation was directed against the hypocrisy, the gross sins, by which men were destroying their own souls, deceiving the people and dishonoring God. In the specious deceptive reasoning of the priests and rulers He discerned the working of satanic agencies. Keen and searching had been His denunciation of sin; but He spoke no words of retaliation. He had a holy wrath against the prince of darkness; but He manifested no irritated temper. So the Christian who lives in harmony with God, possessing the sweet attributes of love and mercy, will feel a righteous indignation against sin; but he will not be roused by passion to revile those who revile him. Even in meeting those who are moved by a power from beneath to maintain falsehood, in Christ he will still preserve calmness and self-possession.—*Lift Him Up*, p. 337.

The forbearance of God has been very great—so great that when we consider the continuous insult to His holy commandments, we marvel. The Omnipotent One has been exerting a restraining power over His own attributes. But He will certainly arise to punish the wicked, who so boldly defy the just claims of the Decalogue.

God allows men a period of probation; but there is a point beyond which divine patience is exhausted, and the judgments of God are sure to follow. The Lord bears long with men, and with cities, mercifully giving warnings to save them from divine wrath; but a time will come when pleadings for mercy will no longer be heard, and the rebellious element that continues to reject the light of truth will be blotted out, in mercy to themselves and to those who would otherwise be influenced by their example.—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 276.

Let us study more diligently the Word of God. The Bible is so plain and clear that all who will may understand. Let us thank the Lord for His precious Word, and for the messages of His Spirit that give so much light. I am instructed that the more we study the Old and New Testaments, the more we shall have impressed on our mind the fact that each sustains a very close relation to the other, and the more evidence we shall receive of their divine inspiration. We shall see clearly that they have but one Author. The study of these precious volumes will teach us how to form characters that will reveal the attributes of Christ.—*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 359.

The Old Testament . . . was not written merely for the ancients; it was for all ages and for all people. Jesus would have the teachers of His doctrine diligently search the Old Testament for that light which establishes His identity as the Messiah foretold in prophecy, and reveals the nature of His mission to the world. The Old and the New Testament are inseparable, for both are the teachings of Christ.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentaries*, vol. 5, p. 1094.

Sunday, January 26: Grieved by Evil

“For all this they [the children of Israel] sinned still, and believed not for His wondrous works. . . . When He slew them, then they sought Him: and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer.” Psalm 78:32-35. Yet they did not turn to God with a sincere purpose. Though when afflicted by their enemies they sought help from Him who alone could deliver, yet “their heart was not right with Him, neither were they steadfast in His covenant. But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned He His anger away. . . . For He remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.” Verses 37-39.—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 410.

Christ was approaching the end of His mission, and He knew that when that time should come, Jerusalem’s day of probation would have ended. But He was reluctant to pronounce the words of doom. For three years He had come, seeking fruit and finding none. During these years one object was

ever upon His soul—to present before His thankless, disobedient people the solemn warnings and gracious invitations of heaven. . . .

He carried them on His heart. He did all that He could do to save them. But at the end of His work in this world He was forced to say in an agony of tears, “Ye would not come unto Me that ye might have life.”

The cloud of divine wrath was gathering over Jerusalem. Christ saw the city beleaguered. He saw it lost. In a voice full of tears he exclaimed, “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.”—*This Day With God*, p. 109.

God has sent messages from His Word to the souls who are living careless lives, and who are unashamed of their wrong course of action. I heard the words spoken: “Why sayest thou . . . My way is hid from the Lord and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?” (Isaiah 40:27, 28). . . .

God is constantly appealing to the human heart, bidding it recognize His love and mercy, and accept His righteousness in the place of the principles of evil. Thus He has pleaded with mankind in all ages. In Noah’s day Christ spoke to men through a human agency and preached to those who were in bondage to sin. He came to Israel enshrouded in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. He it was who educated that vast multitude in their wilderness wandering.

There are many who do not weigh these things sufficiently. The instruction given to Israel should be understood today by every soul living. —*This Day With God*, p. 278.

Monday, January 27: God Is Slow to Anger

When Jonah learned of God’s purpose to spare the city that, notwithstanding its wickedness, had been led to repent in sackcloth and ashes, he should have been the first to rejoice because of God’s amazing grace; but instead he allowed his mind to dwell upon the possibility of his being regarded as a false prophet. Jealous of his reputation, he lost sight of the infinitely greater value of the souls in that wretched city. The

compassion shown by God toward the repentant Ninevites “displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.” “Was not this my saying,” he inquired of the Lord, “when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest Thee of the evil.” Jonah 4:1, 2. . . .

Losing sight of the interests of others, and feeling as if he would rather die than live to see the city spared, in his dissatisfaction he exclaimed, “Now, O Lord, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 271.

The lesson [taught to Jonah] is for God’s messengers today, when the cities of the nations are as verily in need of a knowledge of the attributes and purposes of the true God as were the Ninevites of old. Christ’s ambassadors are to point men to the nobler world, which has largely been lost sight of. According to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, the only city that will endure is the city whose builder and maker is God. With the eye of faith man may behold the threshold of heaven, flushed with God’s living glory. Through His ministering servants the Lord Jesus is calling upon men to strive with sanctified ambition to secure the immortal inheritance. He urges them to lay up treasure beside the throne of God.—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 274.

Divine love makes its most touching appeals to the heart when it calls upon us to manifest the same tender compassion that Christ manifested. That man only who has unselfish love for his brother has true love for God. The true Christian will not willingly permit the soul in peril and need to go unwarned, uncared for. He will not hold himself aloof from the erring, leaving them to plunge farther into unhappiness and discouragement or to fall on Satan’s battleground.

Those who have never experienced the tender, winning love of Christ cannot lead others to the fountain of life. His love in the heart is a constraining power, which leads men to reveal Him in the conversation, in the tender, pitiful spirit, in the uplifting of the lives of those with whom they associate. Christian workers who succeed in their efforts must know Christ; and in order to know Him, they must know His love. In heaven their fitness as workers is measured by their ability to love as Christ loved and to

work as He worked.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 550.

Tuesday, January 28: Righteous Indignation

[Jesus] slowly descended the [temple] steps, and, raising the whip, which in his hand seemed changed to a kingly scepter, bade the bargaining company to quit the sacred limits of the temple, and take hence their merchandise. With a lofty zeal, and a severity he had never before manifested, he overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the coin fell, ringing sharply upon the marble floor. The most hardened and defiant did not presume to question his authority, but, with prompt obedience, the dignitaries of the temple, the speculating priests, the cattle traders and brokers, rushed from his presence. . . .

A panic of fear swept over the multitude who felt the over-shadowing of Christ's divinity. Cries of terror escaped from hundreds of blanched lips as the crowd rushed headlong from the place. Jesus smote them not with the whip of cords, but, to their guilty eyes, that simple instrument seemed like gleaming, angry swords, circling in every direction, and threatening to cut them down. . . . If the presence of the Lord sanctified the mount, his presence made equally sacred the temple reared to his honor.—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 118.

How easily could that vast throng have resisted the authority of one man; but the power of His divinity overwhelmed them with confusion and a sense of their guilt. They had no strength to resist the divine authority of the Saviour of the world. The desecrators of God's holy place were driven from its portals by the Majesty of Heaven.

After the temple was cleansed, the demeanor of Jesus changed; the terrible majesty of his countenance gave place to an expression of tenderest sympathy. He looked after the flying crowd with eyes full of sorrow and compassion. There were some who remained, held by the irresistible attraction of his presence. They were unterrified by his awful dignity, their hearts were drawn toward him with love and hope. These people were not the great and powerful, who expected to impress him with a sense of their grandeur; they were the poor, the sick, and the afflicted.—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 119.

It is true there is an indignation that is justifiable, even in the followers of Christ. When they see that God is dishonored, and His service brought into disrepute, when they see the innocent oppressed, a righteous indignation stirs the soul. Such anger, born of sensitive morals, is not a sin. But those who at any supposed provocation feel at liberty to indulge anger or resentment are opening the heart to Satan. Bitterness and animosity must be banished from the soul if we would be in harmony with heaven. . . .

Many are zealous in religious services, while between them and their brethren are unhappy differences which they might reconcile. God requires them to do all in their power to restore harmony. Until they do this, He cannot accept their services. The Christian's duty in this matter is clearly pointed out.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 310.

Wednesday, January 29: God Does Not Afflict Willingly

Divine pity marked the countenance of the Son of God as He cast one lingering look upon the Temple and then upon His hearers. In a voice choked by deep anguish of heart and bitter tears He exclaimed, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often I would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" This is the separation struggle. In the lamentation of Christ the very heart of God is pouring itself forth.—*Lift Him Up*, p. 337.

Our heavenly Father doth not willingly afflict and grieve the children of men.

This world is the scene of our trials, our griefs, our sorrows. We are here to bear the test of God. The fire of the furnace is to kindle till our dross is consumed and we come forth as gold purified in the furnace of affliction. Light will come out of this darkness. . . . "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). Let this be the language of [the] heart. The cloud of mercy is hovering over [our heads] even in the darkest hour. God's benefits to us are as numerous as the drops of rain falling from the clouds upon the parched earth to water and refresh it. The mercy of God is over you. . . .

Could your eyes be opened, you would see your heavenly Father bending over you in love; and could you hear His voice it would be in tones of compassion to you who are prostrate with suffering and affliction. Stand fast in His strength; there is rest for you.—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 272.

Within a few short years the king of Babylon was to be used as the instrument of God's wrath upon impenitent Judah. Again and again Jerusalem was to be invested and entered by the besieging armies of Nebuchadnezzar. Company after company—at first a few only, but later on thousands and tens of thousands—were to be taken captive to the land of Shinar, there to dwell in enforced exile. Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah—all these Jewish kings were in turn to become vassals of the Babylonian ruler, and all in turn were to rebel. Severer and yet more severe chastisements were to be inflicted upon the rebellious nation, until at last the entire land was to become a desolation, Jerusalem was to be laid waste and burned with fire, the temple that Solomon had built was to be destroyed, and the kingdom of Judah was to fall, never again to occupy its former position among the nations of earth.

Those times of change, so fraught with peril to the Israelitish nation, were marked with many messages from Heaven through Jeremiah. Thus the Lord gave the children of Judah ample opportunity of freeing themselves from entangling alliances with Egypt, and of avoiding controversy with the rulers of Babylon. As the threatened danger came closer, he taught the people by means of a series of acted parables, hoping thus to arouse them to a sense of their obligation to God, and also to encourage them to maintain friendly relations with the Babylonian government.—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 422, 423.

Thursday, January 30: Show Compassion

Could Satan in the least particular have tempted Christ to sin, he would have bruised the Saviour's head. As it was, he could only touch His heel. Had the head of Christ been touched, the hope of the human race would have perished. Divine wrath would have come upon Christ as it came upon Adam. Christ and the church would have been without hope.

We should have no misgivings in regard to the perfect sinlessness of the

human nature of Christ. Our faith must be an intelligent faith, looking unto Jesus in perfect confidence, in full and entire faith in the atoning Sacrifice. This is essential that the soul may not be enshrouded in darkness. This holy Substitute is able to save to the uttermost; for He presented to the wondering universe perfect and complete humility in His human character, and perfect obedience to all the requirements of God. Divine power is placed upon man, that he may become a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. This is why repenting, believing man can be made the righteousness of God in Christ. —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 256.

There are scarcely two whose experiences are alike in every particular. The trials of one may not be the trials of another; and our hearts should ever be open to kindly sympathy, and aglow with the divine love that Jesus manifested for all his brethren. Christ sometimes reproved with severity, and in some cases it may be necessary for us to do so; but we should consider that while Christ knew the exact condition of the ones he rebuked, —just the amount of reproof they could bear, and what was necessary to correct their course of wrong,—he also knew just how to pity the erring, comfort the unfortunate and encourage the weak. He knew just how to inspire hope and courage; for he was acquainted with the exact motives and the peculiar trials of every mind. He reproved with pity, and loved those he rebuked with a divine love.

Jesus could make no mistake; but human judgment is erring, and may be wrong. Men may misjudge motives; they may be deceived by appearances, and when they think they are doing right to reprove wrong, they may go too far, censure too severely, and wound where they wished to heal; or they may exercise sympathy unwisely, and, in their ignorance, counteract reproof that is merited and timely.

The Lord would have us submissive to his will, and sanctified to his service. Selfishness must be put away, with every other defect in our characters. There must be a daily death to self. Paul had this experience. He said, “I die daily.” Every day he had a new conversion; every day he took an advance step toward Heaven. We, too, must gain daily victories in the divine life, if we would enjoy the favor of God.

Our God is gracious, of tender pity, and plenteous in mercy. He knows our weaknesses and needs, and he will help our infirmities if we will only

trust in him.—“Love the Fulfilling of the Law,” *Signs of the Times*, March 3, 1887.

Friday, January 31: For Further Reading

The Great Controversy, “The Destruction of Jerusalem,” pp. 21, 22;
In Heavenly Places, “Sweetness in Affliction,” p. 273.

Lesson 6

God's Love of Justice

Sabbath Afternoon, February 1

With untold love our God has loved us, and our love awakens toward Him as we comprehend something of the length and breadth and depth and height of this love that passeth knowledge. By the revelation of the attractive loveliness of Christ, by the knowledge of His love expressed to us while we were yet sinners, the stubborn heart is melted and subdued, and the sinner is transformed and becomes a child of heaven. God does not employ compulsory measures; love is the agent which He uses to expel sin from the heart. . . .

God is love. Like rays of light from the sun, love and light and joy flow out from Him to all His creatures. It is His nature to give. His very life is the outflow of unselfish love.—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 76, 77.

Our God is a God of mercy. With long-sufferance and tender compassion He deals with the transgressors of His law. And yet, in this our day, when men and women have so many opportunities for becoming familiar with the divine law as revealed in Holy Writ, the great Ruler of the universe cannot behold with any satisfaction the wicked cities, where reign violence and crime. The end of God's forbearance with those who persist in disobedience is approaching rapidly.—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 275.

Under Ahab's rule Israel wandered far from the living God. The dark shadow of apostasy covered the whole land. Images of Baalim and Ashtoreth were everywhere. Idolatrous temples were multiplied. The air was polluted with the smoke of sacrifices offered to false gods. Hill and vale resounded with the drunken cries of a heathen priesthood who sacrificed to the sun, moon, and stars.

The people were taught that these idol gods were deities, ruling by their mystic power the elements of earth, fire, and water. The running brooks, the streams of living water, the gentle dew, the showers of rain which caused the fields to bring forth abundantly—all were ascribed to the favor of Baal and Ashtoreth, instead of to the Giver of every good and perfect gift. The people forgot that the living God controlled the sun, the clouds of heaven, and all the powers of nature.—*From Splendor to Shadow*, p. 60.

God's method of dealing with sin is not in harmony with the views cherished by a large class who occupy a prominent position among the professed followers of Christ. Many of these men cherish sin, and laud the benevolence and long-suffering of God, and dwell upon the loving character of Jesus,—all mercy, all tenderness,—while they pass over the threatenings of God's wrath against sin and sinners, and our Saviour's scathing denunciations of hypocrisy and self-deception. It is those who have not a keen sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin that are ready to question the justice of God in punishing with such severity the sins of the Amalekites, Canaanites, and Midianites. Those who love sin are unable to comprehend God's dealings with his subjects.—“God's Judgment Upon the Midianites,” *Signs of the Times*, January 6, 1881, par. 7.

Sunday, February 2: Love and Justice

[The Lord] stays His judgments that He may plead with the impenitent. He who exercises “loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth” yearns over His erring children; in every way possible He seeks to teach them the way of life everlasting. Jeremiah 9:24. He had brought the Israelites out of bondage that they might serve Him, the only true and living God. Though they had wandered long in idolatry and had slighted His warnings, yet He now declares His willingness to defer chastisement and grant yet another opportunity for repentance. He makes plain the fact that only by the most thorough heart reformation could the impending doom be averted. In vain would be the trust they might place in the temple and its services. Rites and ceremonies could not atone for sin. Notwithstanding their claim to be the chosen people of God, reformation of heart and of the life practice alone could save them from the inevitable result of continued

transgression.—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 413, 414.

God's love has been expressed in His justice no less than in His mercy. Justice is the foundation of His throne, and the fruit of His love. It had been Satan's purpose to divorce mercy from truth and justice. He sought to prove that the righteousness of God's law is an enemy to peace. But Christ shows that in God's plan they are indissolubly joined together; the one cannot exist without the other. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Psalm 85:10.

By His life and His death, Christ proved that God's justice did not destroy His mercy, but that sin could be forgiven, and that the law is righteous, and can be perfectly obeyed. Satan's charges were refuted. God had given man unmistakable evidence of His love.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 762.

Every man, woman, and child is God's property, and has been bought with a price, even with the infinite price of the precious blood of the Son of God. God will not tolerate injustice from man to his fellow-men. He will not pass over oppression and wrong. Men in office cannot permit the practice of injustice and yet be clear from the judgment of God. For the sake of their own souls, and for the sake of the souls of others, men in positions of trust should seek to do good to their fellow-men, representing the character of the great Lawgiver. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets." . . .

Every work is to be brought into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil, and every man will be rewarded according as his work has been. Those who practice injustice and oppression set at naught the authority of God, and declare by their actions that they have no regard for the word of Christ, who has purchased redemption at an infinite cost.—"Rule in the Fear of God," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, October 1, 1895.

Monday, February 3: God Is Entirely Good and Righteous

The shortness of time is urged as an incentive for us to seek righteousness and to make Christ our friend. This is not the great motive. It savors of selfishness. Is it necessary that the terrors of the day of God be held before us to compel us through fear to right action? This ought not to be. Jesus is attractive. He is full of love, mercy, and compassion. He proposes to be our friend, to walk with us through all the rough pathways of life. He says to you, I am the Lord thy God; walk with Me, and I will fill thy path with light. Jesus, the Majesty of heaven, proposes to elevate to companionship with Himself those who come to Him with their burdens, their weaknesses, and their cares. He will make them His dear children, and finally give them an inheritance of more value than the empires of kings, a crown of glory richer than has ever decked the brow of the most exalted earthly monarch.

It is our privilege to have a calm, close, happy walk with Jesus every day we live.—*That I May Know Him*, p. 320.

How shall we know for ourselves God's goodness and His love? The psalmist tells us—not, hear and know, read and know, or believe and know; but—"Taste and see that the Lord is good." Instead of relying upon the word of another, taste for yourself.

Experience is knowledge derived from experiment. Experimental religion is what is needed now. "Taste and see that the Lord is good." Some—yes, a large number—have a theoretical knowledge of religious truth, but have never felt the renewing power of divine grace upon their own hearts. . . . [T]hey neglect the most precious opportunities to make their peace with God. . . .

They have never tasted and learned by experience that the Lord is good.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 221.

For the joy that was set before Him, Christ endured the cross. He died on the cross as a sacrifice for the world, and through this sacrifice comes the greatest blessing that God could bestow—the gift of the Holy Spirit. This blessing is for all who will receive Christ. The fallen world is the battlefield for the greatest conflict the heavenly universe and earthly powers have ever witnessed. It was appointed as the theater on which would be fought out the grand struggle between good and evil, between heaven and hell. Every human being acts a part in this conflict. No one can stand on neutral

ground. Men must either accept or reject the world's Redeemer. All are witnesses, either for or against Christ. Christ calls upon those who stand under His banner to engage in the conflict with Him as faithful soldiers, that they may inherit the crown of life. They have been adopted as sons and daughters of God.—*Lift Him Up*, p. 253.

Tuesday, February 4: God's Changeless Character

Satan declared that mercy destroyed justice, that the death of Christ abrogated the Father's law. Had it been possible for the law to be changed or abrogated, then Christ need not have died. But to abrogate the law would be to immortalize transgression, and place the world under Satan's control. It was because the law was changeless, because man could be saved only through obedience to its precepts, that Jesus was lifted up on the cross. Yet the very means by which Christ established the law Satan represented as destroying it. Here will come the last conflict of the great controversy between Christ and Satan.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 762.

God always has been. He is the great I AM. The psalmist declares, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." Psalm 90:2. He is the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity. "I am the Lord, I change not," He declares. With Him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. He is "the same yesterday, and to day and for ever." Hebrews 13:8. He is infinite and omnipresent. No words of ours can describe His greatness and majesty.

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.

God does not propose to be called to account for His ways and works. It is for His glory to conceal His purposes now; but by and by they will be revealed in their true importance. But He has not concealed His great love, which lies at the foundation of all His dealings with His children.—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 42.

The Lord desires us to make mention of His goodness and tell of His

power. He is honored by the expression of praise and thanksgiving. He says, “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me.” Psalm 50:23. The people of Israel, as they journeyed through the wilderness, praised God in sacred song. The commandments and promises of the Lord were set to music, and all along the journey these were sung by the pilgrim travelers. And in Canaan as they met at their sacred feasts God’s wonderful works were to be recounted, and grateful thanksgiving was to be offered to His name. God desired that the whole life of His people should be a life of praise. Thus His way was to be made “known upon earth,” His “saving health among all nations.” Psalm 67:2.

So it should be now. The people of the world are worshiping false gods. They are to be turned from their false worship, not by hearing denunciation of their idols, but by beholding something better. God’s goodness is to be made known. “Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God.” Isaiah 43:12.—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 298, 299.

Wednesday, February 5: A Repenting God?

“Let Me alone, . . . that I may consume them,” were the words of God. If God had purposed to destroy Israel, who could plead for them? How few but would have left the sinners to their fate! . . .

But Moses discerned ground for hope where there appeared only discouragement and wrath. The words of God, “Let Me alone,” he understood not to forbid but to encourage intercession, implying that nothing but the prayers of Moses could save Israel, but that if thus entreated, God would spare His people. He “besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people, which Thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?”

God had signified that He disowned His people. . . .

. . . All [the surrounding nations] were watching to see what the God of Israel would do for His people. Should they now be destroyed, their enemies would triumph, and God would be dishonored. . . .

. . . The Lord listened to [Moses’s] pleadings, and granted his unselfish prayer.—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 318, 319.

God requires that we confess our sins, and humble our hearts before Him; but at the same time we should have confidence in Him as a tender Father, who will not forsake those who put their trust in Him. . . .

God does not give us up because of our sins. We may make mistakes, and grieve His Spirit; but when we repent, and come to Him with contrite hearts, He will not turn us away. There are hindrances to be removed. Wrong feelings have been cherished, and there have been pride, self-sufficiency, impatience, and murmurings. All these separate us from God. Sins must be confessed; there must be a deeper work of grace in the heart. Those who feel weak and discouraged may become strong men of God, and do noble work for the Master. But they must work from a high standpoint; they must be influenced by no selfish motives.—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 350.

God has always given men warning of coming judgments. Those who had faith in His message for their time, and who acted out their faith, in obedience to His commandments, escaped the judgments that fell upon the disobedient and unbelieving. The word came to Noah, “Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before Me.” Noah obeyed and was saved. The message came to Lot, “Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city.” Genesis 7:1; 19:14. Lot placed himself under the guardianship of the heavenly messengers, and was saved. So Christ’s disciples were given warning of the destruction of Jerusalem. Those who watched for the sign of the coming ruin, and fled from the city, escaped the destruction. So now we are given warning of Christ’s second coming and of the destruction to fall upon the world. Those who heed the warning will be saved.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 634.

Thursday, February 6: Hold Fast to Love and Justice

Christ presented to men that which was entirely contrary to the representations of the enemy in regard to the character of God, and sought to impress upon men the love of the Father, who “so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. He urged upon men the

necessity of prayer, repentance, confession, and the abandonment of sin. He taught them honesty, forbearance, mercy, and compassion, enjoining upon them to love not only those who loved them, but those who hated them and treated them despitefully. In all this He was revealing to them the character of the Father, who is long-suffering, merciful, and gracious, slow to anger, and full of goodness and truth.—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 29.

There is a day just about to burst upon us when God's mysteries will be seen, and all His ways vindicated; when justice, mercy, and love will be the attributes of His throne. When the earthly warfare is accomplished, and the saints are all gathered home, our first theme will be the song of Moses, the servant of God. The second theme will be the song of the Lamb, the song of grace and redemption. This song will be louder, loftier, and in sublimer strains, echoing and re-echoing through the heavenly courts. Thus the song of God's providence is sung, connecting the varying dispensations; for all is now seen without a veil between the legal, the prophetic, and the gospel. The church history upon the earth and the church redeemed in heaven all center around the cross of Calvary. This is the theme, this is the song,—Christ all and in all,—in anthems of praise resounding through heaven from thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand and an innumerable company of the redeemed host. All unite in this song of Moses and of the Lamb. It is a new song, for it was never before sung in heaven.—*Testimonies for Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 433.

I recommend to you Jesus, my blessed Saviour. I adore Him; I magnify Him. Oh, that I had an immortal tongue, that I could praise Him as I desire! that I could stand before the assembled universe and speak in praise of His matchless charms!

And while I adore and magnify Him, I want you to magnify Him with me. Praise the Lord even when you fall into darkness. Praise Him even in temptation. "Rejoice in the Lord alway," says the apostle; "and again I say, Rejoice." Will that bring gloom and darkness into your families? No, indeed; it will bring a sunbeam. You will thus gather rays of eternal light from the throne of glory and scatter them around you. Let me exhort you to engage in this work, scatter this light and life around you, not only in your own path, but in the paths of those with whom you associate. Let it be your

object to make those around you better, to elevate them, to point them to heaven and glory, and lead them to seek, above all earthly things, the eternal substance, the immortal inheritance, the riches which are imperishable.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 593.

Friday, February 7: For Further Reading

That I May Know Him, “The Day of Final Settlement,” p. 359;
The Upward Look, “God Does Not Change,” p. 318.

Lesson 7

The Problem of Evil

Sabbath Afternoon, February 8

God is love. The evil that is in the world comes not from His hands, but from our great adversary, whose work it has ever been to deprave man, and enfeeble and pervert his faculties. But God has not left us in the ruin wrought by the fall. . . . We are His—His purchased possession. The human family cost God and His Son Jesus Christ an infinite price.

The world's Redeemer, the only-begotten Son of God, by His perfect obedience to the law, by His life and character, redeemed that which was lost in the fall, and made it possible for man to obey that holy law of righteousness which Adam transgressed. Christ did not exchange His divinity for humanity, but combined humanity with divinity; and in humanity He lived the law in behalf of the human family. The sins of everyone who will receive Christ were set to His account, and He has fully satisfied the justice of God.—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 429.

God did not create evil, He only made the good, which was like Himself. But Satan would not be content to know the will of God and do it. His curiosity was on the stretch to know that which God had not designed he should know. Evil, sin, and death were not created by God; they are the result of disobedience, which originated in Satan. But the knowledge of evil now in the world was brought in through the cunning of Satan. These are very hard and expensive lessons; but men will learn them, and many will never be convinced that it is bliss to be ignorant of a certain kind of knowledge, which arises from unsatisfied desires and unholy aims.

The sons and daughters of Adam are fully as inquisitive and presumptuous as was Eve in seeking forbidden knowledge. They gain an experience, a knowledge, which God never designed they should have, and

the result will be, as it was to our first parents, the loss of their Eden home. When will human beings learn that which is demonstrated so thoroughly before them?—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 503.

“God is love.” 1 John 4:16. His nature, His law, is love. It ever has been; it ever will be. “The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity,” whose “ways are everlasting,” changeth not. With Him “is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Isaiah 57:15; Habakkuk 3:6; James 1:17.

Every manifestation of creative power is an expression of infinite love. The sovereignty of God involves fullness of blessing to all created beings. . . .

The history of the great conflict between good and evil, from the time it first began in heaven to the final overthrow of rebellion and the total eradication of sin, is also a demonstration of God’s unchanging love. —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 33.

Sunday, February 9: “How Long, O Lord?”

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise.” 2 Peter 3:9. He does not forget or neglect His children; but He permits the wicked to reveal their true character, that none who desire to do His will may be deceived concerning them. . . . [T]he righteous are placed in the furnace of affliction, that they themselves may be purified; that their example may convince others of the reality of faith and godliness; and also that their consistent course may condemn the ungodly and unbelieving.

God permits the wicked to prosper and to reveal their enmity against Him, that when they shall have filled up the measure of their iniquity all may see His justice and mercy in their utter destruction. The day of His vengeance hastens, when all who have transgressed His law and oppressed His people will meet the just recompense of their deeds; when every act of cruelty or injustice toward God’s faithful ones will be punished as though done to Christ Himself.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 48.

In the work of reform to be carried forward today, there is need of men who, like Ezra and Nehemiah, will not palliate or excuse sin, nor shrink from vindicating the honor of God. Those upon whom rests the burden of

this work will not hold their peace when wrong is done, neither will they cover evil with a cloak of false charity. They will remember that God is no respecter of persons, and that severity to a few may prove mercy to many. They will remember also that in the one who rebukes evil the spirit of Christ should ever be revealed.—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 675.

[Christ] is nailed to the cross, and hangs suspended between the heavens and the earth. The glorious Redeemer of a lost world was suffering the penalty of man's transgression of the Father's law. He was about to ransom His people with His own blood.

Oh, was there ever suffering and sorrow like that endured by the dying Saviour! It was the sense of His Father's displeasure which made His cup so bitter. It was not bodily suffering which so quickly ended the life of Christ upon the cross. It was the crushing weight of the sins of the world, and a sense of His Father's wrath. The fierce temptation that His own Father had forever left Him caused that piercing cry from the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

In His dying agony, as He yields up His precious life, He has by faith alone to trust in Him whom it has ever been His joy to obey. . . . Denied even bright hope and confidence in the triumph which will be His in the future, He cries with a loud voice: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). He is acquainted with the character of His Father, with His justice, His mercy, and His great love, and in submission He drops into His hands.—*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 170.

Monday, February 10: "There Are Many Things We Do Not Know"

Divine inspiration asks many questions which the most profound scholar cannot answer. These questions were not asked, supposing that we could answer them, but to call our attention to the deep mysteries of God, and to make men know that their wisdom is limited; that in the common things of daily life there are mysteries past the comprehension of finite minds; that the judgment and purposes of God are past finding out, His wisdom unsearchable. If He reveals Himself to man, it is by shrouding Himself in the thick cloud of mystery.

God's purpose is to conceal more of Himself than He makes known to man. Could men fully understand the ways and works of God, they would not then believe Him to be the infinite One. He is not to be comprehended by man in His wisdom, and reasons, and purposes. "His ways are past finding out" [Romans 11:33]. His love can never be explained upon natural principles. If this could be done, we would not feel that we could trust Him with the interests of our souls. Skeptics refuse to believe, because with their finite minds they cannot comprehend the infinite power by which God reveals Himself to men.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1141.

What lessons of humility and faith may we not learn as we trace the dealings of God with His creatures. The Lord can do but little for the children of men, because they are so full of pride and vain glory. They exalt self, magnifying their own strength, learning, and wisdom. It is necessary for God to disappoint their hopes and frustrate their plans, that they may learn to trust in Him alone. All our powers are from God; we can do nothing independent of the strength which He has given us. Where is the man or woman or child that God does not sustain? Where is the desolate place which God does not fill? Where is the want that any but God can supply?

He would have us make Him our protector and our guide in all the duties and affairs of life.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, 1141.

"The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind" (Job 38:1), and revealed to His servant the might of His power. When Job caught a glimpse of his Creator, he abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes. Then the Lord was able to bless him abundantly and to make his last years the best of his life.

Hope and courage are essential to perfect service for God. These are the fruit of faith. Despondency is sinful and unreasonable. God is able and willing "more abundantly" (Hebrews 6:17) to bestow upon His servants the strength they need for test and trial. The plans of the enemies of His work may seem to be well laid and firmly established, but God can overthrow the strongest of these. And this He does in His own time and way, when He sees that the faith of His servants has been sufficiently tested.—*Prophets and*

Kings, p. 164.

Tuesday, February 11: The Skeptical Theist

We do not understand the greatness and majesty of God nor remember the immeasurable distance between the Creator and the creatures formed by His hand. He who sitteth in the heavens, swaying the scepter of the universe, does not judge according to our finite standard, nor reckon according to our computation. We are in error if we think that that which is great to us must be great to God, and that which is small to us must be small to Him. He would be no more exalted than ourselves if He possessed only the same faculties. . . .

God speaks through His prophet: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts, are not your thoughts neither are your ways, My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” We need clear discernment, that we may measure sin by the Lord’s standard and not by our own. Let us take for our rule, not human opinions, but the divine word.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 337.

The psalmist David in his experience had many changes of mind. At times, as he obtained views of God’s will and ways, he was highly exalted. Then as he caught sight of the reverse of God’s mercy and changeless love, everything seemed to be shrouded in a cloud of darkness. But through the darkness he obtained a view of the attributes of God, which gave him confidence and strengthened his faith. But when he meditated upon the difficulties and danger of life, they looked so forbidding that he thought himself abandoned by God because of his sins. . . .

But as he wept and prayed, he obtained a clearer view of the character and attributes of God.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1149.

As David considered His pledges and promises to [the children of Israel], knowing they were for all who need them as much as for Israel, he

appropriated them to himself, saying, “I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doing.”

His faith laid hold of God, and he was strengthened and encouraged; although he recognized God’s ways as mysterious, yet he knew they were merciful and good; for this was His character as revealed to Moses. . . .

As David appropriated these promises and privileges to himself he decided that he would no longer be hasty in judgment, becoming discouraged, and casting himself down in helpless despair. His soul took courage as he contemplated the general character of God as displayed in His teaching, His forbearance, His surpassing greatness and mercy, and he saw that the works and wonders of God are to have no confined application.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1149.

Wednesday, February 12: The Freewill Defense

The reins of self-government were placed in [Adam’s] hands. Judgment, reason, and conscience were to bear sway. “And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

Adam and Eve were permitted to partake of every tree in the garden save one. There was a single prohibition. The forbidden tree was as attractive and lovely as any of the trees in the garden. It was called the tree of knowledge because in partaking of that tree of which God had said, “Thou shalt not eat of it,” they would have a knowledge of sin, an experience in disobedience.—*Confrontation*, p. 12.

God might have created man without the power to transgress His law; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; but in that case man would have been, not a free moral agent, but a mere automaton. Without freedom of choice, his obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced. There could have been no development of character. It would have been unworthy of man as an intelligent being, and

would have sustained Satan's charge of God's arbitrary rule.

[God] endowed [Adam] with high intellectual powers, and presented before him the strongest possible inducements to be true to his allegiance. Obedience, perfect and perpetual, was the condition of eternal happiness. On this condition he was to have access to the tree of life.

So long as they remained loyal to the divine law, their capacity to know, to enjoy, and to love would continually increase. They would be constantly gaining new treasures of knowledge, discovering fresh springs of happiness, and obtaining clearer and yet clearer conceptions of the immeasurable, unfailing love of God.—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 13.

Every soul has a heaven to win, and a hell to shun. And the angelic agencies are all ready to come to the help of the tried and tempted soul. He, the Son of the infinite God, endured the test and trial in our behalf. The cross of Calvary stands vividly before every soul. When the cases of all are judged, and they [the lost] are delivered to suffer for their contempt for God and their disregard of His honor in their disobedience, not one will have an excuse, not one will need to have perished. It was left to their own choice who should be their prince, Christ or Satan. All the help Christ received, every man may receive in the great trial. The cross stands as a pledge that not one need be lost, that abundant help is provided for every soul. We can conquer the satanic agencies, or we can join ourselves with the powers that seek to counterwork the work of God in our world.—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 96.

Thursday, February 13: Love and Evil

In all ages God's appointed witnesses have exposed themselves to reproach and persecution for the truth's sake. Joseph was maligned and persecuted because he preserved his virtue and integrity. David, the chosen messenger of God, was hunted like a beast of prey by his enemies. Daniel was cast into a den of lions because he was true to his allegiance to heaven. Job was deprived of his worldly possessions, and so afflicted in body that he was abhorred by his relatives, and friends; yet he maintained his integrity. . . . Paul was imprisoned, beaten with rods, stoned, and finally put to death because he was a faithful messenger for God to the Gentiles. . . .

These examples of human steadfastness bear witness to the faithfulness of God's promises—of His abiding presence and sustaining grace. They testify to the power of faith to withstand the powers of the world. It is the work of faith to rest in God in the darkest hour, to feel, however sorely tried and tempest-tossed, that our Father is at the helm. The eye of faith alone can look beyond the things of time to estimate aright the worth of the eternal riches.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 575.

If you are called to go through the fiery furnace for His sake, Jesus will be by your side even as He was with the faithful three in Babylon. Those who love their Redeemer will rejoice at every opportunity of sharing with Him humiliation and reproach. The love they bear their Lord makes suffering for His sake sweet.

In all ages Satan has persecuted the people of God. He has tortured them and put them to death, but in dying they became conquerors. They revealed in their steadfast faith a mightier One than Satan. Satan could torture and kill the body, but he could not touch the life that was hid with Christ in God. . . . They could look beyond the gloom to the glory, saying, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Romans 8:18.—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 30.

Will man take hold of divine power, and with determination and perseverance resist Satan, as Christ has given him example in His conflict with the foe in the wilderness of temptation? God cannot save man against his will from the power of Satan's artifices. Man must work with his human power, aided by the divine power of Christ, to resist and to conquer at any cost to himself. In short, man must overcome as Christ overcame. And then, through the victory that it is his privilege to gain by the all-powerful name of Jesus, he may become an heir of God and joint heir with Jesus Christ. This could not be the case if Christ alone did all the overcoming. Man must do his part; he must be victor on his own account, through the strength and grace that Christ gives him. Man must be a co-worker with Christ in the labor of overcoming, and then he will be partaker with Christ of His glory.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 32.

Friday, February 14: For Further Reading

Steps to Christ, “God’s Love for Man,” pp. 9–15;
Reflecting Christ, “God Teaches Self-Distrust Through Trials,” p. 358.

Lesson 8

Free Will, Love, and Divine Providence

Sabbath Afternoon, February 15

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. They were to gather up memorials and to lay them up in sight. Special pains were taken to preserve them, that when the children should inquire concerning these things, the whole story might be repeated. Thus the providential dealings and the marked goodness and mercy of God in His care and deliverance of His people were kept in mind. We are exhorted to call to “remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions.” Hebrews 10:32. 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.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 364.

There are three ways in which the Lord reveals His will to us, to guide us, and to fit us to guide others. How may we know His voice from that of a stranger? How shall we distinguish it from the voice of a false shepherd? God reveals His will to us in His word, the Holy Scriptures. His voice is also revealed in His providential workings; and it will be recognized if we do not separate our souls from Him by walking in our own ways, doing according to our own wills, and following the promptings of an unsanctified heart, until the senses have become so confused that eternal things are not discerned, and the voice of Satan is so disguised that it is accepted as the

voice of God. . . .

Another way in which God's voice is heard is through the appeals of His Holy Spirit, making impressions upon the heart, which will be wrought out in the character.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 512.

Daily annoyances beset the path of young and old. Those who would live patient, loving, cheerful lives must pray. Only by receiving constant help from God can we gain the victory over self.

Each morning consecrate yourselves and your children to God for that day. Make no calculation for months or years; these are not yours. One brief day is given you. As if it were your last on earth, work during its hours for the Master. Lay all your plans before God, to be carried out or given up, as His providence shall indicate. Accept His plans instead of your own, even though their acceptance requires the abandonment of cherished projects. Thus the life will be molded more and more after the divine example; "and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:7.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 44.

Sunday, February 16: Our Sovereign God

In the face of the most positive commands of God, [many] men and women will follow their own inclinations and then dare to pray over the matter, to prevail upon God to consent to allow them to go contrary to His expressed will. The Lord is not pleased with such prayers. Satan comes to the side of such persons, as he did to Eve in Eden. . . . The religious world is covered with a pall of moral darkness. Superstition and bigotry control the minds of men and women, and blind their judgment so that they do not discern their duty to their fellow men and their duty to yield unquestioned obedience to the will of God. . . .

But God will not be trifled with. He will permit such persons to follow the desires of their own hearts. Psalm 81:11, 12: "But My people would not hearken to My voice." "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 72, 73.

When you make failures, when you are betrayed into sin, do not feel that you cannot pray, that you are not worthy to come before the Lord. . . . With outstretched arms He waits to welcome the prodigal. Go to Him, and tell Him about your mistakes and failures. Ask Him to strengthen you for fresh endeavor. He will never disappoint you, never abuse your confidence. . . .

“In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.” Christ knows the strength of your temptations and the strength of your power to resist. His hand is always stretched out in pitying tenderness to every suffering child. To the tempted, discouraged one He says, Child for whom I suffered and died, cannot you trust me? “As thy days, so shall thy strength be” (Deuteronomy 33:25).—*Lift Him Up*, p. 299.

Oh, how greatly Christ is dishonored by those who, professing to be Christians, disgrace the name they bear by failing to make their lives correspond to their profession, by failing to treat one another with the love and respect that God expects them to reveal in kind words and courteous acts!

The powers from beneath are stirred with deep intensity. War and bloodshed are the result. The moral atmosphere is poisoned with cruel, horrible doings. The spirit of strife is spreading; it abounds in every place. . . .

One who sees beneath the surface, who reads the hearts of all men, says of those who have had great light: . . . “Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before Mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not.” “God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie,” because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved,” “but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” Isaiah 66:3, 4; 2 Thessalonians 2:11, 10, 12.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 248, 249.

Monday, February 17: *Pantokrator*

With Christ [God] gave all heaven, that the moral image of God might be restored in man. . . . His gift could not be greater; for it embraces infinity.

His grace in all its vastness is provided for all. There is no excuse for any to retain selfishness. In the hearts of all who receive him, Christ will be formed, the hope of glory. The Saviour says to everyone for whom he has died, You must receive the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of adoption. You must become so united with God that you will impart the grace you have received. Thus you become a living channel, by which God can communicate his light to the world.

God can not approve our work while it has in it one thread of selfishness. It was apparently a small transgression that closed the gates of paradise against Adam and Eve. But ever since then sin has been increasing in volume and prevalence, and it is still increasing. But notwithstanding this, the divine benevolence has not been cut off. God's love and care still flow earthward.—“Christ Our Example,” *The General Conference Bulletin*, October 1, 1890.

The Lord does not save sinners by abrogating his law, the foundation of his government in heaven and earth. God is a judge, the guardian of justice. The transgression of his law in a single instance, in the smallest particular, is sin. God cannot dispense with his law, he cannot do away with its smallest item, in order to pardon sin. The justice, the moral excellence, of the law must be maintained and vindicated before the heavenly universe. And that holy law could not be maintained at any smaller price than the death of the Son of God.—“Christ's Attitude Toward the Law,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, November 15, 1898.

The Lord sees that prayer is often mixed with earthliness. Men pray for that which will gratify their selfish desires, and the Lord does not fulfill their requests in the way which they expect. He takes them through tests and trials, He brings them through humiliations, until they see more clearly what their necessities are. . . . When we come to God we must be submissive and contrite of heart, subordinating everything to His sacred will.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ prayed to His Father, saying, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me” (Matthew 26:39). The cup which He prayed should be removed from Him, that looked so bitter to His soul, was the cup of separation from God in consequence of the sin of the world. . . . The spirit of submission that Christ manifested in offering up His

prayer before God is the spirit that is acceptable to God. Let the soul feel its need, its helplessness, its nothingness; let all its energies be called forth in an earnest desire for help, and help will come.—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 89.

Tuesday, February 18: To Love God

The Lord will not compel men to deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God; He sets before the human agent good and evil, and makes plain what will be the sure result of following one course or the other. Christ invites us, saying, “Follow Me.” But we are never forced to walk in His footsteps. If we do walk in His footsteps, it is the result of deliberate choice. As we see the life and character of Christ, strong desire is awakened to be like Him in character; and we follow on to know the Lord, and to know His goings forth are prepared as the morning. We then begin to realize that “the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 138.

God gives sufficient light and evidence to enable man to distinguish truth from error. But He does not force man to receive truth. He leaves him free to choose the good or to choose the evil. If man resists evidence that is sufficient to guide his judgment in the right direction, and chooses evil once, he will do this more readily the second time. The third time he will still more eagerly withdraw himself from God and choose to stand on the side of Satan. And in this course he will continue until he is confirmed in evil, and believes the lie he has cherished as truth. His resistance has produced its harvest. . . .

The choice we make in this life will be our choice through all eternity. We shall receive either eternal life or eternal death. There is no middle ground, no second probation. We are called upon to overcome in this life as Christ overcame. Heaven has provided us with abundant opportunities and privileges, so that we may overcome as Christ overcame, and sit down with Him on His throne.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1112.

[God’s] word is pledged. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but His kindness shall not depart from His people, neither shall

the covenant of His peace be removed. His voice is heard, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love” (Jeremiah 31:3). “With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee” (Isaiah 54:8). How amazing is this love, that God condescends to remove all cause for doubt and questioning from human fears and weakness and takes hold of the trembling hand reached up to Him in faith; and He helps us to trust Him by multiplied assurances and securities. . . . He has confirmed His promise with an oath: “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath.” What more could our Lord do to strengthen our faith in His promises?—*That I May Know Him*, p. 262.

Wednesday, February 19: God’s Ideal and Remedial Wills

[In] England just before the time of Wesley . . . many affirmed that Christ had abolished the moral law and that Christians are therefore under no obligation to observe it; that a believer is freed from the “bondage of good works.” . . .

Others, also holding that “the elect cannot fall from grace nor forfeit the divine favor,” arrived at the still more hideous conclusion that “the wicked actions they commit are not really sinful, nor to be considered as instances of their violation of the divine law, and that, consequently, they have no occasion either to confess their sins or to break them off by repentance.”—McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia*, art. “Antinomians.” Therefore, they declared that even one of the vilest of sins, “considered universally an enormous violation of the divine law, is not a sin in the sight of God,” if committed by one of the elect. . . .

These monstrous doctrines are . . . inspired by the same master spirit—by him who, even among the sinless inhabitants of heaven, began his work of seeking to break down the righteous restraints of the law of God.—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 260, 261.

The parable of the unfaithful husbandmen shows plainly that the Jews carried out their ambitious desires till the love and fear of God departed from them.

No one is to understand from this scripture that God arbitrarily blinded

the eyes and hardened the hearts of the Jews. It was Christ's work to soften hard hearts. But if men resisted the work of Christ, the sure result would be that their hearts would become hardened.

Christ quoted a prophecy which more than a thousand years before had predicted what God's foreknowledge had seen would be. The prophecies do not shape the characters of the men who fulfill them. Men act out their own free will, either in accordance with a character placed under the molding of God or a character placed under the harsh rule of Satan.—“Walk in the Light,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, November 13, 1900.

In the experience of the apostle John under persecution, there is a lesson of wonderful strength and comfort for the Christian. God does not prevent the plottings of wicked men, but He causes their devices to work for good to those who in trial and conflict maintain their faith and loyalty. Often the gospel laborer carries on his work amid storms of persecution, bitter opposition, and unjust reproach. At such times let him remember that the experience to be gained in the furnace of trial and affliction is worth all the pain it costs. Thus God brings His children near to Him, that He may show them their weakness and His strength. He teaches them to lean on Him. Thus He prepares them to meet emergencies, to fill positions of trust, and to accomplish the great purpose for which their powers were given them.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 574.

Thursday, February 20: Christ Has Overcome the World

Christ knew that the enemy would come to every human being, to take advantage of hereditary weakness, and by his false insinuations to ensnare all whose trust is not in God. And by passing over the ground which man must travel, our Lord has prepared the way for us to overcome. It is not His will that we should be placed at a disadvantage in the conflict with Satan. He would not have us intimidated and discouraged by the assaults of the serpent. “Be of good cheer,” He says; “I have overcome the world.” John 16:33. . . .

By what means did He overcome in the conflict with Satan? By the word of God. Only by the word could He resist temptation. “It is written,” He

said. And unto us are given “exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” 2 Peter 1:4. Every promise in God’s word is ours. . . . When assailed by temptation, look not to circumstances or to the weakness of self, but to the power of the word. All its strength is yours.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 122, 123.

“These things have I spoken unto you,” the Saviour said, “that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John 15:11). The work of overcoming is not a joyless work; no, indeed. It means communication with Heaven. You can go to God in prayer; you can ask, and receive; you can believe, hanging your helpless soul on Christ. It means that humanity can work the will and ways of God. Humanity and divinity are combined for this very purpose. . . .

He suffers the deep waters of affliction to go over our souls, in order that we may know Him and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, in order that we may have deep heart longings to be cleansed from defilement, and may come forth from the trial purer, holier, happier. Often we enter the furnace of affliction with our souls darkened with selfishness; but if patient under the crucial test, we shall come forth reflecting the divine character. When His purpose in the affliction is accomplished “he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday” (Psalm 37:6). —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 279.

The power of Christ is to be the comfort, the hope, the crown of rejoicing, of every one that follows Jesus in his conflict, in his struggles in life. He who truly follows the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, can shout as he advances, “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4).

What kind of faith is it that overcomes the world? It is that faith which makes Christ your own personal Saviour—that faith which, recognizing your helplessness, your utter inability to save yourself, takes hold of the helper who is mighty to save, as your only hope. It is faith that will not be discouraged, that hears the voice of Christ saying, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world, and my divine strength is yours.” . . . “Lo, I am with you alway.”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 166.

Friday, February 21: For Further Reading

Testimonies for the Church, “Religion in the Daily Life,” vol. 4, pp. 360–371;

Steps to Christ, “Rejoicing in the Lord,” pp. 115–126.

Lesson 9

The Cosmic Conflict

Sabbath Afternoon, February 22

It is impossible to explain the origin of sin so as to give a reason for its existence. Yet enough may be understood concerning both the origin and the final disposition of sin to make fully manifest the justice and benevolence of God in all His dealings with evil. Nothing is more plainly taught in Scripture than that God was in no wise responsible for the entrance of sin; that there was no arbitrary withdrawal of divine grace, no deficiency in the divine government, that gave occasion for the uprising of rebellion.

Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it is to defend it. Could excuse for it be found, or cause be shown for its existence, it would cease to be sin. Our only definition of sin is that given in the word of God; it is “the transgression of the law;” it is the outworking of a principle at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 492.

Lucifer was envious and jealous of Jesus Christ. Yet when all the angels bowed to Jesus to acknowledge His supremacy and high authority and rightful rule, he bowed with them; but his heart was filled with envy and hatred. Christ had been taken into the special counsel of God in regard to His plans, while Lucifer was unacquainted with them. He did not understand, neither was he permitted to know, the purposes of God. But Christ was acknowledged sovereign of heaven, His power and authority to be the same as that of God Himself. Lucifer thought that he was himself a favorite in heaven among the angels. He had been highly exalted, but this did not call forth from him gratitude and praise to his Creator. He aspired to

the height of God Himself. He gloried in his loftiness. . . . Were not his garments light and beautiful? Why should Christ thus be honored before himself?—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 14.

Even when it was decided that he could no longer remain in heaven, Infinite Wisdom did not destroy Satan. Since the service of love can alone be acceptable to God, the allegiance of His creatures must rest upon a conviction of His justice and benevolence. The inhabitants of heaven and of other worlds, being unprepared to comprehend the nature or consequences of sin, could not then have seen the justice and mercy of God in the destruction of Satan. Had he been immediately blotted from existence, they would have served God from fear rather than from love. The influence of the deceiver would not have been fully destroyed, nor would the spirit of rebellion have been utterly eradicated. Evil must be permitted to come to maturity. For the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages Satan must more fully develop his principles, that his charges against the divine government might be seen in their true light by all created beings, that the justice and mercy of God and the immutability of His law might forever be placed beyond all question.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 498.

Sunday, February 23: An Enemy Has Done This

The teaching of this parable [the wheat and tares] is illustrated in God's own dealing with men and angels. Satan is a deceiver. When he sinned in heaven, even the loyal angels did not fully discern his character. This was why God did not at once destroy him. Had He done so, the holy angels would not have perceived the justice and love of God. A doubt of God's goodness would have been as evil seed that would yield the bitter fruit of sin and woe. Therefore the author of evil was spared, fully to develop his character.

Through long ages God has borne the anguish of beholding the work of evil. He has given the infinite Gift of Calvary, rather than let any be deceived by the misrepresentations of the wicked one, for the tares could not be plucked up without danger of uprooting the precious grain. And shall we not be as forbearing toward our fellow men as the Lord of heaven is toward Satan?—*The Upward Look*, p. 77.

Christ . . . has not committed to us the work of judging character and motive. He knows our nature too well to entrust this work to us. Should we try to uproot from the church those whom we suppose to be spurious Christians, we should be sure to make mistakes. Often we regard as hopeless subjects the very ones whom Christ is drawing to Himself. Were we to deal with these souls according to our imperfect judgment, it would perhaps extinguish their last hope. Many who think themselves Christians will at last be found wanting. Many will be in heaven who their neighbors supposed would never enter there. Man judges from appearance, but God judges the heart. The tares and the wheat are to grow together until the harvest; and the harvest is the end of probationary time.

There is in the Saviour's words another lesson, a lesson of wonderful forbearance and tender love. As the tares have their roots closely intertwined with those of the good grain, so false brethren in the church may be closely linked with true disciples. The real character of these pretended believers is not fully manifested. Were they to be separated from the church, others might be caused to stumble, who but for this would have remained steadfast.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 71, 72.

We are to beware of indulging a spirit of bigotry and intolerance. We are not to stand aside from others in a spirit that seems to say, "Come not near to me, for I am holier than thou." We are not to shut ourselves away from our fellow human beings, but are to seek to impart to them the precious truth that has blessed our own hearts. . . . [However, we] should be firmly rooted in the conviction that whatever in any sense turns aside from truth and justice in our association and partnership with men, cannot benefit us and greatly dishonors God.—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 310.

Monday, February 24: The Origin of the Controversy on Earth

Before the entrance of evil there was peace and joy throughout the universe. All was in perfect harmony with the Creator's will. Love for God was supreme, love for one another impartial. Christ the Word, the Only Begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father,—one in nature, in character, and in purpose,—the only being in all the universe that could

enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. By Christ the Father wrought in the creation of all heavenly beings. "By Him were all things created, that are in heaven, . . . whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers" (Colossians 1:16); and to Christ, equally with the Father, all heaven gave allegiance.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 493.

To many minds the origin of sin and the reason for its existence are a source of great perplexity. They see the work of evil, with its terrible results of woe and desolation, and they question how all this can exist under the sovereignty of One who is infinite in wisdom, in power, and in love. Here is a mystery of which they find no explanation. And in their uncertainty and doubt they are blinded to truths plainly revealed in God's word and essential to salvation. There are those who, in their inquiries concerning the existence of sin, endeavor to search into that which God has never revealed; hence they find no solution of their difficulties; and such as are actuated by a disposition to doubt and cavil seize upon this as an excuse for rejecting the words of Holy Writ.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 492.

The instant man accepted the temptations of Satan, and did the very things God had said he should not do, Christ, the Son of God, stood between the living and the dead, saying, "Let the punishment fall on Me. I will stand in man's place. He shall have another chance."

What love! What amazing condescension! The King of glory proposed to humble Himself to fallen humanity! He would place His feet in Adam's steps. He would take man's fallen nature, and engage to cope with the strong foe who triumphed over Adam. He would overcome Satan, and in thus doing He would open the way for the redemption from the disgrace of Adam's failure and fall, of all those who would believe on Him.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1085.

Jesus came into the world to illustrate the character of God in His own life, and He swept back the misrepresentations that Satan had originated, and revealed the glory of God. It was only by living among men that He could reveal the mercy, compassion, and love of His heavenly Father; for it was only by actions of benevolence that He could set forth the grace of God. The unbelief of men was deep seated, and yet they could not resist the

testimony of His God-like example, and His deeds of love and truth.—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 139.

Tuesday, February 25: The Origin of the Controversy in Heaven

Sin originated with him who, next to Christ, had been most honored of God and who stood highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of heaven. Before his fall, Lucifer was first of the covering cherubs, holy and undefiled. “Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering. . . . Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.” Ezekiel 28:12-15.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 493.

Lucifer might have remained in favor with God, beloved and honored by all the angelic host, exercising his noble powers to bless others and to glorify his Maker. But, says the prophet, “Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness.” Verse 17. Little by little, Lucifer came to indulge a desire for self-exaltation. “Thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God.” “Thou hast said, . . . I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation. . . . I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.” Verse 6; Isaiah 14:13, 14. Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of His creatures, it was Lucifer’s endeavor to win their service and homage to himself. And coveting the honor which the infinite Father had bestowed upon His Son, this prince of angels aspired to power which it was the prerogative of Christ alone to wield.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 494.

What is meant by a failure to obey it is seen in the history of Satan, who for his disobedience was cast out of heaven. The greatest talents and the highest gifts that could be bestowed on a created being were given to Lucifer, the covering cherub. Before his fall he was a glorious being,

occupying a position next to Christ, but he sought to be equal with God, and brought upon himself irretrievable ruin.

With this lesson before us, let us hide ourselves in Christ. He is the source of all wisdom, all intelligence, all power. Behold in the cross of Christ the only guarantee for our salvation. Behold the Saviour giving His life for us, that we might be Christians. Those who strive to live the life of a Christian are battling against the devil's lie. Can we doubt the result of this conflict? God lives, God reigns, and daily He is working His miracles.—*This Day With God*, p. 287.

Wednesday, February 26: If You Worship Me

“And the devil, taking Him up into an high mountain, showed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto Him, All this power will I give Thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If Thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be Thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind Me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.”

Satan presented before Jesus the kingdoms of the world in the most attractive light. If Jesus would there worship him, he offered to relinquish his claims to the possessions of earth. If the plan of salvation should be carried out, and Jesus should die to redeem man, Satan knew that his own power must be limited and finally taken away, and that he would be destroyed. Therefore it was his studied plan to prevent, if possible, the completion of the great work which had been commenced by the Son of God. If the plan of man's redemption should fail, Satan would retain the kingdom which he then claimed. And if he should succeed, he flattered himself that he would reign in opposition to the God of heaven.

But Jesus met the tempter with the rebuke, “Get thee behind Me, Satan.” He was to bow only to His Father.—*Early Writings*, p. 157.

Satan claimed the kingdom of earth as his and insinuated to Jesus that all His sufferings might be saved: that He need not die to obtain the kingdoms of this world; if He would worship him He might have all the possessions of earth and the glory of reigning over them. But Jesus was steadfast. He knew

that the time was to come when He would by His own life redeem the kingdom from Satan, and that, after a season, all in heaven and earth would submit to Him. He chose His life of suffering and His dreadful death, as the way appointed by His Father that He might become a lawful heir to the kingdoms of earth and have them given into His hands as an everlasting possession. Satan also will be given into His hands to be destroyed by death, nevermore to annoy Jesus or the saints in glory.—*Early Writings*, p. 157.

Christ did not tell His disciples that their work would be easy. He showed them the vast confederacy of evil arrayed against them. They would have to fight “against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Ephesians 6:12. But they would not be left to fight alone. He assured them that He would be with them; and that if they would go forth in faith, they should move under the shield of Omnipotence. He bade them be brave and strong; for One mightier than angels would be in their ranks—the General of the armies of heaven.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 29.

Thursday, February 27: The Nature of the Cosmic Conflict

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love—homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced allegiance, and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 493.

The principalities and powers of darkness were assembled around the cross, casting the hellish shadow of unbelief into the hearts of men. When the Lord created these beings to stand before His throne, they were beautiful and glorious. Their loveliness and holiness were in accordance with their exalted station. They were enriched with the wisdom of God, and girded with the panoply of heaven. They were Jehovah’s ministers. But who could recognize in the fallen angels the glorious seraphim that once

ministered in the heavenly courts?

Satanic agencies confederated with evil men in leading the people to believe Christ the chief of sinners, and to make Him the object of detestation. Those who mocked Christ as He hung upon the cross were imbued with the spirit of the first great rebel. He filled them with vile and loathsome speeches. He inspired their taunts. But by all this he gained nothing. . . .

Christ bowed His head and died, but He held fast His faith and His submission to God. “And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.” Revelation 12:10.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 760, 761.

God has given His law for the regulation of the conduct of nations, of families, and of individuals. There is not one worker of wickedness, though his sin is the least and the most secret, that escapes the denunciation of that law. The whole work of the father of lies is recorded in the statute books of heaven; and those who lend themselves to the service of Satan, to present to men his lies by precept and practice, will receive according to their deeds. Every offense against God, however minute, is set down in the reckoning. And when the sword of justice is taken in hand, it will do the work that was done to the Divine Sufferer. Justice will strike; for God’s hatred of sin is intense and overwhelming.

The truth as it is in Jesus will teach most important lessons. It will show that the love of God is broad and deep; that it is infinite; and that in awarding the penalty to the disobedient, those who have made void God’s law, it will be uncompromising. This is the love and justice of God combined. It reaches to the very depth of human woe and degradation, to lift up the fallen and oppressed who lay hold of the truth by repentance and faith in Jesus.—*Lift Him Up*, p. 158.

Friday, February 28: For Further Reading

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, “Religion and Scientific Education,” pp. 503, 504;

God's Amazing Grace, "The Battlefield," p. 36.

Lesson 10

Rules of Engagement

Sabbath Afternoon, March 1

Outwardly bold and defiant, but with terror in their guilty hearts, the false priests prepare their altar, laying on the wood and the victim; and then they begin their incantations. Their shrill cries echo and re-echo through the forests and the surrounding heights, as they call on the name of their god, saying, “O Baal, hear us.” The priests gather about their altar, and with leaping and writhing and screaming, with tearing of hair and cutting of flesh, they beseech their god to help them. . . .

Gladly would Satan have come to the help of those whom he had deceived, and who were devoted to his service. Gladly would he have sent the lightning to kindle their sacrifice. But Jehovah has set Satan’s bounds, restrained his power, and not all the enemy’s devices can convey one spark to Baal’s altar.—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 149, 150.

Modern spiritualism and the forms of ancient witchcraft and idol worship—all having communion with the dead as their vital principle—are founded upon that first lie by which Satan beguiled Eve in Eden: “Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, . . . ye shall be as gods.” Genesis 3:4, 5. Alike based upon falsehood and perpetuating the same, they are alike from the father of lies. . . .

The “familiar spirits” [are] not the spirits of the dead, but evil angels, the messengers of Satan. Ancient idolatry, which, as we have seen, comprises both worship of the dead and pretended communion with them, is declared by the Bible to have been demon worship. The apostle Paul, in warning his brethren against participating, in any manner, in the idolatry of their heathen neighbors, says, “The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God, and I would not that ye should have

fellowship with devils.” 1 Corinthians 10:20. . . . In their supposed worship of dead men they were in reality worshipping demons.—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 685, 686.

Satan, the chief of the fallen angels, once had an exalted position in heaven. He was next in honor to Christ. The knowledge which he, as well as the angels who fell with him, had of the character of God, of His goodness, His mercy, wisdom, and excellent glory, made their guilt unpardonable. . . .

The principles of Satan’s working in heaven are the same principles by which he works through human agents in this world. It is through these corrupting principles that every earthly empire and the churches have been increasingly corrupted. It is by the working out of these principles that Satan deceives and corrupts the whole world from the beginning to the ending. He is continuing this same policy-working, originally begun in the heavenly universe. He is energizing the whole world with his violence with which he corrupted the world in the days of Noah.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1163.

Sunday, March 2: An Angel Delayed

We have before us in the Word of God instances of heavenly agencies working on the minds of kings and rulers, while at the same time satanic agencies were also at work on their minds. No human eloquence, in strongly set forth human opinions, can change the working of satanic agencies. Satan seeks continually to block the way, so that the truth shall be bound about by human devising; and those who have light and knowledge are in the greatest danger unless they constantly consecrate themselves to God, humiliating self, and realizing the peril of the times.

Heavenly beings are appointed to answer the prayers of those who are working unselfishly for the interests of the cause of God. The very highest angels in the heavenly courts are appointed to work out the prayers which ascend to God for the advancement of the cause of God. Each angel has his particular post of duty, which he is not permitted to leave for any other place. If he should leave, the powers of darkness would gain an advantage.—*Lift Him Up*, p. 370.

As a people we do not understand as we should the great conflict going on between invisible agencies, the controversy between loyal and disloyal angels. Evil angels are constantly at work, planning their line of attack, controlling as commanders, kings, and rulers, the disloyal human forces. . . . Do not indulge in fanciful speculations. The Written Word is our only safety. We must pray as did Daniel, that we may be guarded by heavenly intelligences. As ministering spirits angels are sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. Pray, my brethren, pray as you have never prayed before. We are not prepared for the Lord's coming. We need to make thorough work for eternity.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1173.

It was by the display of supernatural power, in making the serpent his medium, that Satan caused the fall of Adam and Eve in Eden. Before the close of time he will work still greater wonders. So far as his power extends, he will perform actual miracles. Says the Scripture: "He . . . deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do," not merely those which he pretends to do. Something more than mere impostures is brought to view in this scripture. But there is a limit beyond which Satan cannot go, and here he calls deception to his aid and counterfeits the work which he has not power actually to perform. In the last days he will appear in such a manner as to make men believe him to be Christ come the second time into the world. He will indeed transform himself into an angel of light. But . . . it will deceive none but those who, like Pharaoh, are seeking to resist the truth.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 698.

Monday, March 3: The Dragon of Revelation

Under the symbols of a great red dragon, a leopardlike beast, and a beast with lamblike horns, the earthly governments which would especially engage in trampling upon God's law and persecuting His people, were presented to John. The war is carried on till the close of time. The people of God, symbolized by a holy woman and her children, were represented as greatly in the minority. In the last days only a remnant still existed. Of these John speaks as they "which keep the commandments of God, and have the

testimony of Jesus Christ.” . . .

Satan and his army of confederates have been the avowed enemies of God in our world, continually warring against the cause of truth and righteousness. Satan has continued to present to men, as he presented to the angels, his false representations of Christ and of God, and he has won the world to his side. Even the professedly Christian churches have taken sides with the great apostate.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 972, 973.

We are in constant danger of becoming self-sufficient, relying upon our own wisdom, and not making God our strength. Nothing disturbs Satan so much as our not being ignorant of his devices. If we feel our dangers, we shall feel the need of prayer as did Nehemiah, and, like him, we shall obtain that sure defense that will give us security in peril. If we are careless and indifferent, we shall surely be overcome by Satan’s devices. We must be vigilant. While, like Nehemiah, we resort to prayer, taking all our perplexities and burdens to God, we should not feel that we have nothing to do. We are to watch as well as pray. We should watch the work of our adversaries, lest they gain advantage in deceiving souls. We should, in the wisdom of Christ, make efforts to defeat their purposes, while, at the same time, we do not suffer them to call us from our great work. Truth is stronger than error. Righteousness will prevail over wrong.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1138.

With pity and compassion, with tender yearning, the Lord is looking upon His tempted and tried people. For a time the oppressors will be permitted to triumph over those who know God’s holy commandments. All are given the same opportunity that was granted to the first great rebel to demonstrate the spirit that moves them to action. It is God’s purpose that everyone shall be tested and proved, to see whether he will be loyal or disloyal to the laws which govern the kingdom of heaven. To the last God permits Satan to reveal his character as a liar, an accuser, and a murderer. Thus the final triumph of his people is made more marked, more glorious, more full and complete.

The people of God should be wide awake, not trusting in their own wisdom, but wholly in the wisdom of their Leader. They should set aside days for fasting and prayer.—*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 414.

Tuesday, March 4: The Case of Job

It was generally believed by the Jews that sin is punished in this life. Every affliction was regarded as the penalty of some wrongdoing, either of the sufferer himself or of his parents. It is true that all suffering results from the transgression of God's law, but this truth had become perverted. Satan, the author of sin and all its results, had led men to look upon disease and death as proceeding from God,—as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin. Hence one upon whom some great affliction or calamity had fallen had the additional burden of being regarded as a great sinner. . . .

God had given a lesson designed to prevent this. The history of Job had shown that suffering is inflicted by Satan, and is overruled by God for purposes of mercy.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 471.

A guardian angel is appointed to every follower of Christ. These heavenly watchers shield the righteous from the power of the wicked one. This Satan himself recognized when he said: "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?" Job 1:9, 10. The agency by which God protects His people is presented in the words of the psalmist: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." Psalm 34:7. . . . The angels appointed to minister to the children of God have at all times access to His presence.

Thus God's people, exposed to the deceptive power and unsleeping malice of the prince of darkness, and in conflict with all the forces of evil, are assured of the unceasing guardianship of heavenly angels. Nor is such assurance given without need. If God has granted to His children promise of grace and protection, it is because there are mighty agencies of evil to be met—agencies numerous, determined, and untiring, of whose malignity and power none can safely be ignorant or unheeding.—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 512, 513.

The enemy cannot overcome the humble learner of Christ, the one who walks prayerfully before the Lord. Christ interposes Himself as a shelter, a retreat, from the assaults of the wicked one. The promise is given, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."

Satan was permitted to tempt the too-confident Peter, as he had been permitted to tempt Job; but when that work was done he had to retire. Had Satan been suffered to have his way, there would have been no hope. . . . He would have made complete shipwreck of faith. But the enemy dare not go one hairbreadth beyond his appointed sphere. There is no power in the whole satanic force that can disable the soul that trusts, in simple confidence, in the wisdom that comes from God.—*My Life Today*, p. 316.

Wednesday, March 5: The (Temporary) Ruler of This World

When Christ came to this world, He found that Satan had everything as he wanted it. The adversary of God and man thought that he was indeed the prince of the earth, but Jesus laid hold of the world to take it out of the power of Satan. He came to redeem it from the curse of sin and the penalty of transgression, that the transgressor might be forgiven. He planted the cross between earth and heaven, and between divinity and humanity; and as the Father beheld the cross, He was satisfied. . . . [In the cross] “mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1137.

When Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted, He was led by the Spirit of God. He did not invite temptation. He went to the wilderness to be alone, to contemplate His mission and work. By fasting and prayer He was to brace Himself for the bloodstained path He must travel. But Satan knew that the Saviour had gone into the wilderness, and he thought this the best time to approach Him.

Mighty issues for the world were at stake in the conflict between the Prince of light and the leader of the kingdom of darkness. After tempting man to sin, Satan claimed the earth as his, and styled himself the prince of this world. Having conformed to his own nature the father and mother of our race, he thought to establish here his empire. He declared that men had chosen him as their sovereign. Through his control of men, he held dominion over the world. Christ had come to disprove Satan’s claim. As the Son of man, Christ would stand loyal to God. Thus it would be shown that

Satan had not gained complete control of the human race, and that his claim to the world was false. All who desired deliverance from his power would be set free. The dominion that Adam had lost through sin would be recovered.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 114.

[Jesus] gave Satan no advantage. When the last steps of Christ's humiliation were to be taken, when the deepest sorrow was closing about His soul, He said to His disciples, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." "The prince of this world is judged." Now shall he be cast out. John 14:30; 16:11; 12:31. With prophetic eye Christ traced the scenes to take place in His last great conflict. He knew that when He should exclaim, "It is finished," all heaven would triumph. His ear caught the distant music and the shouts of victory in the heavenly courts. He knew that the knell of Satan's empire would then be sounded, and the name of Christ would be heralded from world to world throughout the universe.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 678, 679.

Thursday, March 6: Limits and Rules

In the divine arrangement God does nothing without the cooperation of man. He compels no man's will. That must be given to the Lord completely, else the Lord is not able to accomplish His divine work that He would do through the human agency. Jesus declared that in a certain place He could not do many mighty works among the people because of their unbelief. He wanted to do for them in that place just what He knew that they needed to have done, but He could not because unbelief barred the way. The potter cannot mold and fashion unto honor that which has never been placed in his hands. The Christian life is one of daily surrender, submission, and continual overcoming, gaining fresh victories every day. This is the growing up into Christ, fashioning the life into the divine Model.—*That I May Know Him*, p. 55.

Some poor souls who have been fascinated with the eloquent words of the teachers of spiritualism, and have yielded to its influence, afterward find out its deadly character, and would renounce and flee from it, but cannot. Satan holds them by his power, and is not willing to let them go free. He

knows that they are surely his while he has them under his special control, but that if they once free themselves from his power, he can never bring them again to believe in spiritualism, and to place themselves so directly under his control.

The only way for such poor souls to overcome Satan, is to discern between pure Bible truth and fables. As they acknowledge the claims of truth, they place themselves where they can be helped. They should entreat those who have had a religious experience, and who have faith in the promises of God, to plead with the mighty Deliverer in their behalf. It will be a close conflict. Satan will reinforce his evil angels who have controlled these persons; but if the saints of God with deep humility fast and pray, their prayers will prevail. Jesus will commission holy angels to resist Satan, and he will be driven back and his power broken from off the afflicted ones. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 343.

There are toils and conflicts and self-denials for us all. Not one will escape them. We must tread the path where Jesus leads the way. It may be in tears, in trials, in bereavements, in sorrow for sins, or in seeking for the mastery over depraved desires, unbalanced characters, and unholy tempers. It requires earnest effort to present ourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. It takes the entire being. There is no chamber of the mind where Satan can hold sway and carry out his devices. Self must be crucified. Consecration, submission, and sacrifices must be made that will seem like taking the very lifeblood from the heart.

Will it make you sad to be buffeted, despised, derided, maligned of the world? It ought not, for Jesus told us just how it would be. “If the world hate you,” He says, “ye know that it hated me before it hated you” (John 15:18). The apostle Paul, the great hero of faith, testifies: “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).—*That I May Know Him*, p. 280.

Friday, March 7: For Further Reading

In Heavenly Places, “Heaven’s Honor Roll,” p. 271;
God’s Amazing Grace, “Incomparable Temptations,” p. 162.

Lesson 11

What More Could I Have Done?

Sabbath Afternoon, March 8

Jesus would contrast His manner of work with that of His accusers. This midnight seizure by a mob, this cruel mockery and abuse before He was even accused or condemned, was their manner, not His. His work was open to all. He had nothing in His doctrines that He concealed. Thus He rebuked their position, and unveiled the hypocrisy of the Sadducees.

Truth never languished on His lips, never suffered in His hands for want of perfect obedience to its requirements. “To this end was I born,” Christ declared, “and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.” And the mighty principles of truth fell from His lips with the freshness of a new revelation. The truth was spoken by Him with an earnestness proportionate to its infinite importance and to the momentous results depending on its success.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1148.

Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father’s mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father’s reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt.—*The Desire*

of Ages, p. 753.

We are safe only in following where Christ leads the way. The path will grow clearer, brighter and brighter, unto the perfect day.

Man's business is to work in cooperation with God. Alone, his feet will slip, in apparently the safest path. We cannot walk one step safely in mere human wisdom. If we would walk without fear, we must know that the hand of Jesus Christ holds our own firmly. And we can only know this by searching the Word of the living God.

God desires that men shall feel their dependence upon Him and trust to that Hand that can save to the uttermost, that Heart that throbs in response to the appeals of suffering humanity. We must not trust in man or make flesh our arm. Our trust must be placed in a Hand that is warm with life and a Heart that throbs with love for the helpless.—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 258.

Sunday, March 9: Christ the Victor

[Satan] tempts men to distrust God's love and to doubt His wisdom. He is constantly seeking to excite a spirit of irreverent curiosity, a restless, inquisitive desire to penetrate the secrets of divine wisdom and power. In their efforts to search out what God has been pleased to withhold, multitudes overlook the truths which He has revealed, and which are essential to salvation. Satan tempts men to disobedience by leading them to believe they are entering a wonderful field of knowledge. But this is all a deception. Elated with their ideas of progression, they are, by trampling on God's requirements, setting their feet in the path that leads to degradation and death.—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 54.

[Christ] loved the poor sinner and took upon Himself the form of a servant, that He might suffer and die in man's behalf. Jesus might have remained at His Father's right hand, wearing His kingly crown and royal robes. But He chose to exchange all the riches, honor, and glory of heaven for the poverty of humanity, and His station of high command for the horrors of Gethsemane and the humiliation and agony of Calvary. He became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, that by His baptism of suffering and blood He might purify and redeem a guilty world. . . .

Christ suffered without the gates of Jerusalem, for Calvary was outside the city walls. This was to show that Christ did not die for the Hebrews alone, but for all mankind. He proclaims to a fallen world that He has come to be their Redeemer and urges them to accept the salvation He offers them. . . . “And having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 121.

The government of God is not, as Satan would make it appear, founded upon a blind submission, an unreasoning control. It appeals to the intellect and the conscience. “Come now, and let us reason together” is the Creator’s invitation to the beings He has made. Isaiah 1:18. God does not force the will of His creatures. He cannot accept an homage that is not willingly and intelligently given. A mere forced submission would prevent all real development of mind or character; it would make man a mere automaton. Such is not the purpose of the Creator. He desires that man, the crowning work of His creative power, shall reach the highest possible development. He sets before us the height of blessing to which He desires to bring us through His grace. He invites us to give ourselves to Him, that He may work His will in us. It remains for us to choose whether we will be set free from the bondage of sin, to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God. —*Steps to Christ*, p. 43.

Monday, March 10: The Just and the Justifier

The atonement of Christ is not a mere skillful way to have our sins pardoned; it is a divine remedy for the cure of transgression and the restoration of spiritual health. It is the Heaven-ordained means by which the righteousness of Christ may be not only upon us but in our hearts and characters.

Christ came to this world to show us what God can do and what we can do in cooperation with God. In human flesh He went into the wilderness to be tempted by the enemy. He knows what it is to hunger and thirst. He knows the weakness and the infirmities of the flesh. He was tempted in all points like as we are tempted.

Our ransom has been paid by our Saviour. No one need be enslaved by Satan. Christ stands before us as our divine example, our all-powerful Helper. We have been bought with a price that it is impossible to compute. Who can measure the goodness and mercy of redeeming love.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1074.

The abundant evidence given by God that He desires the salvation of all, will be the condemnation of those who refuse the gift of heaven. At the last great day, when all will be rewarded or punished according to their obedience or disobedience, the cross of Calvary will appear plainly before those standing before the Judge of all the earth to receive sentence for eternity. . . .

With deep solicitude Heaven watches the conflict between good and evil. None but the obedient can enter the gates of the city of God. Upon those who choose to continue in transgression the death sentence must at last be pronounced. The earth will be purified from their misdoings, their defiance of God.

God's law is the transcript of His character. . . . The rules of life that the Lord has given will make men pure and happy and holy. Those only who obey these rules can hear from the lips of Christ the words, "Come up higher."—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 361.

Every manifestation of God's power for His people arouses the enmity of Satan. Every time God works in their behalf, Satan with his angels works with renewed vigor to compass their ruin. . . . He endeavors to affright their souls with the thought that their case is hopeless, that the stain of their defilement can never be washed away. He hopes so to destroy their faith that they will yield fully to his temptations, and turn from their allegiance to God.

The Lord's people cannot of themselves answer the charges of Satan. As they look to themselves they are ready to despair. But they appeal to the divine Advocate. They plead the merits of the Redeemer. God can be "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26. With confidence the Lord's children cry unto Him to silence the accusations of Satan, and bring to naught his devices. . . . [A]nd with the mighty argument of the cross, Christ silences the bold accuser.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 168.

Tuesday, March 11: The Song of My Beloved

God in His Son had been seeking fruit, and had found none. Israel was a cumberer of the ground. Its very existence was a curse; for it filled the place in the vineyard that a fruitful tree might fill. It robbed the world of the blessings that God designed to give. The Israelites had misrepresented God among the nations. They were not merely useless, but a decided hindrance. To a great degree their religion was misleading, and wrought ruin instead of salvation.

In the parable the dresser of the vineyard does not question the sentence that the tree, if it remained fruitless, should be cut down; but he knows and shares the owner's interest in that barren tree. Nothing could give him greater joy than to see its growth and fruitfulness. He responds to the desire of the owner, saying, "Let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well."

The gardener does not refuse to minister to so unpromising a plant. He stands ready to give it still greater care. He will make its surroundings most favorable, and will lavish upon it every attention.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 215.

On the hills of Palestine our heavenly Father had planted this goodly Vine, and He Himself was the husbandman. Many were attracted by the beauty of this Vine, and declared its heavenly origin. But to the leaders in Israel it appeared as a root out of a dry ground. They took the plant, and bruised it, and trampled it under their unholy feet. Their thought was to destroy it forever. But the heavenly Husbandman never lost sight of His plant. After men thought they had killed it, He took it, and replanted it on the other side of the wall. The vine stock was to be no longer visible. It was hidden from the rude assaults of men. But the branches of the Vine hung over the wall. They were to represent the Vine. Through them grafts might still be united to the Vine. From them fruit has been obtained. There has been a harvest which the passers-by have plucked.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 675.

Could God give us any greater proof of His love than in thus giving His Son to pass through this scene of suffering? And as the gift of God to man was a free gift, His love infinite, so His claims upon our confidence, our

obedience, our whole heart, and the wealth of our affections are correspondingly infinite. He requires all that it is possible for man to give. The submission on our part must be proportionate to the gift of God; it must be complete and wanting in nothing. We are all debtors to God. He has claims upon us that we cannot meet without giving ourselves a full and willing sacrifice. He claims prompt and willing obedience, and nothing short of this will He accept.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 369.

Wednesday, March 12: Christ's Parable of the Vineyard

This parable [of the vineyard] is of great importance to all who are entrusted with responsibilities in the Lord's service. God selected a people to be educated by Christ. He brought them into the wilderness to be trained for His service, and there gave them the highest code of morality—His holy law. To them was committed God's lesson book, the Old Testament Scriptures. Enshrouded in the pillar of cloud Christ led them in their wilderness wandering. By His own power He transplanted the wild vine from Egypt to His vineyard. Well might God ask, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done?" (Isaiah 5:4).

The history of the children of Israel is written for our admonition and instruction upon whom the ends of the world are come. Those who would stand firm in the faith in these last days, and finally gain an entrance into the heavenly Canaan, must listen to the words of warning spoken by Jesus Christ to the Israelites. These lessons were given to the church in the wilderness to be studied and heeded by God's people throughout their generations forever. The experience of the people of God in the wilderness will be the experience of His people in this age. Truth is a safeguard in all time to those who will hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints.—*The Upward Look*, p. 232.

The Jewish people might have repented, if they would, but they were clothed with the garments of their own self-righteousness. They claimed to be the descendants of Abraham, and looked upon every promise made to Israel as theirs. But the Israel of God are those who are converted, not those who are the lineal descendants of Abraham.—*The Upward Look*, p. 80.

With amazement the angels beheld the infinite love of Jesus, who, suffering the most intense agony of mind and body, thought only of others, and encouraged the penitent soul to believe. In His humiliation He as a prophet had addressed the daughters of Jerusalem; as priest and advocate He had pleaded with the Father to forgive His murderers; as a loving Saviour He had forgiven the sins of the penitent thief. . . .

And now the Lord of glory was dying, a ransom for the race. In yielding up His precious life, Christ was not upheld by triumphant joy. All was oppressive gloom. It was not the dread of death that weighed upon Him. It was not the pain and ignominy of the cross that caused His inexpressible agony. Christ was the prince of sufferers; but His suffering was from a sense of the malignity of sin, a knowledge that through familiarity with evil, man had become blinded to its enormity. Christ saw how deep is the hold of sin upon the human heart, how few would be willing to break from its power. He knew that without help from God, humanity must perish, and He saw multitudes perishing within reach of abundant help.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 752.

Thursday, March 13: The Vindication of God's Name

Fallen man, because of his guilt, could no longer come directly before God with his supplications; for his transgression of the divine law had placed an impassable barrier between the holy God and the transgressor. But a plan was devised that the sentence of death should rest upon a Substitute. In the plan of redemption there must be the shedding of blood, for death must come in consequence of man's sin. The beasts for sacrificial offerings were to prefigure Christ. In the slain victim, man was to see the fulfillment for the time being of God's word, "Thou shalt surely die." And the flowing of the blood from the victim would also signify an atonement. There was no virtue in the blood of animals; but the shedding of the blood of beasts was to point forward to a Redeemer who would one day come to the world and die for the sins of men. And thus Christ would fully vindicate His Father's law.—*Confrontation*, p. 21.

What sustained the Son of God during His life of toil and sacrifice? He

saw the results of the travail of His soul and was satisfied. Looking into eternity, He beheld the happiness of those who through His humiliation had received pardon and everlasting life. His ear caught the shout of the redeemed. He heard the ransomed ones singing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

We may have a vision of the future, the blessedness of heaven. In the Bible are revealed visions of the future glory, scenes pictured by the hand of God, and these are dear to His church. By faith we may stand on the threshold of the eternal city, and hear the gracious welcome given to those who in this life co-operate with Christ, regarding it as an honor to suffer for His sake. As the words are spoken, “Come, ye blessed of My Father,” they cast their crowns at the feet of the Redeemer, exclaiming, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. . . . Honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” Matthew 25:34; Revelation 5:12, 13.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 601.

Ever before Him, Christ saw the result of His mission. His earthly life, so full of toil and self-sacrifice, was cheered by the thought that He would not have all this travail for nought. By giving His life for the life of men, He would restore in humanity the image of God. He would lift us up from the dust, reshape the character after the pattern of His own character, and make it beautiful with His own glory. . . .

Although the baptism of blood must first be received, although the sins of the world were to weigh upon His innocent soul, although the shadow of an unspeakable woe was upon Him; yet for the joy that was set before Him He chose to endure the cross and despised the shame.—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 504.

Friday, March 14: For Further Reading

The Acts of the Apostles, “God’s Purposes for His Church,” pp. 14–16;
Lift Him Up, “What More Could I Have Done?” p. 216.

Lesson 12

Love and Justice: The Two Greatest Commandments

Sabbath Afternoon, March 15

John's love for his Master was not a mere human friendship, but it was the love of a repentant sinner, who felt that he had been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. He esteemed it the highest honor to work and suffer in the service of his Lord. His love for Jesus led him to love all for whom Christ died. His religion was of a practical character. He reasoned that love to God would be manifested in love to His children. He was heard again and again to say, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 John 4:11). "We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (verses 19, 20).

The apostle's life was in harmony with his teachings. The love which glowed in his heart for Christ, led him to put forth the most earnest, untiring labor for his fellow men, especially for his brethren in the Christian church. He was a powerful preacher, fervent, and deeply in earnest, and his words carried with them a weight of conviction.—*The Sanctified Life*, p. 53.

If we love God with all the heart, we must love His children also. This love is the spirit of God. It is the heavenly adorning that gives true nobility and dignity to the soul and assimilates our lives to that of the Master. No matter how many good qualities we may have, however honorable and refined we may consider ourselves, if the soul is not baptized with the heavenly grace of love to God and one another, we are deficient in true goodness and unfit for heaven, where all is love and unity.—*Testimonies for*

the Church, vol. 4, p. 223.

The servants of Christ are not to act out the dictates of the natural heart. They need to have close communion with God, lest, under provocation, self rise up, and they pour forth a torrent of words that are unbefitting, that are not as dew or the still showers that refresh the withering plants. This is what Satan wants them to do; for these are his methods. It is the dragon that is wroth; it is the spirit of Satan that is revealed in anger and accusing. But God's servants are to be representatives of Him. He desires them to deal only in the currency of heaven, the truth that bears His own image and superscription. The power by which they are to overcome evil is the power of Christ. The glory of Christ is their strength. They are to fix their eyes upon His loveliness. Then they can present the gospel with divine tact and gentleness. And the spirit that is kept gentle under provocation will speak more effectively in favor of the truth than will any argument.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 353.

Sunday, March 16: The Two Greatest Commandments

The lawyer was not satisfied with the position and works of the Pharisees. He had been studying the Scriptures with a desire to learn their real meaning. He had a vital interest in the matter, and had asked in sincerity, "What shall I do?" In his answer as to the requirements of the law, he passed by all the mass of ceremonial and ritualistic precepts. For these he claimed no value, but presented the two great principles on which hang all the law and the prophets. This answer, being commended by Christ, placed the Saviour on vantage ground with the rabbis. They could not condemn Him for sanctioning that which had been advanced by an expositor of the law.

"This do, and thou shalt live," Jesus said. He presented the law as a divine unity, and in this lesson taught that it is not possible to keep one precept, and break another; for the same principle runs through them all. Man's destiny will be determined by his obedience to the whole law. Supreme love to God and impartial love to man are the principles to be wrought out in the life.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 497, 498.

When this young ruler came to Jesus, his sincerity and earnestness won the Saviour's heart. He "beholding him loved him." In this young man He saw one who might do service as a preacher of righteousness. He would have received this talented and noble youth as readily as He received the poor fishermen who followed Him. Had the young man devoted his ability to the work of saving souls, he might have become a diligent and successful laborer for Christ.

But first he must accept the conditions of discipleship. He must give himself unreservedly to God. At the Saviour's call, John, Peter, Matthew, and their companions "left all, rose up, and followed Him." Luke 5:28. The same consecration was required of the young ruler. And in this Christ did not ask a greater sacrifice than He Himself had made. "He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." 2 Corinthians 8:9. The young man had only to follow where Christ led the way.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 392, 393.

Those who love God cannot harbor hatred or envy. When the heavenly principle of eternal love fills the heart, it will flow out to others, not merely because favors are received of them, but because love is the principle of action and modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and elevates and ennoble the affections. This love is not contracted so as merely to include "me and mine," but is as broad as the world and as high as heaven, and is in harmony with that of the angel workers. This love cherished in the soul sweetens the entire life and sheds a refining influence on all around.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 223.

Monday, March 17: The Two Greatest Sins

Many who bear the name of Christians are serving other gods besides the Lord. Our Creator demands our supreme devotion, our first allegiance. Anything which tends to abate our love for God, or to interfere with the service due Him, becomes thereby an idol. With some their lands, their houses, their merchandise, are the idols. Business enterprises are prosecuted with zeal and energy, while the service of God is made a secondary consideration. Family worship is neglected, secret prayer is forgotten. Many

claim to deal justly with their fellow men, and seem to feel that in so doing they discharge their whole duty. But it is not enough to keep the last six commandments of the decalogue. We are to love the Lord our God with all the heart. Nothing short of obedience to every precept—nothing less than supreme love to God as well as equal love to our fellow man—can satisfy the claims of the divine law.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, 1011.

The enemy well knows that if we do not have love one for another, he can gain his object, and wound and weaken the church, by causing differences among brethren. He can lead them to surmise evil, to speak evil, to accuse, condemn, and hate one another. In this way the cause of God is brought into dishonor, the name of Christ is reproached, and untold harm is done to the souls of men. . . .

It is not the opposition of the world that will most endanger us; it is the evil cherished right in our midst that works our most grievous disaster. It is the unconsecrated lives of half-hearted professors that retard the work of the truth, and bring darkness upon the church of God.—*This Day With God*, p. 165.

Let it be printed on the mind that mercy and the love of God are to be expressed to the children of God. Search heaven and earth, and there is no truth revealed more powerful than that which is manifested in mercy to the very ones who need your sympathy and aid in breaking the yoke, and setting free the oppressed. Here the truth is lived, the truth is obeyed, the truth is taught as it is in Jesus.

There is a great amount of truth professed, but truth practiced in relieving our fellow men is of great influence, reaching unto heaven, and compassing eternity. Every soul in our world is on trial; every man's experience, the common life history, tells in unmistakable language whether he is a doer of Christ's words and His works. There is constantly recurring a large array of little things that God alone sees; to act out in these things the principles of truth will bring a precious reward. The great and important things are recognized by nearly all, but the knitting of these things with the supposed smaller things of life and closely connecting them as one, is too rarely done by professed Christians. Religion is too much profession, and too little reality.—*This Day With God*, p. 224.

Tuesday, March 18: God Loves Justice

Christ came to give to the world an example of what perfect humanity might be when united with divinity. He presented to the world a new phase of greatness in His exhibition of mercy, compassion, and love. He gave to men a new interpretation of God. As head of humanity, He taught men lessons in the science of divine government, whereby He revealed the righteousness of the reconciliation of mercy and justice. The reconciliation of mercy and justice did not involve any compromise with sin, or ignore any claim of justice; but by giving to each divine attribute its ordained place, mercy could be exercised in the punishment of sinful, impenitent man without destroying its clemency or forfeiting its compassionate character, and justice could be exercised in forgiving the repenting transgressor without violating its integrity.—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 260.

Let those who occupy positions of trust rid themselves of the unmerciful spirit which so greatly offends God. Justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne. Let no one suppose that God has given to men the power of ruling their fellow-men. He will accept the service of no man who hurts and discourages Christ's heritage. Now is the time for every man to examine himself, to prove himself, that he may see whether he is in the faith. Investigate closely the motives which prompt you to action. We are engaged in the work of the Most High. Let us not weave into the web of our work one thread of selfishness.—Manuscript 42, 1901.

“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.

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.” . . . 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.—*Lift Him Up*, p. 298.

Wednesday, March 19: Called to Establish Justice

The true worshipers of God will work the works of Christ. They will be liberal to the needy; they will not turn the poor from his right, nor frame an excuse to avoid helping those who need help; they will love their neighbors as themselves, not hiding themselves from their own flesh, but considering the condition of the poor, the fatherless, and the widow; they will not appropriate to themselves any portion of the just earnings of those who may be under their control. “Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates: at his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee.” . . .

“And the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.”—“The Blessed of the Father,” *The Home Missionary*, July 1, 1891.

Read the words of Christ in Matthew 23:23: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.” These denunciations are given as a warning to all who “outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within” “are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.” . . . What lessons are here; how fearful and decisive! Jesus said, “Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city.” This prophecy was

literally fulfilled by the Jews in their treatment of Christ and of the messengers whom God sent to them. Will men in these last days follow the example of those whom Christ condemned?—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 79.

Jesus was misunderstood by His brothers because He was not like them. His standard was not their standard. In looking to men they had turned away from God, and they had not His power in their lives. The forms of religion which they observed could not transform the character. They paid “tithe of mint and anise and cummin,” but omitted “the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.” Matthew 23:23. The example of Jesus was to them a continual irritation. He hated but one thing in the world, and that was sin. He could not witness a wrong act without pain which it was impossible to disguise. Between the formalists, whose sanctity of appearance concealed the love of sin, and a character in which zeal for God’s glory was always paramount, the contrast was unmistakable. Because the life of Jesus condemned evil, He was opposed, both at home and abroad. His unselfishness and integrity were commented on with a sneer. His forbearance and kindness were termed cowardice.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 88.

Thursday, March 20: Who Is My Neighbor?

Many, many, have fainted and become discouraged in the great struggle of life, when one word of kindly cheer would have strengthened them to overcome. 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. “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” Beloved, “if we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us.” 1 John 4:20, 12.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 504, 505.

The characteristics most needful to be cherished by God’s commandment-keeping people are patience and long-suffering, peace and love. When love is lacking, irretrievable loss is sustained; for souls are driven away from the truth, even after they have been connected with the cause of God. Our brethren in responsible positions, who have strength of influence, should remember the words of the apostle Paul, spoken by the Holy Spirit: “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not Himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me.” Romans 15:1-3.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 398.

No matter how high the profession, he whose heart is not filled with love for God and his fellow men is not a true disciple of Christ. Though he should possess great faith and have power even to work miracles, yet without love his faith would be worthless. He might display great liberality; but should he, from some other motive than genuine love, bestow all his goods to feed the poor, the act would not commend him to the favor of God. In his zeal he might even meet a martyr’s death, yet if not actuated by love, he would be regarded by God as a deluded enthusiast or an ambitious hypocrite.

“Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.” The purest joy springs from the deepest humiliation. The strongest and noblest characters are built on the foundation of patience, love, and submission to God’s will.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 318, 319.

Friday, March 21: For Further Reading

Manuscript 62, “Home Missionary Work,” August 18, 1894;

Reflecting Christ, “Perfect Oneness Will Give Success,” p. 200.

Lesson 13

Love Is the Fulfillment of the Law

Sabbath Afternoon, March 22

In setting aside the law of God, men know not what they are doing. God's law is the transcript of His character. It embodies the principles of His kingdom. He who refuses to accept these principles is placing himself outside the channel where God's blessings flow.

The glorious possibilities set before Israel could be realized only through obedience to God's commandments. The same elevation of character, the same fulness of blessing—blessing on mind and soul and body, blessing on house and field, blessing for this life and for the life to come—is possible for us only through obedience.

In the spiritual as in the natural world, obedience to the laws of God is the condition of fruit bearing. And when men teach the people to disregard God's commandments, they are preventing them from bearing fruit to His glory. They are guilty of withholding from the Lord the fruits of His vineyard.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 305.

The great God has a law by which to govern His kingdom, and those who trample upon that law will one day find that they are amenable to its statutes. The remedy for transgression is not to be found in declaring that the law is abolished. To abolish the law would be to dishonor it, and to cast contempt upon the Lawgiver. The only escape for the transgressor of law is found in the Lord Jesus Christ; for through the grace and atonement of the only-begotten Son of God, the sinner may be saved and the law vindicated.—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 331.

The same divine mind that is working upon the things of nature is speaking to the hearts of men and creating an inexpressible craving for

something they have not. The things of the world cannot satisfy their longing. The Spirit of God is pleading with them to seek for those things that alone can give peace and rest—the grace of Christ, the joy of holiness. Through influences seen and unseen, our Saviour is constantly at work to attract the minds of men from the unsatisfying pleasures of sin to the infinite blessings that may be theirs in Him. To all these souls, who are vainly seeking to drink from the broken cisterns of this world, the divine message is addressed, “Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Revelation 22:17.

You who in heart long for something better than this world can give, recognize this longing as the voice of God to your soul. Ask Him to give you repentance, to reveal Christ to you in His infinite love, in His perfect purity. In the Saviour’s life the principles of God’s law—love to God and man—were perfectly exemplified. Benevolence, unselfish love, was the life of His soul. It is as we behold Him, as the light from our Saviour falls upon us, that we see the sinfulness of our own hearts.—*Steps to Christ*, p. 28.

Sunday, March 23: The Law of Love

The law of Jehovah dating back to creation, was comprised in the two great principles, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.” These two great principles embrace the first four commandments, showing the duty of man to God, and the last six, showing the duty of man to his fellowman. The principles were more explicitly stated to man after the fall, and worded to meet the case of fallen intelligences. This was necessary in consequence of the minds of men being blinded by transgression.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1104.

The lawyer approached Jesus with a direct question, “Which is the first commandment of all?” The answer of Christ is direct and forcible: “The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy

soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.” The second is like the first, said Christ; for it flows out of it, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.” “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 607.

The first four of the Ten Commandments are summed up in the one great precept, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.” The last six are included in the other, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Both these commandments are an expression of the principle of love. The first cannot be kept and the second broken, nor can the second be kept while the first is broken. When God has His rightful place on the throne of the heart, the right place will be given to our neighbor. We shall love him as ourselves. And only as we love God supremely is it possible to love our neighbor impartially.

And since all the commandments are summed up in love to God and man, it follows that not one precept can be broken without violating this principle. Thus Christ taught His hearers that the law of God is not so many separate precepts, some of which are of great importance, while others are of small importance and may with impunity be ignored. Our Lord presents the first four and the last six commandments as a divine whole, and teaches that love to God will be shown by obedience to all His commandments.

—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 607.

Monday, March 24: The Law Is Holy and Righteous and Good

In His teachings, Christ showed how far-reaching are the principles of the law spoken from Sinai. He made a living application of that law whose principles remain forever the great standard of righteousness—the standard by which all shall be judged in that great day when the judgment shall sit, and the books shall be opened. He came to fulfill all righteousness, and, as the head of humanity, to show man that he can do the same work, meeting every specification of the requirements of God. Through the measure of His grace furnished to the human agent, not one need miss heaven. . . .

When the Spirit of God reveals to man the full meaning of the law, a change takes place in his heart. The faithful portrayal of his true state by the prophet Nathan made David acquainted with his own sins, and aided him in putting them away. He accepted the counsel meekly, and humbled himself before God. “The law of the Lord,” he said, “is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart” [Psalm 19:7, 8].—*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 211, 212.

Sin did not kill the law, but it did kill the carnal mind in Paul. . . . “Was that then which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful” (Romans 7:13). “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Romans 7:12). . . .

There is no safety nor repose nor justification in transgression of the law. Man cannot hope to stand innocent before God, and at peace with Him through the merits of Christ, while he continues in sin. He must cease to transgress, and become loyal and true. As the sinner looks into the great moral looking glass, he sees his defects of character. He sees himself just as he is, spotted, defiled, and condemned. But he knows that the law cannot in any way remove the guilt or pardon the transgressor. He must go farther than this.

The law is but the schoolmaster to bring him to Christ. He must look to his sin-bearing Saviour. And as Christ is revealed to him upon the cross of Calvary, dying beneath the weight of the sins of the whole world, the Holy Spirit shows him the attitude of God to all who repent of their transgressions. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 213.

Tuesday, March 25: Law and Grace

The Lord saw our fallen condition; He saw our need of grace, and because He loved our souls, He has given us grace and peace. Grace means favor to one who is undeserving, to one who is lost. The fact that we are

sinners, instead of shutting us away from the mercy and love of God, makes the exercise of His love to us a positive necessity in order that we may be saved. Christ says, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain” (John 15:16).—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 347.

By His spotless life, His obedience, His death on the cross of Calvary, Christ interceded for the lost race. And now not as a mere petitioner does the Captain of our salvation intercede for us, but as a conqueror claiming His victory. His offering is complete, and as our intercessor He executes His self-appointed work, holding before God the censer containing His own spotless merits and the prayers, confessions, and thanksgiving of His people. . . .

Christ is able to save to the uttermost all who come to Him in faith. He will cleanse them from all defilement if they will let Him. But if they cling to their sins, they cannot possibly be saved; for Christ’s righteousness covers no sin unrepented of. God has declared that those who receive Christ as their Redeemer, accepting Him as the One who takes away all sin, will receive pardon for their transgressions.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 930, 931.

There are two errors against which the children of God—particularly those who have just come to trust in His grace—especially need to guard. The first . . . is that of looking to their own works, trusting to anything they can do, to bring themselves into harmony with God. He who is trying to become holy by his own works in keeping the law, is attempting an impossibility. All that man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin. It is the grace of Christ alone, through faith, that can make us holy.

The opposite and no less dangerous error is that belief in Christ releases men from keeping the law of God; that since by faith alone we become partakers of the grace of Christ, our works have nothing to do with our redemption.

But notice here that obedience is not a mere outward compliance, but the service of love. . . . When the principle of love is implanted in the heart, when man is renewed after the image of Him that created him, the new-covenant promise is fulfilled, “I will put My laws into their hearts, and in

their minds will I write them.” Hebrews 10:16. And if the law is written in the heart, will it not shape the life? Obedience—the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of discipleship. . . . Instead of releasing man from obedience, it is faith, and faith only, that makes us partakers of the grace of Christ, which enables us to render obedience.—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 59, 60.

Wednesday, March 26: Love Is the Fulfillment of the Law

When the law of God is written in the heart it will be exhibited in a pure and holy life. The commandments of God are no dead letter. They are spirit and life, bringing the imaginations and even the thoughts into subjection to the will of Christ. The heart in which they are written will be kept with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. All who love Jesus and keep the commandments will seek to avoid the very appearance of evil; not because they are constrained thus to do, but because they are copying a pure model, and feel averse to everything contrary to the law written in their hearts. They will not feel self-sufficient, but their trust will be in God, who alone is able to keep them from sin and impurity. The atmosphere surrounding them is pure; they will not corrupt their own souls or the souls of others. It is their pleasure to deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before God.—*This Day With God*, p. 146.

[The Sabbath] points to [Christ] as both the Creator and the Sanctifier. . . . For, speaking of Israel, He said, “I gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them,”—make them holy. Ezekiel 20:12. Then the Sabbath is a sign of Christ’s power to make us holy. And it is given to all whom Christ makes holy. . . .

To all who receive the Sabbath as a sign of Christ’s creative and redeeming power, it will be a delight. Seeing Christ in it, they delight themselves in Him. The Sabbath points them to the works of creation as an evidence of His mighty power in redemption. While it calls to mind the lost peace of Eden, it tells of peace restored through the Saviour. And every object in nature repeats His invitation, “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28.—*The Desire of*

Ages, pp. 288, 289.

The sin which is indulged to the greatest extent, and which separates us from God and produces so many contagious spiritual disorders, is selfishness. There can be no returning to the Lord except by self-denial. Of ourselves we can do nothing; but, through God strengthening us, we can live to do good to others, and in this way shun the evil of selfishness. We need not go to heathen lands to manifest our desire to devote all to God in a useful, unselfish life. We should do this in the home circle, in the church, among those with whom we associate and with whom we do business. Right in the common walks of life is where self is to be denied and kept in subordination. . . . We should forget self in the desire to do good to others. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 132.

Thursday, March 27: Above All, Love One Another

Our mission is the same as that which was announced by Christ, at the beginning of His ministry, to be His mission. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,” He said, “because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” Luke 4:18, 19.

We are to carry forward the work placed in our hands by the Master. He says: “If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday: and the Lord shall guide thee continually.” . . . “The poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.” Isaiah 58:10, 11; Deuteronomy 15:11.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 134.

We should study to copy the Pattern, that the Spirit that dwelt in Christ may dwell in us. The Saviour was not found among the exalted and honorable of the world. He did not spend His time among those who were seeking their ease and pleasure. He went about doing good. His work was to help those who needed help, to save the lost and perishing, to lift up the

bowed down, to break the yoke of oppression from those who were in bondage, to heal the afflicted, and to speak words of sympathy and consolation to the distressed and sorrowing. We are required to copy this pattern. Let us be up and doing, seeking to bless the needy and comfort the distressed. The more we partake of the spirit of Christ, the more we shall see to do for our fellow men. We shall be filled with a love for perishing souls, and shall find our delight in following the footsteps of the Majesty of heaven.—*Our High Calling*, p. 180.

Do you in your words, in your spirit, in your actions, resemble Christ? If in word and spirit you represent the character of Christ, then you are Christians; for to be a Christian is to be Christlike. The tongue will testify of the principles that characterize the life; it is the sure test of what power controls the heart. We may judge our own spirit and principles by the words that proceed from our lips. The tongue is always to be under the control of the Holy Spirit. . . .

. . . Do you believe on the Son of God as your personal Saviour? Then if you believe with all your heart, God dwells in the soul, and the soul in God. You represent Jesus. . . . Just in proportion as the human agent is a partaker of the divine nature, he will be in sympathy with Christ. Jesus says, “A new commandment I give unto you [That ye tolerate one another? No], That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.”—“What Doth the Lord Require,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 26, 1896.

Friday, March 28: For Further Reading

That I May Know Him, “God’s Law in the Heart,” p. 299;
In Heavenly Places, “A Relationship of Interdependence,” p. 287.