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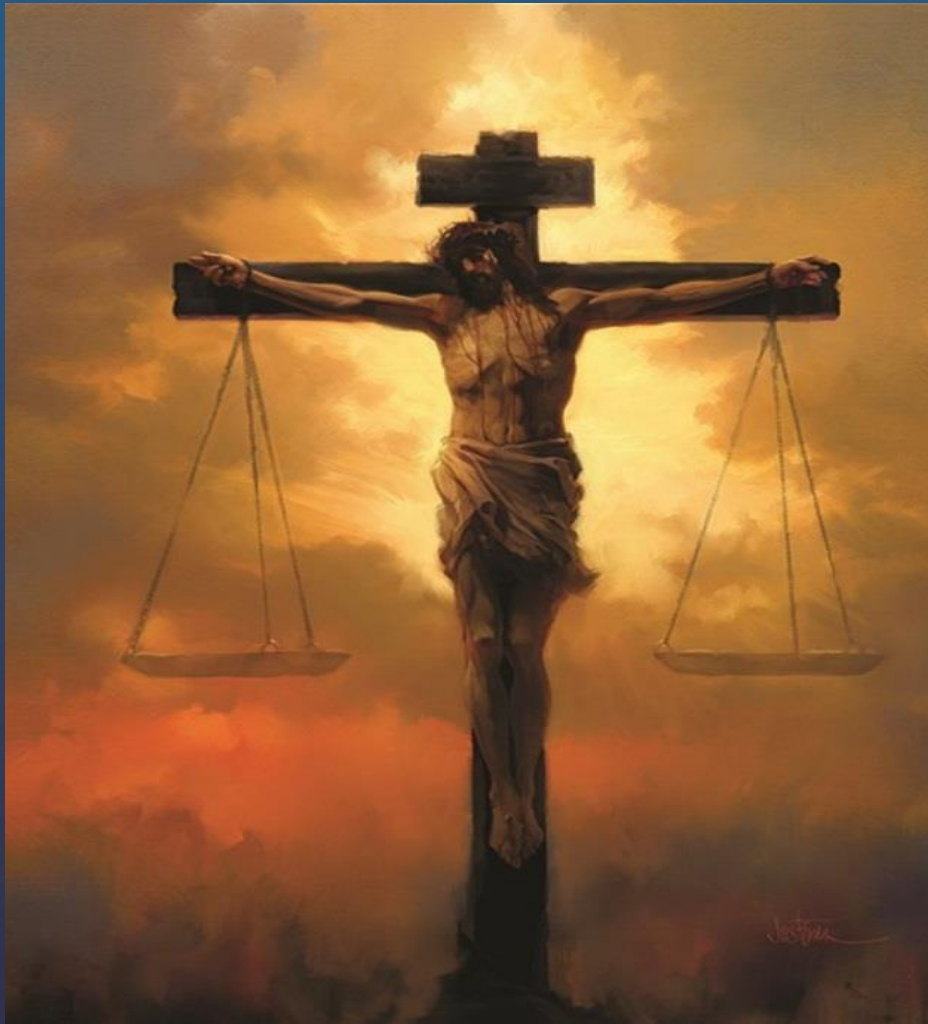
Sabbath School

Bible Study Guide

Jan | Feb | Mar 2025

Name _____

GOD'S LOVE AND JUSTICE



LESSON STUDY HELPS

OVERVIEW

God's Love and Justice

God is love. So says 1 John 4:8 and verse 16. The entirety of the Bible testifies to this fact. The Christian faith is centered on God's character of love. Love is at the core of who God is, at the core of everything that we believe, and should be at the core of everything we do. Accordingly, the way we understand love affects the entirety of our faith and practice. If, for example, one believes that God's love must be earned or merited, a person might think that God does not love them because they are sinful and unworthy. And, in relation to others, one might expect others to merit love—a recipe for disaster.

In this and many other ways, how we understand God's love has massive implications for our faith and practice. Yet, what is love? If you ask ten people to define love, you might get ten different answers. Even among Christians, there are many myths and misunderstandings about God's love.

For example, Christians offer different answers to such questions as:

Does God's love only give but never receive? Is divine love purely self-sacrificial, or might God also delight in and be pleased by humans? Is God's love emotional? Does God really care about humans? Can God's love be rejected or forfeited? Does God enter into a back-and-forth love relationship with creatures? Is anger incompatible with love? How do love and justice go together? If God is love, why is there evil in this world, and so much of it? Can humans love the way God does? If so, what would that look like?

The answers to some of these questions might seem obvious but are often disputed in Christian treatments of divine love. And many answers that are sometimes taken to be obvious, turn out on closer inspection to be incompatible with what Scripture teaches about God's love.

We will not address all these questions at once, but we will take up these and other questions throughout this quarter. And we will see that God's love is far greater than we might think. God's love as depicted in Scripture is far superior to the ideas that pass for "love" in much of our world today. In the coming weeks, we will look more closely at some of the most prominent and beautiful aspects of God's love that are revealed in the Bible.

And, as we continue on, we will see how divine love and justice are inextricably connected. The God of the Bible loves justice (see, for example, Isa. 61:8).

And, as the Bible portrays them, divine love and justice go together in such a way that you cannot have one without the other. Because God is love, He is deeply concerned about injustice and suffering in this world, and He identifies Himself with the oppressed and the suffering, willingly entering into the pain and grief that evil has wrought in creation—Himself suffering most of all, so much so that God Himself is the greatest victim of evil.

Throughout the Bible, God is repeatedly grieved and pained by evil and suffering because He loves each person more than we can possibly imagine. One can see the depth of God's love in the lament of Christ over His people when He said: " 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!' " (Matt. 23:37, NKJV).

The God of the Bible, who is love, is often portrayed throughout Scripture as broken-hearted and grieved by love rejected and love lost. The entire story of Scripture is about what God has done and is doing to restore love to every corner and crevice of the universe. This and much more is the topic of this quarter's lessons.

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LESSON 1

"GOD LOVES FREELY"

December 28 - January 3

EGW Study Notes 1

Preparation Day, January 3rd, 2025

The Acts of the Apostles Chapter 51, p. 514-518

"A faithful Under-Shepherd"

Little mention is made in the book of Acts of the later work of the apostle Peter. During the busy years of ministry that followed the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, he was among those who put forth untiring efforts to reach the Jews who came to Jerusalem to worship at the time of the annual festivals.

As the number of believers multiplied in Jerusalem and in other places visited by the messengers of the cross, the talents possessed by Peter proved of untold value to the early Christian church. The influence of his testimony concerning Jesus of Nazareth extended far and wide. Upon him had been laid a double responsibility. He bore positive witness concerning the Messiah before unbelievers, labouring earnestly for their conversion; and at the same time he did a special work for believers, strengthening them in the faith of Christ.

It was after Peter had been led to self-renunciation and entire reliance upon divine power, that he received his call to act as an under-shepherd. Christ had said to Peter, before his denial of Him, "*When you are converted, strengthen thy brethren.*" [Luke 22:32] These words were significant of the wide and effectual work which this apostle was to do in the future for those who should come to the faith. For this work, Peter's own experience of sin and suffering and repentance had prepared him. Not until he had learned his weakness, could he know the believer's need of dependence on Christ. Amid the storm of temptation he had come to understand that man can walk safely only as in utter self-distrust he relies upon the Saviour.

At the last meeting of Christ with His disciples by the sea, Peter, tested by the thrice-repeated question, "*Do you love Me?*" [John 21:15-17], had been restored to his place among the Twelve. His work had been appointed him; he was to feed the Lord's flock. Now, converted and accepted, he was not only to seek to save those without the fold, but was to be a shepherd of the sheep.

Christ mentioned to Peter only one condition of service—"Do you love Me?" [John 21:15-17] This is the essential qualification. Though Peter might possess every other, yet without the love of Christ he could not be a faithful shepherd over the flock of God. Knowledge, benevolence, eloquence, zeal—all are essential in the good work; but without the love of Christ in the heart, the work of the Christian minister is a failure.

The love of Christ is not a fitful feeling, but a living principle, which is to be made manifest as an abiding power in the heart. If the character and deportment of the shepherd is an exemplification of the truth he advocates, the Lord will set the seal of His approval to the work. The shepherd and the flock will become one, united by their common hope in Christ.

The Saviour's manner of dealing with Peter had a lesson for him and his brethren. Although Peter had denied his Lord, the love which Jesus bore him had never faltered. And as the apostle should take up the work of ministering the word to others, he was to meet the transgressor with patience, sympathy, and forgiving love. Remembering his

own weakness and failure, he was to deal with the sheep and lambs committed to his care as tenderly as Christ had dealt with him.

Human beings, themselves given to evil, are prone to deal untenderly with the tempted and the erring. They cannot read the heart; they know not its struggle and its pain. Of the rebuke that is love, of the blow that wounds to heal, of the warning that speaks hope, they have need to learn.

Throughout his ministry, Peter faithfully watched over the flock entrusted to his care, and thus proved himself worthy of the charge and responsibility given him by the Saviour. Ever he exalted Jesus of Nazareth as the Hope of Israel, the Saviour of mankind. He brought his own life under the discipline of the Master Worker. By every means within his power he sought to educate the believers for active service. His godly example and untiring activity inspired many young men of promise to give themselves wholly to the work of the ministry. As time went on, the apostle's influence as an educator and leader increased; and while he never lost his burden to labour especially for the Jews, yet he bore his testimony in many lands and strengthened the faith of multitudes in the gospel.

In the later years of his ministry, Peter was inspired to write to the believers "scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." His letters were the means of reviving the courage and strengthening the faith of those who were enduring trial and affliction, and of renewing to good works those who through manifold temptations were in danger of losing their hold upon God. These letters bear the impress of having been written by one in whom the sufferings of Christ and also His consolation had been made to abound; one whose entire being had been transformed by grace, and whose hope of eternal life was sure and steadfast.

At the very beginning of his first letter the aged servant of God ascribed to his Lord a tribute of praise and thanksgiving. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," he exclaimed, "which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

In this hope of a sure inheritance in the earth made new, the early Christians rejoiced, even in times of severe trial and affliction. *"You greatly rejoice," Peter wrote, "though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, you love; in whom, though now you see Him not, . . . you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."* [1 Peter 1st 6-9]

The apostle's words were written for the instruction of believers in every age, and they have a special significance for those who live at the time when *"the end of all things is at hand."* [1 Peter 4:7] His exhortations and warnings, and his words of faith and courage, are needed by every soul who would maintain his faith *"steadfast unto the end."* [Hebrews 3:14]

The apostle sought to teach the believers how important it is to keep the mind from wandering to forbidden themes or from spending its energies on trifling subjects. Those who would not fall a prey to Satan's devices, must guard well the avenues of the soul; they must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts. The mind must not be left to dwell at random upon every subject that the enemy of souls may suggest. The heart must be faithfully sentineled, or evils without will awaken evils within, and the soul will wander in darkness. "Gird up the loins of your mind," Peter wrote, "be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; . . . not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, *"Be ye holy; for I am holy."* [1 Peter 1:16]

EGW Study Notes 2**Preparation Day, January 3rd, 2025****The Story of Redemption****Chapter 4, p. 37-39****“Temptation and Fall”****“Man’s Freedom of Choice”**

God instructed our first parents in regard to the tree of knowledge, and they were fully informed relative to the fall of Satan, and the danger of listening to his suggestions. He did not deprive them of the power of eating the forbidden fruit. He left them as free moral agents to believe His word, obey His commandments, and live, or believe the tempter, disobey, and perish. They both ate, and the great wisdom they obtained was the knowledge of sin and a sense of guilt. The covering of light about them soon disappeared, and under a sense of guilt and loss of their divine covering, a shivering seized them, and they tried to cover their exposed forms.

Our first parents chose to believe the words, as they thought, of a serpent; yet he had given them no tokens of his love. He had done nothing for their happiness and benefit, while God had given them everything that was good for food and pleasant to the sight. Everywhere the eye might rest was abundance and beauty; yet Eve was deceived by the serpent, to think that there was something withheld which would make them wise, even as God. Instead of believing and confiding in God, she basely distrusted His goodness and cherished the words of Satan.

After Adam's transgression he at first imagined that he felt the rising to a new and higher existence. But soon the thought of his transgression terrified him. The air, that had been of a mild and even temperature, seemed to chill them. The guilty pair had a sense of sin. They felt a dread of the future, a sense of want, a nakedness of soul. The sweet love and peace and happy contented bliss seemed removed from them, and in its place a want of something came over them that they had never experienced before. They then for the first time turned their attention to the external. They had not been clothed but were draped in light as were the heavenly angels. This light which had enshrouded them had departed. To relieve their sense of lack and nakedness which they realized, their attention was directed to seek a covering for their forms, for how could they meet the eye of God and angels unclothed?

Their crime is now before them in its true light. Their transgression of God's express command assumes a clearer character. Adam censured Eve's folly in leaving his side and being deceived by the serpent. They both flattered themselves that God, who had given them everything to make them happy, might yet excuse their disobedience because of His great love to them and that their punishment would not be so dreadful after all.

Satan exulted in his success. He had now tempted the woman to distrust God, to question His wisdom, and to seek to penetrate His all-wise plans. And through her he had also caused the overthrow of Adam, who, in consequence of his love for Eve, disobeyed the command of God and fell with her.

The news of man's fall spread through heaven—every harp was hushed. The angels cast their crowns from their heads in sorrow. All heaven was in agitation. The angels were grieved at the base ingratitude of man in return for the rich bounties God had provided. A council was held to decide what must be done with the guilty pair. The angels feared that they would put forth the hand and eat of the tree of life, and thus perpetuate a life of sin.

The Lord visited Adam and Eve, and made known to them the consequence of their disobedience. As they heard God's majestic approach they sought to hide themselves from His inspection, whom they delighted, while in their innocence and holiness, to meet. *"And The LORD God called to Adam, and said to him, **Where are you?** And he said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.' And He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded you that you should not eat?'"* [Genesis 3:9-11] This question was asked by The LORD, not because He needed information, but for the

conviction of the guilty pair. How didst thou become ashamed and fearful? Adam acknowledged his transgression, not because he was penitent for his great disobedience, but to cast reflection upon God. "*And the man said, The woman whom thou gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.*" [Genesis 3:12] The woman was then addressed: "*The LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this that thou hast done?' And the woman said, 'The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat'.*" [Genesis 3:13]

LESSON 2***“COVENANTAL LOVE”*****January 4 - January 10*****EGW Study Notes 1******Preparation Day, January 10th, 2025*****In Heavenly Places
Chapter 1, p. 32****“In Right Relationship to God”****January 26th**

Jesus answered and said unto 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.

John 14:23

Consider the familiar relation Christ here brings to view as existing between the Father and His children. His presence and guardianship are an abiding thing. While we trust in Christ's saving power, all the arts and wiles of the fallen host can do nothing to harm us. Heavenly angels are constantly with us, guiding and protecting. God has ordained that we shall have His saving power with us, to enable us to do all His will. Let us grasp the promises and cherish them moment by moment. Let us believe that God means just what He says.

There is a possibility of the believer in Christ obtaining an experience that will be wholly sufficient to place him in right relation to God. Every promise that is in God's Book holds out to us the encouragement that we may be partakers of the divine nature. This is the possibility—to rely upon God, to believe His Word, to work His works; and this we can do when we lay hold of the divinity of Christ.

This possibility is worth more to us than all the riches in the world. There is nothing on earth that can compare with it. As we lay hold of the power thus placed within our reach, we receive a hope so strong that we can rely wholly upon God's promises; and laying hold of the possibilities there are in Christ, we become the sons and daughters of God.

There are high attainments for the Christian. He may ever be rising to higher attainments. John had an elevated idea of the privilege of a Christian. He says, "*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.*" [1 John 3:1] It is not possible for humanity to rise to a higher dignity than is here implied. To man is granted the privilege of becoming an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ. To those who have been thus exalted, are unfolded the unsearchable riches of Christ, which are of a thousandfold more value than the wealth of the world. Thus, through the merits of Jesus Christ, finite man is elevated to fellowship with God and with His dear Son.

EGW Study Notes 2**Preparation Day, January 10th, 2025****In Heavenly Places
Chapter 1, p. 16****“Not to Condemn But to Save”****January 10th**

For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.

John 3:17

There are souls who are trembling in unbelief. They ask, “How can I know that God is reconciled to me? How can I be assured that He loves and pardons me?” It is not for you, dear youth, to make yourselves just with God. Jesus invites you to come to Him with all your burdens and perplexities.... Accept the promise and the provision that God has made.... Look away from self to Jesus; for in Christ the character of the Father is revealed.

The blood of Christ in ever-abiding efficacy is our only hope, for through His merits alone we have pardon and peace.

The character of God as revealed by Christ invites our faith and love, for we have a Father whose mercy and compassion fail not. At every step of our journey heavenward He will be with us to guide in every perplexity, to give us help in every temptation.

Your reason and imagination should be touched with the life-giving power of Christ, that forms of beauty and truth may be impressed thereon. There are great and precious truths that demand your contemplation, in order that you may have a sound foundation for your faith by having a correct knowledge of God. O that the superficial, vain seeker for truth would learn that the world by wisdom, however much acquired, knew not God.

It is proper to seek to learn all that is possible from nature, but do not fail to look from nature to Christ for the complete representation of the character of the living God. By contemplation of Christ, by conformity to the divine likeness, your conceptions of the divine character will expand, and your mind and heart will be elevated, refined, and ennobled. Let the youth aim high, not relying upon human wisdom, but living day by day as seeing Him who is invisible, doing their work as in the sight of the intelligences of heaven....

He who constantly depends upon God through simple trust and prayerful confidence, will be surrounded by the angels of heaven. He who lives by faith in Christ, will be strengthened and upheld, able to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold upon eternal life.

LESSON 3

"TO BE PLEASING TO GOD"

January 11 - January 17

EGW Study Notes 1

Preparation Day, January 17th, 2025

The Desire of Ages

Chapter 33, p. 321-327

"Who are My Brethren?"

The sons of Joseph were far from being in sympathy with Jesus in His work. The reports that reached them in regard to His life and labours filled them with astonishment and dismay. They heard that He devoted entire nights to prayer, that through the day He was thronged by great companies of people, and did not give Himself time so much as to eat. His friends felt that He was wearing Himself out by His incessant labour; they were unable to account for His attitude toward the Pharisees, and there were some who feared that His reason was becoming unsettled.

His brothers heard of this, and also of the charge brought by the Pharisees that He cast out devils through the power of Satan. They felt keenly the reproach that came upon them through their relation to Jesus. They knew what a tumult His words and works created, and were not only alarmed at His bold statements, but indignant at His denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees. They decided that He must be persuaded or constrained to cease this manner of labour, and they induced Mary to unite with them, thinking that through His love for her they might prevail upon Him to be more prudent.

It was just before this that Jesus had a second time performed the miracle of healing a man possessed, blind and dumb, and the Pharisees had reiterated the charge, "He casts out devils through the prince of the devils." Matthew 9:34. Christ told them plainly that in attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan, they were cutting themselves off from the fountain of blessing. Those who had spoken against Jesus Himself, not discerning His divine character, might receive forgiveness; for through the Holy Spirit they might be brought to see their error and repent. Whatever the sin, if the soul repents and believes, the guilt is washed away in the blood of Christ; but he who rejects the work of the Holy Spirit is placing himself where repentance and faith cannot come to him. It is by the Spirit that God works upon the heart; when men wilfully reject the Spirit, and declare It to be from Satan, they cut off the channel by which God can communicate with them. When the Spirit is finally rejected, there is no more that God can do for the soul.

The Pharisees to whom Jesus spoke this warning did not themselves believe the charge they brought against Him. There was not one of those dignitaries but had felt drawn toward the Saviour. They had heard the Spirit's voice in their own hearts declaring Him to be the Anointed of Israel, and urging them to confess themselves His disciples. In the light of His presence they had realized their unholiness, and had longed for a righteousness which they could not create. But after their rejection of Him it would be too humiliating to receive Him as the Messiah. Having set their feet in the path of unbelief, they were too proud to confess their error. And in order to avoid acknowledging the truth, they tried with desperate violence to dispute the Saviour's teaching. The evidence of His power and mercy exasperated them. They could not prevent the Saviour from working miracles, they could not silence His teaching; but they did everything in their power to misrepresent Him and to falsify His words. Still the convicting Spirit of God followed them, and they had to build up many barriers in order to withstand its power. The mightiest agency that can be brought to bear upon the human heart was striving with them, but they would not yield.

It is not God that blinds the eyes of men or hardens their hearts. He sends them light to correct their errors, and to lead them in safe paths; it is by the rejection of this light that the eyes are blinded and the heart hardened. Often the process is gradual, and almost imperceptible. Light comes to the soul through God's word, through His servants, or by the direct agency of His Spirit; but when one ray of light is disregarded, there is a partial benumbing of the spiritual perceptions, and the second revealing of light is less clearly discerned. So the darkness increases, until it is night in the soul. Thus it had been with these Jewish leaders. They were convinced that a divine power attended Christ, but in order to resist the truth, they attributed the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan. In doing this they deliberately chose deception; they yielded themselves to Satan, and henceforth they were controlled by his power.

Closely connected with Christ's warning in regard to the sin against the Holy Spirit is a warning against idle and evil words. The words are an indication of that which is in the heart. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." But the words are more than an indication of character; they have power to react on the character. Men are influenced by their own words. Often under a momentary impulse, prompted by Satan, they give utterance to jealousy or evil surmising, expressing that which they do not really believe; but the expression reacts on the thoughts. They are deceived by their words, and come to believe that true which was spoken at Satan's instigation. Having once expressed an opinion or decision, they are often too proud to retract it, and try to prove themselves in the right, until they come to believe that they are. It is dangerous to utter a word of doubt, dangerous to question and criticize divine light. The habit of careless and irreverent criticism reacts upon the character, in fostering irreverence and unbelief. Many a man indulging this habit has gone on unconscious of danger, until he was ready to criticize and reject the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

Then He added a warning to those who had been impressed by His words, who had heard Him gladly, but who had not surrendered themselves for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is not only by resistance but by neglect that the soul is destroyed. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man," said Jesus, "he walks through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he finds it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there."

There were many in Christ's day, as there are today, over whom the control of Satan for the time seemed broken; through the grace of God they were set free from the evil spirits that had held dominion over the soul. They rejoiced in the love of God; but, like the stony-ground hearers of the parable, they did not abide in His love. They did not surrender themselves to God daily, that Christ might dwell in the heart; and when the evil spirit returned, with "seven other spirits more wicked than himself," they were wholly dominated by the power of evil.

When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature. The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan. But unless we do yield ourselves to the control of Christ, we shall be dominated by the wicked one. We must inevitably be under the control of the one or the other of the two great powers that are contending for the supremacy of the world. It is not necessary for us deliberately to choose the service of the kingdom of darkness in order to come under its dominion. We have only to neglect to ally ourselves with the kingdom of light. If we do not co-operate with the heavenly agencies, Satan will take possession of the heart, and will make it his abiding place. The only defense against evil is the indwelling of Christ in the heart through faith in His righteousness. Unless we become vitally connected with God, we can never resist the unhallowed effects of self-love, self-indulgence, and temptation to sin. We may leave off many bad habits, for the time we may part company with Satan; but without a vital connection with God, through the surrender of ourselves to Him moment by moment, we shall be overcome. Without a personal acquaintance with Christ, and a continual communion, we are at the mercy of the enemy, and shall do his bidding in the end.

"The last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so," said Jesus, "shall it be also unto this wicked generation." There are none so hardened as those who have slighted the invitation of mercy, and done despite to the Spirit of grace. The most common manifestation of the sin against the Holy Spirit is in persistently slighting Heaven's invitation to repent. Every step in the rejection of Christ is a step toward the rejection of salvation, and toward the sin against the Holy Spirit.

In rejecting Christ the Jewish people committed the unpardonable sin; and by refusing the invitation of mercy, we may commit the same error. We offer insult to the Prince of life, and put Him to shame before the synagogue of Satan and before the heavenly universe when we refuse to listen to His delegated messengers, and instead listen to the agents of Satan, who would draw the soul away from Christ. So long as one does this, he can find no hope or pardon, and he will finally lose all desire to be reconciled to God.

While Jesus was still teaching the people, His disciples brought the message that His mother and His brothers were without, and desired to see Him. He knew what was in their hearts, and "He answered and said unto him that told Him, Who is My mother? and who are My brethren? And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother."

All who would receive Christ by faith were united to Him by a tie closer than that of human kinship. They would become one with Him, as He was one with the Father. As a believer and doer of His words, His mother was more nearly and savingly related to Him than through her natural relationship. His brothers would receive no benefit from their connection with Him unless they accepted Him as their personal Saviour.

What a support Christ would have found in His earthly relatives if they had believed in Him as one from heaven, and had co-operated with Him in doing the work of God! Their unbelief cast a shadow over the earthly life of Jesus. It was a part of the bitterness of that cup of woe which He drained for us.

The enmity kindled in the human heart against the gospel was keenly felt by the Son of God, and it was most painful to Him in His home; for His own heart was full of kindness and love, and He appreciated tender regard in the family relation. His brothers desired that He should concede to their ideas, when such a course would have been utterly out of harmony with His divine mission. They looked upon Him as in need of their counsel. They judged Him from their human point of view, and thought that if He would speak only such things as would be acceptable to the scribes and Pharisees, He would avoid the disagreeable controversy that His words aroused. They thought that He was beside Himself in claiming divine authority, and in placing Himself before the rabbis as a reprover of their sins. They knew that the Pharisees were seeking occasion to accuse Him, and they felt that He had given them sufficient occasion.

With their short measuring line they could not fathom the mission which He came to fulfill, and therefore could not sympathize with Him in His trials. Their coarse, unappreciative words showed that they had no true perception of His character, and did not discern that the divine blended with the human. They often saw Him full of grief; but instead of comforting Him, their spirit and words only wounded His heart. His sensitive nature was tortured, His motives were misunderstood, His work was uncomprehended.

His brothers often brought forward the philosophy of the Pharisees, which was threadbare and hoary with age, and presumed to think that they could teach Him who understood all truth, and comprehended all mysteries. They freely condemned that which they could not understand. Their reproaches probed Him to the quick, and His soul was wearied and distressed. They avowed faith in God, and thought they were vindicating God, when God was with them in the flesh, and they knew Him not.

These things made His path a thorny one to travel. So pained was Christ by the misapprehension in His own home that it was a relief to Him to go where it did not exist. There was one home that He loved to visit,--the home of Lazarus, and Mary, and Martha; for in the atmosphere of faith and love His spirit had rest. Yet there were none on earth who could comprehend His divine mission, or know the burden which He bore in behalf of humanity. Often He could find relief only in being alone, and communing with His heavenly Father.

Those who are called to suffer for Christ's sake, who have to endure misapprehension and distrust, even in their own home, may find comfort in the thought that Jesus has endured the same. He is moved with compassion for them. He bids them find companionship in Him, and relief where He found it, in communion with the Father.

Those who accept Christ as their personal Saviour are not left as orphans, to bear the trials of life alone. He receives them as members of the heavenly family; He bids them call His Father their Father. They are His "little ones," dear to the heart of God, bound to Him by the most tender and abiding ties. He has toward them an

exceeding tenderness, as far surpassing what our father or mother has felt toward us in our helplessness as the divine is above the human.

Of Christ's relation to His people, there is a beautiful illustration in the laws given to Israel. When through poverty a Hebrew had been forced to part with his patrimony, and to sell himself as a bondservant, the duty of redeeming him and his inheritance fell to the one who was nearest of kin. See Leviticus 25:25, 47-49; Ruth 2:20. So the work of redeeming us and our inheritance, lost through sin, fell upon Him who is "near of kin" unto us. It was to redeem us that He became our kinsman. Closer than father, mother, brother, friend, or lover is the Lord our Saviour. "Fear not," He says, "for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine." "Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life." Isaiah 43:1, 4

Christ loves the heavenly beings that surround His throne; but what shall account for the great love wherewith He has loved us? We cannot understand it, but we can know it true in our own experience. And if we do hold the relation of kinship to Him, with what tenderness should we regard those who are brethren and sisters of our Lord! Should we not be quick to recognize the claims of our divine relationship? Adopted into the family of God, should we not honour our Father and our kindred?

EGW Study Notes 2**Preparation Day, January 17th, 2025****My Life Today
Chapter 55, p. 274****“A Sanctified Life”****“Partakers Through God’s Promises”****September 27th**

Whereby are given unto us 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 that is in God's book holds out to us the encouragement that we may be partakers of the divine nature. This is the possibility--to rely upon God, to believe His Word, to work His works, and this we can do when we lay hold of the divinity of Christ. This possibility is worth more to us than all the riches in the world. There is nothing on earth that can compare with it. As we lay hold of the power thus placed within our reach, we receive a hope so strong that we can rely wholly upon God's promise; and laying hold of the possibilities there are in Christ, we become the sons and daughters of God. . . .

He who truly believes in Christ is made partaker of the divine nature, and has power that he can appropriate under every temptation. He will not fall under temptation or be left to defeat. In time of trial he will claim the promises, and by these escape the corruptions that are in the world through lust. . . .

To make us partakers of the divine nature, heaven gave its most costly treasure. The Son of God laid aside His royal robe and kingly crown and came to our earth as a little child. He pledged Himself to live from infancy to manhood a perfect life. He engaged to stand in a fallen world as the representative of the Father. And He would die in behalf of a lost race. What a work was this! . . . I hardly know how to present these points; they are so wonderful, wonderful. . . .

By His life of sacrifice and death of shame He has made it possible for us to take hold of His divinity, and to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. . . . If you are partakers of the divine nature, you will day by day be obtaining a fitting for that life that measures with the life of God. Day by day you will purify your trust in Jesus and follow His example and grow into His likeness until you shall stand before Him perfected.

LESSON 4*“GOD IS PASSIONATE AND COMPASSIONATE”***January 18 - January 24*****EGW Study Notes 1******Preparation Day, January 24th, 2025*****The Upward Look****Chapter 6, p. 180****“Today”****June 15th**

But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrews 3:13

Dear Sister ____: ... “we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entered into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever after the order of Melchisedek” (Hebrews 6:19, 20).

We have every reason to trust in God, and to bring all our worries and anxieties to Jesus Christ, that we may become better acquainted with Him. It should not be a difficult thing to remember that the Lord Jesus is desirous that we should bring all our troubles and perplexities to Him. “Take it to the Lord in prayer,” and then leave your perplexities and burdens with Him. How much happier we should be would we do this. You may come to Him as a child comes to his parents, saying, “Here, Lord, I have carried myself as though I could save myself for a long time. My burdens are too heavy for me to carry longer. Thou canst bear them for me.” He says, “I will take them. With everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee.”

This love is [as] strong as it is tender. The love of Jesus is stronger than death, for He died to win your love, to have you lean upon Him fully and entirely, and to make you one with Him, mystically and eternally one. The love of Jesus is something expressed, more tender than even the love of a mother for her child. The most tender love we know is that of a mother for her child, but the love of Jesus exceeds this. She may change in her affection. Mothers may become unkind, but Jesus never, never will become unmindful or unkind, or cruel to His children.

Then never, never will we show distrust and want of faith. So strong is His love that it controls all the affections of His nature, and [He] employs all His vast resources to do His people good. His love is durable, without variableness or shadow of turning. Never let us dishonour God by trying so hard to keep ourselves, fixing our eyes upon ourselves, and keeping ourselves constantly in view.

Look unto Jesus who is the Author and Finisher of our faith. Let us not do as we have done, make ourselves miserable over some supposed future tomorrow's burden. Carry your duties of today cheerfully. Today's faith, today's trust in Jesus, we must have. Today I may look and live. Today I will put my trust in God. Today I will rest in quietude and peace kept by the power of God. Say, “The Lord will be glorified by my being cheerful and happy in His assurance of His love—today.”

In much love, Ellen G. White.—Letter 48, June 15, 1896, to a sister in need of encouragement.

EGW Study Notes 2**Preparation Day, January 24th, 2025****Messages to Young People****Chapter 17, p. 72-73****"True Conversion"****"Not Feeling But A Changed Life"**

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

Many who speak to others of the need of a new heart do not themselves know what is meant by these words. The youth especially stumble over this phrase, "a new heart." They do not know what it means. They look for a special change to take place in their feelings. This they term conversion. Over this error thousands have stumbled to ruin, not understanding the expression, "Ye must be born again."

Not Feeling but a Changed Life

Satan leads people to think that because they have felt a rapture of feeling they are converted. But their experience does not change. Their actions are the same as before. Their lives show no good fruit. They pray often and long, and are constantly referring to the feelings they had at such and such a time. But they do not live the new life. They are deceived. Their experience goes no deeper than feeling. They build upon the sand, and when adverse winds come their house is swept away.

Many poor souls are groping in darkness, looking for the feelings which others say they have had in their experience. They overlook the fact that the believer in Christ must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. The convicted sinner has something to do. He must repent and show true faith.

When Jesus speaks of the new heart, He means the mind, the life, the whole being. To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world, and fasten them upon Christ. To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives. What is the sign of a new heart?-- A changed life. There is a daily, hourly dying to selfishness and pride.

Practicality of Genuine Religion

Some make a great mistake by supposing that a high profession will compensate for real service. But a religion which is not practical is not genuine. True conversion makes us strictly honest in our dealings with our fellow men. It makes us faithful in our everyday work. Every sincere follower of Christ will show that the religion of the Bible qualifies him to use his talents in the Master's service.

"Not slothful in business." These words will be fulfilled in the life of every Christian. Even though your work may seem to be a drudgery, you may ennoble it by the way in which you do it. Do it as unto the Lord. Do it cheerfully, and with heaven-born dignity. It is the noble principles which are brought into the work that make it wholly acceptable in the Lord's sight. True service links the lowliest of God's servants on earth with the highest of His servants in the courts above. . . .

As sons and daughters of God, Christians should strive to reach the high ideal set before them in the gospel. They should be content with nothing less than perfection; for Christ says, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

The Sanctified Life

Let us make God's holy word our study, bringing its holy principles into our lives. Let us walk before God in meekness and humility, daily correcting our faults. Let us not by selfish pride separate the soul from God. Cherish not a feeling of lofty supremacy, thinking yourself better than others. "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." Peace and rest will come to you as you bring your will into subjection to the will of Christ. Then the love of Christ will rule in the heart, bringing into captivity to the Saviour the secret springs of action. The hasty, easily roused temper will be soothed and subdued by the oil of Christ's grace. The sense of sins forgiven will bring that peace that passeth all understanding. There will be an earnest striving to overcome all that is opposed to Christian perfection. Variance will disappear. He who once found fault with those around him will see that far greater faults exist in his own character.

There are those who listen to the truth, and are convinced that they have been living in opposition to Christ. They are condemned, and they repent of their transgressions. Relying upon the merits of Christ, exercising true faith in Him, they receive pardon for sin. As they cease to do evil and learn to do well, they grow in grace and in the knowledge of God. They see that they must sacrifice in order to separate from the world; and, after counting the cost, they look upon all as loss if they may but win Christ. They have enlisted in Christ's army. The warfare is before them, and they enter it bravely and cheerfully, fighting against their natural inclinations and selfish desires, bringing the will into subjection to the will of Christ. Daily they seek the Lord for grace to obey Him, and they are strengthened and helped. This is true conversion. In humble, grateful dependence he who has been given a new heart relies upon the help of Christ. He reveals in his life the fruit of righteousness. He once loved himself. Worldly pleasure was his delight. Now his idol is dethroned, and God reigns supreme. The sins he once loved he now hates. Firmly and resolutely he follows in the path of holiness.—*The Youth's Instructor, September 26, 1901.*

The Cords of Satan

The pains of duty and the pleasures of sin are the cords with which Satan binds men in his snares. Those who would rather die than perform a wrong act are the only ones who will be found faithful.—*Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, p. 53.*

LESSON 5

“THE WRATH OF DIVINE LOVE”

January 25 - January 31

*EGW Study Notes 1**Preparation Day, January 31st, 2025***The Great Controversy**
Chapter 1, p. 21-22**“The Destruction of Jerusalem”**

The hour of hope and pardon was fast passing; the cup of God's long-deferred wrath was almost full. The cloud that had been gathering through ages of apostasy and rebellion, now black with woe, was about to burst upon a guilty people, and He who alone could save them from their impending fate had been slighted, abused, rejected, and was soon to be crucified. When Christ should hang upon the cross of Calvary, Israel's day as a nation favoured and blessed of God would be ended. The loss of even one soul is a calamity, infinitely outweighing the gains and treasures of a world; but as Christ looked upon Jerusalem, the doom of a whole city, a whole nation, was before him; that city, that nation which had once been the chosen of God,—his peculiar treasure.

Prophets had wept over the apostasy of Israel, and the terrible desolations by which their sins were visited. Jeremiah wished that his eyes were a fountain of tears, that he might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of his people, for the Lord's flock that was carried away captive. [Jeremiah 9:1; 13:17.] What, then, was the grief of Him whose prophetic glance took in, not years, but ages! He beheld the destroying angel with sword uplifted against the city which had so long been Jehovah's dwelling-place. From the ridge of Olivet, the very spot afterward occupied by Titus and his army, he looked across the valley upon the sacred courts and porticoes, and with tear-dimmed eyes he saw, in awful perspective, the walls surrounded by alien hosts. He heard the tread of armies marshalling for war. He heard the voice of mothers and children crying for bread in the besieged city. He saw her holy and beautiful house, her palaces and towers, given to the flames, and where once they stood, only a heap of smouldering ruins.

Looking down the ages, he saw the covenant people scattered in every land, “like wrecks on a desert shore.” In the temporal retribution about to fall upon her children, he saw but the first draught from that cup of wrath which at the final Judgment she must drain to its dregs. Divine pity, yearning love, found utterance in the mournful words: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killed the prophets, and stoned them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” [Matthew 23:37.] Oh that thou, a nation favoured above every other, had known the time of thy visitation, and the things that belong unto thy peace! I have stayed the angel of justice, I have called thee to repentance, but in vain. It is not merely servants, delegates, and prophets, whom thou hast refused and rejected, but the Holy One of Israel, thy Redeemer. If thou art destroyed, thou alone art responsible. ‘Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.’” [John 5:40.]

Christ saw in Jerusalem a symbol of the world hardened in unbelief and rebellion, and hastening on to meet the retributive judgments of God. The woes of a fallen race, pressing upon his soul, forced from his lips that exceeding bitter cry. He saw the record of sin traced in human misery, tears, and blood; his heart was moved with infinite pity for the afflicted and suffering ones of earth; he yearned to relieve them all. But even his hand might not turn back the tide of human woe; few would seek their only source of help. He was willing to pour out his soul unto death, to bring salvation within their reach; but few would come to him that they might have life.

The Majesty of Heaven in tears! the Son of the infinite God troubled in spirit, bowed down with anguish! The scene filled all Heaven with wonder. That scene reveals to us the exceeding sinfulness of sin; it shows how hard a task it is, even for infinite power, to save the guilty from the consequences of transgressing the law of God. Jesus, looking down to the last generation, saw the world involved in a deception similar to that which caused the destruction of Jerusalem. The great sin of the Jews was their rejection of Christ; the great sin of the Christian world would be their rejection of the law of God, the foundation of his government in Heaven and earth. The precepts of Jehovah would be despised and set at naught. Millions in bondage to sin, slaves of Satan, doomed to suffer the second death, would refuse to listen to the words of truth in their day of visitation. Terrible blindness! strange infatuation!

EGW Study Notes 2***Preparation Day, January 31st, 2025*****In Heavenly Places****Chapter 9, p. 273****“Sweetness Through Affliction”****September 23rd**

Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

2 Corinthians 1:4

Those who have borne the greatest sorrows are frequently the ones who carry the greatest comfort to others, bringing sunshine wherever they go. Such ones have been chastened and sweetened by their afflictions; they did not lose confidence in God when trouble assailed them, but clung closer to His protecting love. Such ones are living proof of the tender care of God, who makes the darkness as well as the light and chastens us for our good. Christ is the light of the world; in Him is no darkness. Precious light! Let us live in that light! Bid adieu to sadness and repining. Rejoice in the Lord always.

It is selfish to devote our precious time to mourning over disappointed hopes, indulging in useless grief that clouds the family circle. We should be cheerful, if only for the benefit of those who depend more or less upon us for happiness. . . . It is our duty to make the best of everything, and to cultivate a habit of looking at the bright side of things. Let the cloud that shadows us pass over, while we wait patiently till the clear blue sky again appears and the blessed sunshine is revealed. . . . Let us all forget self as much as possible, cultivate cheerfulness, seek to brighten the lives of others, and we shall then have less desire to complain of our own lot.

The afflicted may take courage, the desponding may hope, for they have a sympathizing friend in Jesus. All our troubles and griefs we may pour into His sympathizing ears. When we associate together let it not be to talk darkness and unbelief, to recount the gloomy chapters in our life experience. Let us talk of the love of God that has been manifested to us, that is seen in nature, in the firmament of the heavens, in all the wise arrangements of Providence. Let us search out the rays of sunshine that have brightened our pathway, and linger over their memory with grateful hearts. Let us dwell upon the matchless love of Christ, for in Him we have a constant theme of rejoicing. In Him is no darkness. He is the Light of life, the Chief among ten thousand, and the One altogether lovely.

LESSON 6*“GOD’S LOVE OF JUSTICE”***February 1 - February 7*****EGW Study Notes 1******Preparation Day, February 7th, 2025*****That I May Know Him
Chapter 12, p. 359****“The Day of Final Settlement”****December 19th**

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

Revelation 20:12

The Scriptures declare, “God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:14). There is not a shadow of doubt about this matter.... Sin may be concealed, denied, covered up from father, mother, wife, children, and associates. No one but the guilty actors may cherish the least suspicion of the wrong, but it is laid bare before the intelligences of heaven. The darkness of the darkest night, the secrecy of all deceptive arts, is not sufficient to veil one thought from the knowledge of the Eternal....

The Lord beheld Adam and Eve as they took of the forbidden tree. In their guilt they fled from His presence and “hid themselves,” but God saw them; they could not cover their shame from His eyes. When Cain slew his brother, he thought to hide his crime by denial of his deed, but the Lord said, “The voice of thy brother’s blood cries unto me from the ground” (Genesis 4:10)....

All sin unrepented of and unconfessed will remain upon the books of record. It will not be blotted out, it will not go beforehand to judgment, to be cancelled by the atoning blood of Jesus. The accumulated sins of every individual will be written with absolute accuracy, and the penetrating light of God’s law will try every secret of darkness. In proportion to the light, to the opportunities, and the knowledge of God’s claims upon them will be the condemnation of the rejecters of God’s mercy.

The day of final settlements is just before us....

The Bible presents the law of God as a perfect standard by which to shape the life and character. The only perfect example of obedience to its precepts is found in the Son of God, the Saviour of lost mankind. There is no stain of unrighteousness upon Him, and we are bidden to follow in His steps

EGW Study Notes 2**Preparation Day, February 7th, 2025****The Upward Look****Chapter 10, p. 318****“God Does Not Change”****October 31st**

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Genesis 3:15

How hard it is for man to walk humbly with God, to believe His Word and accept His plans. Satan's propositions appear to present great advantages, but they end in ruin. Over and over again men have found out by experience the result of refusing to walk in the path of obedience. Will not others gain wisdom from their experience? Let us think of the experience of our first parents and be afraid of any plans that are not based on obedience to God's will.

When will men learn that God is God, not man, and that He does not change. Every calamity, every death, is a witness to the power of evil and to the truth of the living God. The Word of God is life, and it will abide forever. Through all eternity it will stand fast. How can man, knowing what God is and what He has done, choose Satan's way instead of God's way? There is only one path to Paradise restored—the path of obedience.

The message given man to proclaim in these last days is not to be amalgamated with worldly opinions. In these days of peril, nothing but obedience will keep man from apostasy. God has bestowed on man great light and many blessings. But unless this light and these blessings are received, they are no security against apostasy and disobedience. When those whom God has exalted to positions of high trust turn from Him to human wisdom, their light becomes darkness, and how great is that darkness! Their entrusted capabilities are a snare to them. They are become an offense to God....

There always has been, and till the conflict is ended, there always will be a departing from God. Sins have a close connection. One act of disobedience, unless repented of, leads to another. He who justifies himself in sin is led on step by step in deception, till at length he sins with impunity.

Often the professed followers of Christ are found with hearts hardened and eyes blinded, because they do not obey the truth. Selfish motives and purposes take possession of the mind. In their self-confidence they suppose that their way is the way of wisdom. They are not particular to follow the path that God has marked out. They declare that circumstances alter cases, and when Satan tempts them to follow worldly principles, they yield, and making crooked paths for their feet, they lead others astray. The inexperienced follow where they go, supposing that the judgment of Christians so experienced must be wise.—
Manuscript 135, October 31, 1902, “Instruction to the Church.”

LESSON 7*“THE PROBLEM OF EVIL”***February 8 - February 14*****EGW Study Notes 1******Preparation Day, February 14th, 2025*****Steps to Christ
Chapter 1, p. 9-15****“God’s Love for Man”**

Nature and revelation alike testify of God’s love. Our Father in heaven is the source of life, of wisdom, and of joy. Look at the wonderful and beautiful things of nature. Think of their marvellous adaptation to the needs and happiness, not only of man, but of all living creatures. The sunshine and the rain, that gladden and refresh the earth, the hills and seas and plains, all speak to us of the Creator’s love. It is God who supplies the daily needs of all His creatures. In the beautiful words of the psalmist—

“The eyes of all wait upon You;
And You give them their meat in due season.
You open Your hand,
And satisfy the desire of every living thing.”

Psalm 145:15-16

God made man perfectly holy and happy; and the fair earth, as it came from the Creator’s hand, bore no blight of decay or shadow of the curse. It is transgression of God’s law—the law of love—that has brought woe and death. Yet even amid the suffering that results from sin, God’s love is revealed. It is written that God cursed the ground for man’s sake. Genesis 3:17. The thorn and the thistle—the difficulties and trials that make his life one of toil and care—were appointed for his good as a part of the training needful in God’s plan for his uplifting from the ruin and degradation that sin has wrought. The world, though fallen, is not all sorrow and misery. In nature itself are messages of hope and comfort. There are flowers upon the thistles, and the thorns are covered with roses.

“God is love” is written upon every opening bud, upon every spire of springing grass. The lovely birds making the air vocal with their happy songs, the delicately tinted flowers in their perfection perfuming the air, the lofty trees of the forest with their rich foliage of living green—all testify to the tender, fatherly care of our God and to His desire to make His children happy.

The word of God reveals His character. He Himself has declared His infinite love and pity. When Moses prayed, “Show me Thy glory,” the Lord answered, “I will make all My goodness pass before thee.” Exodus 33:18, 19. This is His glory. The Lord passed before Moses, and proclaimed, “The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.” Exodus 34:6, 7. He is “slow to anger, and of great kindness,” “because He delights in mercy.” Jonah 4:2; Micah 7:18.

God has bound our hearts to Him by unnumbered tokens in heaven and in earth. Through the things of nature, and the deepest and tenderest earthly ties that human hearts can know, He has sought to reveal Himself to us. Yet these but imperfectly represent His love. Though all these evidences have been given, the enemy of good blinded the minds of men, so that they looked upon God with fear; they thought of Him as severe and unforgiving. Satan led men to conceive of God as a being whose chief attribute is stern justice,—one who is a severe judge, a harsh, exacting creditor. He pictured the Creator as a being who is watching with jealous eye to discern the errors and

mistakes of men, that He may visit judgments upon them. It was to remove this dark shadow, by revealing to the world the infinite love of God, that Jesus came to live among men.

The Son of God came from heaven to make manifest the Father. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." John 1:18. "Neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." Matthew 11:27. When one of the disciples made the request, "Show us the Father," Jesus answered, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how say thou then, Show us the Father?" John 14:8, 9.

In describing His earthly mission, Jesus said, The Lord "hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." Luke 4:18. This was His work. He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by Satan. There were whole villages where there was not a moan of sickness in any house, for He had passed through them and healed all their sick. His work gave evidence of His divine anointing. Love, mercy, and compassion were revealed in every act of His life; His heart went out in tender sympathy to the children of men. He took man's nature, that He might reach man's wants. The poorest and humblest were not afraid to approach Him. Even little children were attracted to Him. They loved to climb upon His knees and gaze into the pensive face, benignant with love.

Jesus did not suppress one word of truth, but He uttered it always in love. He exercised the greatest tact and thoughtful, kind attention in His relationships with the people. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He spoke the truth, but always in love. He denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity; but tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes. He wept over Jerusalem, the city He loved, which refused to receive Him, the way, the truth, and the life. They had rejected Him, the Saviour, but He regarded them with pitying tenderness. His life was one of self-denial and thoughtful care for others. Every soul was precious in His eyes. While He ever bore Himself with divine dignity, He bowed with the tenderest regard to every member of the family of God. In all men He saw fallen souls whom it was His mission to save.

Such is the character of Christ as revealed in His life. This is the character of God. It is from the Father's heart that the streams of divine compassion, manifest in Christ, flow out to the children of men. Jesus, the tender, pitying Saviour, was God "manifest in the flesh." 1 Timothy 3:16.

It was to redeem us that Jesus lived and suffered and died. He became "a Man of Sorrows," that we might be made partakers of everlasting joy. God permitted His beloved Son, full of grace and truth, to come from a world of indescribable glory, to a world marred and blighted with sin, darkened with the shadow of death and the curse. He permitted Him to leave the bosom of His love, the adoration of the angels, to suffer shame, insult, humiliation, hatred, and death. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Isaiah 53:5. Behold Him in the wilderness, in Gethsemane, upon the cross! The spotless Son of God took upon Himself the burden of sin. He who had been one with God, felt in His soul the awful separation that sin makes between God and man. This wrung from His lips the anguished cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Matthew 27:46. It was the burden of sin, the sense of its terrible enormity, of its separation of the soul from God—it was this that broke the heart of the Son of God.

But this 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.

Jesus said, "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again." John 10:17. That is, "My Father has so loved you that He even loves Me more for giving My life to redeem you. In becoming your Substitute and Surety, by surrendering My life, by taking your liabilities, your transgressions, I am endeared to My Father; for by My sacrifice, God can be just, and yet the Justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."

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.

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." He gave Him not only to live among men, to bear their sins, and die their sacrifice. He gave Him to the fallen race. Christ was to identify Himself with the interests and needs of humanity. He who was one with God has linked Himself with the children of men by ties that are never to be broken. Jesus is "not ashamed to call them brethren" (Hebrews 2:11); He is our Sacrifice, our Advocate, our Brother, bearing our human form before the Father's throne, and through eternal ages one with the race He has redeemed—the Son of man. And all this that man might be uplifted from the ruin and degradation of sin that he might reflect the love of God and share the joy of holiness.

The price paid for our redemption, the infinite sacrifice of our heavenly Father in giving His Son to die for us, should give us exalted conceptions of what we may become through Christ. As the inspired apostle John beheld the height, the depth, the breadth of the Father's love toward the perishing race, he was filled with adoration and reverence; and, failing to find suitable language in which to express the greatness and tenderness of this love, he called 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." 1 John 3:1. What a value this places upon man! Through transgression the sons of man become subjects of Satan. Through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ the sons of Adam may become the sons of God. By assuming human nature, Christ elevates humanity. Fallen men are placed where, through connection with Christ, they may indeed become worthy of the name "sons of God."

Such love is without a parallel. Children of the heavenly King! Precious promise! Theme for the most profound meditation! The matchless love of God for a world that did not love Him! The thought has a subduing power upon the soul and brings the mind into captivity to the will of God. The more we study the divine character in the light of the cross, the more we see mercy, tenderness, and forgiveness blended with equity and justice, and the more clearly we discern innumerable evidences of a love that is infinite and a tender pity surpassing a mother's yearning sympathy for her wayward child.

EGW Study Notes 2**Preparation Day, February 14th, 2025****Reflecting Christ
Chapter 12, p. 358****“Reflecting Christ Through Trials, Affliction, and Deliverance”****“God Teaches Self-Distrust Through Trials”****December 10th****My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.****Isaiah 55:8**

The worker for God often regards the activities of life as essential for the advancement of the work. He looks upon himself as a necessity, and self is mingled with all that is said and done. Then God interposes. He draws His child away from the earthly, which holds his attention, that he may behold His glory. He says: “This poor soul has lost sight of Me and My sufficiency. His eye is not fixed upon his Lord. I must throw My light and My vitalizing power into his heart, and thus prepare him to work in right lines. By anointing his eyes with the heavenly eyesalve I will prepare him to receive truth.”

The Lord is compelled to fortify the soul against self-sufficiency and self-dependence, in order that the worker shall not regard his failings as virtues, and thus be ruined by self-exaltation. Sometimes the Lord makes His path to the soul by a process that is painful to humanity; the work of purifying is a great work, and will always cost man suffering and trial. But he must pass through the furnace until the fires have consumed the dross, and he can reflect the divine image.

Those who follow their own inclinations are not good judges of what the Lord is doing, and they are filled with discontent. They see failure where there is triumph, loss where there is gain. Like Jacob, they are ready to exclaim, “All these things are against me,” when the very things whereof they complain are working together for their good. “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.” ...

Let us consider the experience of Paul for a little. At the very time when it seemed that the apostle's labours were most needed to strengthen the tried and persecuted church, his liberty was taken away, and he was bound in chains. But this was the time for the Lord to work, and precious were the victories won.

When to all appearance Paul was able to do the least, then it was that the truth found an entrance into the royal palace. Not Paul's masterly sermons before these great men, but his bonds attracted their attention. Through his captivity he was a conqueror for Christ. The patience and meekness with which he submitted to his long and unjust confinement set these men to weighing character. Sending his last message to his loved ones in the faith, Paul gathers up with his words the greetings from these saints in Caesar's household to the saints in other cities.—*The Signs of the Times*, February 21, 1900.

LESSON 8*“FREE WILL, LOVE, AND DIVINE PROVIDENCE”***February 15 - February 21*****EGW Study Notes 1******Preparation Day, February 21st, 2025*****Testimonies for the Church, Volume 4
Chapter 32, p. 360–371****“Religion in the Daily Life”**

Brother H,

I was shown that you really love the truth, but that you are not sanctified through it. You have a great work before you to do. “Every man that hath this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure.” You have this work to do, and you have no time to lose. I was shown that your life has been a stormy one. You have not been right yourself; but you have been deeply wronged, and your motives have been misjudged. But your disappointments and pecuniary losses have, in the providence of God, been overruled for your good.

It has been difficult for you to feel that your heavenly Father is still your kind benefactor. Your troubles and perplexities have had a tendency to discourage, and you have felt that death would be preferable to life. But at a certain time, could your eyes have been opened, you would have seen angels of God seeking to save you from yourself. The angels of God led you where you could receive the truth and plant your feet upon a foundation that would be more firm than the everlasting hills. Here you saw light and cherished it. New faith, new life, sprang up in your pathway. God in His providence connected you with His work in the office of the Pacific Press. He has been at work for you, and you should see His guiding hand. Sorrow has been your portion; but you have brought much of it upon yourself because you have not had self-control. You have been very severe at times. You have a quick temper, which must be overcome. In your life you have been in danger, either of indulging in self-confidence or else of throwing yourself away and becoming despondent. A continual dependence upon the word and providence of God will qualify you to exert your powers wholly for your Redeemer, who has called you, saying: “Follow Me.” You should cultivate a spirit of entire submission to the will of God, earnestly, humbly seeking to know His ways and to follow the leadings of His Spirit. You must not lean to your own understanding. You should have deep distrust of your own wisdom and supposed prudence. Your condition demands these cautions. It is unsafe for man to confide in his own judgment. He has limited capacities at best, and many have received, as their birthright, both strong and weak points of character, which are positive defects. These peculiarities colour the entire life.

The wisdom which God gives will lead men to self-examination. The truth will convict them of their errors and existing wrongs. The heart must be open to see, realize, and acknowledge these wrongs, and then, through the help of Jesus, each must earnestly engage in the work of overcoming them. The knowledge gained by the wise of the world, however diligent they may be in acquiring it, is, after all, limited and comparatively inferior. But few comprehend the ways and works of God in the mysteries of His providence. They advance a few steps, and then are unable to touch bottom or shore. It is the superficial thinker who deems himself wise. Men of solid worth, of high attainments, are the most ready

to admit the weakness of their own understanding. God wants everyone who claims to be His disciple to be a learner, to be more inclined to learn than to teach.

How many men in this age of the world fail to go deep enough. They only skim the surface. They will not think closely enough to see difficulties and grapple with them, and will not examine every important subject which comes before them with thoughtful, prayerful study and with sufficient caution and interest to see the real point at issue. They talk of matters which they have not fully and carefully weighed. Frequently persons of mind and candour have opinions of their own which need to be firmly resisted, or these of less mental strength will be in danger of being misled. Through the mental bias, habits are formed, and customs, feelings, and wishes have a greater or less influence. Sometimes a course of conduct is pursued every day, and persisted in, because it is a habit, and not because the judgment approves. In these cases, feeling, rather than duty, bears sway.

If we could understand our own weakness, and see the sharp traits in our character which need repressing, we should see so much to do for ourselves that we would humble our hearts under the mighty hand of God. Hanging our helpless souls upon Christ, we should supplement our ignorance with His wisdom, our weakness with His strength, our frailty with His enduring might, and, connected with God, we should indeed be lights in the world.

Dear brother, God loves you, and is very patient toward you, notwithstanding your many errors and mistakes. In view of the tender, pitying love of God exercised in your behalf, should you not be more kind, forbearing, patient, and forgiving to your children? Your harshness and severity is weaning their hearts from you. You cannot give them lessons in regard to patience, forbearance, long-suffering, and gentleness, when you are overbearing and manifest temper in dealing with them. They have the stamp of character which their parents have given them; and if you wish to counsel and direct them, and turn them from following any wrong course, the object cannot be gained by harshness and that which looks to them like tyranny. When in the fear of God you can advise and counsel them with all the solicitude and tender love which a father should manifest toward an erring child, then you will have demonstrated to them that there is power in the truth to transform those who receive it. When your children do not act according to your ideas, instead of manifesting sorrow for their wrongs, and earnestly pleading with and praying for them, you fly into a passion and pursue a course that will do them no good, but will only wean their affections and finally separate them from you.

Your youngest son is perverse; he does not do right. His heart is in rebellion against God and the truth. He is affected by influences which only make him coarse, rough, and uncourteous. He is a trial to you, and, unless converted, he will be a great tax upon your patience. But harshness and overbearing severity will not reform him. You must seek to do what you can for him in the spirit of Christ, not in your own spirit, not under the influence of passion. You must control yourself in the management of your children. You must remember that Justice has a twin sister, Mercy. When you would exercise justice, show mercy, tenderness, and love, and you will not labour in vain.

Your son has a perverse will, and he needs the most judicious discipline. Consider what have been your children's surroundings, how unfavourable to the formation of good characters. They need pity and love. The youngest is now in the most critical period of his life. The intellect is now taking shape; the affections are receiving their impress. The whole future career of this young man is being determined by the course he now pursues. He is entering upon the path which leads to virtue, or that which leads to vice. I appeal to the young man to fill his mind with images of truth and purity. It will be no advantage to him to indulge in sin. He may flatter himself that it is very pleasant to sin and to have his own way; but it is a fearful way after all. If he loves the society of those who love sin and love to do evil, his thoughts will run in a low channel, and he will see nothing attractive in purity and holiness. But could he see the end of the transgressor, that the wages of sin is death, he would be overcome with alarm and would cry out: "O my Father, be Thou the guide of my youth."

His success in this life depends very much upon the course he now pursues. The responsibilities of life must be borne by him. He has not been a promising youth. He has been impatient and is wanting in self-control. This is the seed his father is sowing, which will produce a harvest for the sower to reap. "Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap." With what care should we cast in the seed, knowing that we must reap as we have sown. Jesus still loves this young man. He died for him and invites him to come to His arms and find in Him peace and happiness, quiet and rest. This youth is forming associations which will mold his whole life. He should connect with God and without delay give to Him his unreserved affections. He should not hesitate. Satan will make his fiercest assaults upon him, but he must not be overcome by temptation.

I have been shown the dangers of youth. Their hearts are full of high anticipations, and they see the downward road strewn with tempting pleasures which look very inviting; but death is there. The narrow path to life may appear to them to be destitute of attractions, a path of thorns and briers, but it is not. It is the path which requires a denial of sinful pleasures; it is a narrow path, cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in. None can walk this path and carry with them their burdens of pride, self-will, deceit, falsehood, dishonesty, passion, and the carnal lusts. The path is so narrow that these things will have to be left behind by those who walk in it, but the broad road is wide enough for sinners to travel it with all their sinful propensities.

Young man, if you reject Satan with all his temptations you may walk in the footsteps of your Redeemer and have the peace of heaven, the joys of Christ. You cannot be happy in the indulgence of sin. You may flatter yourself that you are happy, but real happiness you cannot know. The character is becoming deformed by the indulgence of sin. Danger is encountered at every downward step, and those who could help the youth do not see or realize it. The kind and tender interest which should be taken in the young is not manifested. Many might be kept from sinful influences if they were surrounded with good associations and had words of kindness and love spoken to them.

My dear brother, I hope you will not become discouraged because your feelings so often master you when your way or will is crossed. Never despond. Flee to the Stronghold. Watch and pray, and try again. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you."

Upon another point be guarded. You are not at all times as cautious as you should be to abstain from the very appearance of evil. You are in danger of being too familiar with the sisters, of talking with them in a light and foolish way. This will injure your influence. Guard carefully all these points; watch against the first approach of the tempter. You are highly nervous and excitable. Tea has an influence to excite the nerves, and coffee benumbs the brain; both are highly injurious. You should be careful of your diet. Eat the most wholesome, nourishing food, and keep yourself in a calm state of mind, where you will not become so excited and fly into a passion.

You can be of great service in the office, for you can fill a place of importance if you will become transformed; but as you now are you will certainly fail of doing what you might do. I have been shown that you are rough and coarse in your feelings. These need to be softened, refined, elevated. In all your course of action you should discipline yourself to habits of self-control. With the spirit you now possess you can never enter heaven.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God." Can any human dignity equal this? What higher position can we occupy than to be called the sons of the infinite God? You would be ready to do some great thing for the Master; but the very things which would please Him most, you do not do. Will you not be faithful in overcoming self, that you may have the peace of Christ and an indwelling Saviour?

Your afflicted son needs to be dealt with calmly and tenderly; he needs your compassion. He should not be exposed to your insane temper and unreasonable demands. You must reform in respect to the spirit you manifest. Ungovernable passion will not be subdued in a moment; but your lifework is before you to rid the garden of the heart of the poisonous weeds of impatience, fault-finding, and an overbearing disposition. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts; but the brutish part of your nature takes the lines of control and guides the spiritual. This is God's order reversed.

Your faithfulness in labour is praiseworthy. Others in the office would do well to imitate your example of fidelity, diligence, and thoroughness. But you lack the graces of the Spirit of God. You are an intelligent man, but your powers have been abused. Jesus presents to you His grace, patience, and love. Will you accept the gift? Be careful of your words and actions. You are sowing seed in your daily life. Every thought, every word uttered, and every action performed, is seed cast into the soil, which will spring up and bear fruit to life eternal or to misery and corruption. Think, my brother, how the angels of God look upon your sad state when you let passion control you. And then it is written in the books of heaven. As is the seed sown, so will be the harvest. You must reap that which you have sown.

You should control the appetite and in the name of Jesus be a conqueror on this point. Your health may improve with correct habits. Your nervous system is greatly shattered; but the Great Physician can heal your body as well as your soul. Make His power your dependence, His grace your strength, and your physical, moral, and spiritual powers will be greatly improved. You have more to overcome than some others, and therefore will have more severe conflicts; but Jesus will regard your earnest efforts; He knows just how hard you have to work to keep self under the control of His Spirit. Place yourself in the hands of Jesus. Self-culture should be your business, with the object before you of being a blessing to your children and to all with whom you associate. Heaven will look with pleasure upon every victory you gain in the work of overcoming. If you put away anger and passion, and look unto Jesus, who is the Author and Finisher of your faith, you may, through His merits, develop a Christian character. Make a decided change at once, and be determined that you will act a part worthy of the intellect with which God has endowed you.

When I was shown the present condition of man in physical, mental, and moral power, and what he might become through the merits of Christ, I was astonished that he should preserve such a low level. Man may grow up into Christ, his living head. It is not the work of a moment, but that of a lifetime. By growing daily in the divine life, he will not attain to the full stature of a perfect man in Christ until his probation ceases. The growing is a continuous work. Men with fiery passions have a constant conflict with self; but the harder the battle, the more glorious will be the victory and the eternal reward.

You are connected with the office of publication. In this position your peculiar traits of character will be developed. The little courtesies of life should be cherished. A pleasant and amiable temper, blended with a firm principle of justice and honesty, will make you a man of influence. Now is the time to obtain a moral fitness for heaven. The church to which you belong must have the refining, elevating grace of Christ. God requires His followers to be men of good report, as well as to be pure, elevated, and honest; kind, as well as faithful. It is essential to be right in the weightier matters; but this is no excuse for negligence in things apparently of less importance. The principles of the law of God must be developed in the life and character. An amiable temper, combined with firm integrity and faithfulness, will constitute a moral fitness for any position. The apostle Peter exhorts: "Be courteous."

We must be learners in the school of Christ. We cannot imitate His example unless we are pleasing in disposition and condescending in deportment. True Christian politeness should be cultivated. No one else can lessen our influence as we ourselves can lessen it through the indulgence of uncontrollable temper. A naturally petulant man does not know true happiness, and is seldom content. He is ever hoping to get into

a more favourable position, or to so change his surroundings that he will have peace and rest of mind. His life seems to be burdened with heavy crosses and trials, when, had he controlled his temper and bridled his tongue, many of these annoyances might have been avoided. It is the "soft answer" which "turneth away wrath." Revenge has never conquered a foe. A well-regulated temper exerts a good influence on all around; but "he that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls."

Consider the life of Moses. Meekness in the midst of murmuring, reproach, and provocation constituted the brightest trait in his character. Daniel was of a humble spirit. Although he was surrounded with distrust and suspicion, and his enemies laid a snare for his life, yet he never deviated from principle. He maintained a serene and cheerful trust in God. Above all, let the life of Christ teach you. When reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not. This lesson you must learn, or you will never enter heaven. Christ must be made your strength. In His name you will be more than conqueror. No enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel, will prevail. If your soul is riveted to the eternal Rock, you are safe. Come joy or come sorrow, nothing can sway you from the right.

You have been afloat in the world, but the eternal truth will prove an anchor to you. You need to guard your faith. Do not move from impulse nor entertain vague theories. Experimental faith in Christ and submission to the law of God are of the highest consequence to you. Be willing to take the advice and counsel of those who have experience. Make no delay in the work of overcoming. Be true to yourself, to your children, and to God. Your afflicted son needs to be tenderly dealt with. As a father you should remember that the nerves that can thrill with pleasure can also thrill with keenest pain. The Lord identifies His interest with that of suffering humanity.

Many parents forget their accountability to God to so educate their children for usefulness and duty that they will be a blessing to themselves and to others. Children are often indulged from their babyhood, and wrong habits become fixed. The parents have been bending the sapling. By their course of training, the character develops, either into deformity or into symmetry and beauty. But while many err upon the side of indulgence, others go to the opposite extreme and rule their children with a rod of iron. Neither of these follow out the Bible directions, but both are doing a fearful work. They are molding the minds of their children and must render an account in the day of God for the manner in which they have done this. Eternity will reveal the results of the work done in this life. "As the twig is bent, the tree's inclined."

Your manner of government is wrong, decidedly wrong. You are not a tender, pitiful father. What an example do you give your children in your insane outbursts of passion! What an account will you have to render to God for your perverse discipline! If you would have the love and respect of your children, you must manifest affection for them. The indulgence of passion is never excusable; it is always blind and perverse.

God calls upon you to change your course of action. You can be a useful and efficient man in the office if you will make determined efforts to overcome. Do not set up your views as a criterion. The Lord connected you with His people that you might be a learner in the school of Christ. Your ideas have been perverted; you must not now lean to your own understanding. You cannot be saved unless your spirit is changed. Notwithstanding the fact that Moses was the meekest man that lived upon the earth, on one occasion he drew the displeasure of God upon himself. He was harassed greatly by the murmuring of the children of Israel for water. The undeserved reproaches of the people which fell upon him led him for a moment to forget that their murmuring was not against him, but against God; and instead of being grieved because the Spirit of God was insulted, he became irritated, offended, and in a self-willed, impatient manner struck the rock twice saying: "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" Moses and Aaron put themselves forward in God's place, as though the miracle had been wrought by them. They did not exalt God, but themselves, before the people. Many will ultimately fail of eternal life because they indulge in a similar course.

Moses revealed great weakness before the people. He showed a marked lack of self-control, a spirit similar to that possessed by the murmurers. He should have been an example of forbearance and patience before that multitude, who were ready to excuse their failures, disaffections, and unreasonable murmurings, on account of this exhibition of wrong on his part. The greatest sin consisted in assuming to take the place of God. The position of honour that Moses had heretofore occupied did not lessen his guilt, but greatly magnified it. Here was a man hitherto blameless, now fallen. Many in a similar position would reason that their sin would be overlooked because of their long life of unwavering fidelity. But no; it was a more serious matter for a man who had been honoured of God to show weakness of character in the exhibition of passion than if he had occupied a less responsible position. Moses was a representative of Christ, but how sadly was the figure marred! Moses had sinned, and his past fidelity could not atone for the present sin. The whole company of Israel was making history for future generations. This history the unerring pen of inspiration must trace with exact fidelity. Men of all future time must see the God of heaven is a firm ruler, in no case justifying sin. Moses and Aaron must die without entering Canaan, subjected to the same punishment that fell upon those in a more lowly position. They bowed in submission, though with anguish of heart that was inexpressible; but their love for and confidence in God was unshaken. Their example is a lesson that many pass over without learning from it as they should. Sin does not appear sinful. Self-exaltation does not appear to them grievous.

But few realize the sinfulness of sin; they flatter themselves that God is too good to punish the offender. The cases of Moses and Aaron, of David, and numerous others, show that it is not a safe thing to sin in word or thought or deed. God is a Being of infinite love and compassion. In the parting address which Moses gave to the children of Israel he said: "For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God." The touching plea made by Moses that he might be privileged to enter Canaan was steadfastly refused. The transgression at Kadesh had been open and marked; and the more exalted the position of the offender, the more distinguished the man, the firmer was the decree and the more certain the punishment.

Dear brother, be warned. Be true to the light which shines upon your pathway. Said Paul: "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

EGW Study Notes 2**Preparation Day, February 21st, 2025****Steps to Christ
Chapter 13, p. 115-126****“Rejoicing in the Lord”**

The children of God are called to be representatives of Christ, showing forth the goodness and mercy of the Lord. As Jesus has revealed to us the true character of the Father, so we are to reveal Christ to a world that does not know His tender, pitying love. “As Thou hast sent Me into the world,” said Jesus, “even so have I also sent them into the world.” “I in them, and Thou in Me; ... that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me.” John 17:18, 23. The apostle Paul says to the disciples of Jesus, “Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ,” “known and read of all men.” 2 Corinthians 3:3, 2. In every one of His children, Jesus sends a letter to the world. If you are Christ’s follower, He sends in you a letter to the family, the village, the street, where you live. Jesus, dwelling in you, desires to speak to the hearts of those who are not acquainted with Him. Perhaps they do not read the Bible, or do not hear the voice that speaks to them in its pages; they do not see the love of God through His works. But if you are a true representative of Jesus, it may be that through you they will be led to understand something of His goodness and be won to love and serve Him.

Christians are set as light bearers on the way to heaven. They are to reflect to the world the light shining upon them from Christ. Their life and character should be such that through them others will get a right conception of Christ and of His service.

If we do represent Christ, we shall make His service appear attractive, as it really is. Christians who gather up gloom and sadness to their souls, and murmur and complain, are giving to others a false representation of God and the Christian life. They give the impression that God is not pleased to have His children happy, and in this they bear false witness against our heavenly Father.

Satan is exultant when he can lead the children of God into unbelief and despondency. He delights to see us mistrusting God, doubting His willingness and power to save us. He loves to have us feel that the Lord will do us harm by His providences. It is the work of Satan to represent the Lord as lacking in compassion and pity. He misstates the truth in regard to Him. He fills the imagination with false ideas concerning God; and instead of dwelling upon the truth in regard to our heavenly Father, we too often fix our minds upon the misrepresentations of Satan and dishonour God by distrusting Him and murmuring against Him. Satan ever seeks to make the religious life one of gloom. He desires it to appear toilsome and difficult; and when the Christian presents in his own life this view of religion, he is, through his unbelief, seconding the falsehood of Satan.

Many, walking along the path of life, dwell upon their mistakes and failures and disappointments, and their hearts are filled with grief and discouragement. While I was in Europe, a sister who had been doing this, and who was in deep distress, wrote to me, asking for some word of encouragement. The night after I had read her letter I dreamed that I was in a garden, and one who seemed to be the owner of the garden was conducting me through its paths. I was gathering the flowers and enjoying their fragrance, when this sister, who had been walking by my side, called my attention to some unsightly briars that were impeding her way. There she was mourning and grieving. She was not walking in the pathway, following the guide, but was walking among the briars and thorns. “Oh,” she mourned, “is it not a pity that this beautiful garden is spoiled with thorns?” Then the guide said, “Let the thorns alone, for they will only wound you. Gather the roses, the lilies, and the pinks.”

Have there not been some bright spots in your experience? Have you not had some precious seasons when your heart throbbed with joy in response to the Spirit of God? When you look back into the chapters of your life experience do you not find some pleasant pages? Are not God's promises, like the fragrant flowers, growing beside your path on every hand? Will you not let their beauty and sweetness fill your heart with joy?

The briars and thorns will only wound and grieve you; and if you gather only these things, and present them to others, are you not, besides slighting the goodness of God yourself, preventing those around you from walking in the path of life?

It is not wise to gather together all the unpleasant recollections of a past life,—its iniquities and disappointments,—to talk over them and mourn over them until we are overwhelmed with discouragement. A discouraged soul is filled with darkness, shutting out the light of God from his own soul and casting a shadow upon the pathway of others.

Thank God for the bright pictures which He has presented to us. Let us group together the blessed assurances of His love, that we may look upon them continually: The Son of God leaving His Father's throne, clothing His divinity with humanity, that He might rescue man from the power of Satan; His triumph in our behalf, opening heaven to men, revealing to human vision the presence chamber where the Deity unveils His glory; the fallen race uplifted from the pit of ruin into which sin had plunged it, and brought again into connection with the infinite God, and having endured the divine test through faith in our Redeemer, clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and exalted to His throne—these are the pictures which God would have us contemplate.

When we seem to doubt God's love and distrust His promises we dishonour Him and grieve His Holy Spirit. How would a mother feel if her children were constantly complaining of her, just as though she did not mean them well, when her whole life's effort had been to forward their interests and to give them comfort? Suppose they should doubt her love; it would break her heart. How would any parent feel to be thus treated by his children? And how can our heavenly Father regard us when we distrust His love, which has led Him to give His only-begotten Son that we might have life? The apostle writes, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Romans 8:32. And yet how many, by their actions, if not in word, are saying, "The Lord does not mean this for me. Perhaps He loves others, but He does not love me."

All this is harming your own soul; for every word of doubt you utter is inviting Satan's temptations; it is strengthening in you the tendency to doubt, and it is grieving from you the ministering angels. When Satan tempts you, breathe not a word of doubt or darkness. If you choose to open the door to his suggestions, your mind will be filled with distrust and rebellious questioning. If you talk out your feelings, every doubt you express not only reacts upon yourself, but it is a seed that will germinate and bear fruit in the life of others, and it may be impossible to counteract the influence of your words. You yourself may be able to recover from the season of temptation and from the snare of Satan, but others who have been swayed by your influence may not be able to escape from the unbelief you have suggested. How important that we speak only those things that will give spiritual strength and life!

Angels are listening to hear what kind of report you are bearing to the world about your heavenly Master. Let your conversation be of Him who lives to make intercession for you before the Father. When you take the hand of a friend, let praise to God be on your lips and in your heart. This will attract his thoughts to Jesus.

All have trials; griefs hard to bear, temptations hard to resist. Do not tell your troubles to your fellow mortals, but carry everything to God in prayer. Make it a rule never to utter one word of doubt or

discouragement. You can do much to brighten the life of others and strengthen their efforts, by words of hope and holy cheer.

There is many a brave soul sorely pressed by temptation, almost ready to faint in the conflict with self and with the powers of evil. Do not discourage such a one in his hard struggle. Cheer him with brave, hopeful words that shall urge him on his way. Thus the light of Christ may shine from you. "None of us lives to himself." Romans 14:7. By our unconscious influence others may be encouraged and strengthened, or they may be discouraged, and repelled from Christ and the truth.

There are many who have an erroneous idea of the life and character of Christ. They think that He was devoid of warmth and sunniness, that He was stern, severe, and joyless. In many cases the whole religious experience is coloured by these gloomy views.

It is often said that Jesus wept, but that He was never known to smile. Our Saviour was indeed a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief, for He opened His heart to all the woes of men. But though His life was self-denying and shadowed with pain and care, His spirit was not crushed. His countenance did not wear an expression of grief and repining, but ever one of peaceful serenity. His heart was a wellspring of life, and wherever He went He carried rest and peace, joy and gladness.

Our Saviour was deeply serious and intensely in earnest, but never gloomy or morose. The life of those who imitate Him will be full of earnest purpose; they will have a deep sense of personal responsibility. Levity will be repressed; there will be no boisterous merriment, no rude jesting; but the religion of Jesus gives peace like a river. It does not quench the light of joy; it does not restrain cheerfulness nor cloud the sunny, smiling face. Christ came not to be ministered unto but to minister; and when His love reigns in the heart, we shall follow His example.

If we keep uppermost in our minds the unkind and unjust acts of others we shall find it impossible to love them as Christ has loved us; but if our thoughts dwell upon the wondrous love and pity of Christ for us, the same spirit will flow out to others. We should love and respect one another, notwithstanding the faults and imperfections that we cannot help seeing. Humility and self-distrust should be cultivated, and a patient tenderness with the faults of others. This will kill out all narrowing selfishness and make us large-hearted and generous.

The psalmist says, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Psalm 37:3. "Trust in the Lord." Each day has its burdens, its cares and perplexities; and when we meet how ready we are to talk of our difficulties and trials. So many borrowed troubles intrude, so many fears are indulged, such a weight of anxiety is expressed, that one might suppose we had no pitying, loving Saviour ready to hear all our requests and to be to us a present help in every time of need.

Some are always fearing, and borrowing trouble. Every day they are surrounded with the tokens of God's love; every day they are enjoying the bounties of His providence; but they overlook these present blessings. Their minds are continually dwelling upon something disagreeable which they fear may come; or some difficulty may really exist which, though small, blinds their eyes to the many things that demand gratitude. The difficulties they encounter, instead of driving them to God, the only source of their help, separate them from Him because they awaken unrest and repining.

Do we well to be thus unbelieving? Why should we be ungrateful and distrustful? Jesus is our friend; all heaven is interested in our welfare. We should not allow the perplexities and worries of everyday life to fret the mind and cloud the brow. If we do we shall always have something to vex and annoy. We should not indulge a solicitude that only frets and wears us, but does not help us to bear trials.

You may be perplexed in business; your prospects may grow darker and darker, and you may be threatened with loss; but do not become discouraged; cast your care upon God, and remain calm and cheerful. Pray for wisdom to manage your affairs with discretion, and thus prevent loss and disaster. Do all you can on your part to bring about favourable results. Jesus has promised His aid, but not apart from our effort. When, relying upon our Helper, you have done all you can, accept the result cheerfully.

It is not the will of God that His people should be weighed down with care. But our Lord does not deceive us. He does not say to us, "Do not fear; there are no dangers in your path." He knows there are trials and dangers, and He deals with us plainly. He does not propose to take His people out of a world of sin and evil, but He points them to a never-failing refuge. His prayer for His disciples was, "I pray not that Thou should take them out of the world, but that Thou should keep them from the evil." "In the world," He says, "ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." John 17:15; 16:33.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Christ taught His disciples precious lessons in regard to the necessity of trusting in God. These lessons were designed to encourage the children of God through all ages, and they have come down to our time full of instruction and comfort. The Saviour pointed His followers to the birds of the air as they warbled their carols of praise, unencumbered with thoughts of care, for "they sow not, neither do they reap." And yet the great Father provides for their needs. The Saviour asks, "Are ye not much better than they?" Matthew 6:26. The great Provider for man and beast opens His hand and supplies all His creatures. The birds of the air are not beneath His notice. He does not drop the food into their bills, but He makes provision for their needs. They must gather the grains He has scattered for them. They must prepare the material for their little nests. They must feed their young. They go forth singing to their labour, for "your heavenly Father feeds them." And "are ye not much better than they?" Are not you, as intelligent, spiritual worshipers, of more value than the birds of the air? Will not the Author of our being, the Preserver of our life, the One who formed us in His own divine image, provide for our necessities if we but trust in Him?

Christ pointed His disciples to the flowers of the field, growing in rich profusion and glowing in the simple beauty which the heavenly Father had given them, as an expression of His love to man. He said, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow." The beauty and simplicity of these natural flowers far outrival the splendour of Solomon. The most gorgeous attire produced by the skill of art cannot bear comparison with the natural grace and radiant beauty of the flowers of God's creation. Jesus asks, "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Matthew 6:28, 30. If God, the divine Artist, gives to the simple flowers that perish in a day their delicate and varied colours, how much greater care will He have for those who are created in His own image? This lesson of Christ's is a rebuke to the anxious thought, the perplexity and doubt, of the faithless heart.

The Lord would have all His sons and daughters happy, peaceful, and obedient. Jesus says, "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." John 14:27; 15:11.

Happiness that is sought from selfish motives, outside of the path of duty, is ill-balanced, fitful, and transitory; it passes away, and the soul is filled with loneliness and sorrow; but there is joy and satisfaction in the service of God; the Christian is not left to walk in uncertain paths; he is not left to vain regrets and disappointments. If we do not have the pleasures of this life we may still be joyful in looking to the life beyond.

But even here Christians may have the joy of communion with Christ; they may have the light of His love, the perpetual comfort of His presence. Every step in life may bring us closer to Jesus, may give us a

deeper experience of His love, and may bring us one step nearer to the blessed home of peace. Then let us not cast away our confidence, but have firm assurance, firmer than ever before. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us," and He will help us to the end. 1 Samuel 7:12. Let us look to the monumental pillars, reminders of what the Lord has done to comfort us and to save us from the hand of the destroyer. Let us keep fresh in our memory all the tender mercies that God has shown us,—the tears He has wiped away, the pains He has soothed, the anxieties removed, the fears dispelled, the wants supplied, the blessings bestowed,—thus strengthening ourselves for all that is before us through the remainder of our pilgrimage.

We cannot but look forward to new perplexities in the coming conflict, but we may look on what is past as well as on what is to come, and say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Deuteronomy 33:25. The trial will not exceed the strength that shall be given us to bear it. Then let us take up our work just where we find it, believing that whatever may come, strength proportionate to the trial will be given.

And by and by the gates of heaven will be thrown open to admit God's children, and from the lips of the King of glory the benediction will fall on their ears like richest music, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matthew 25:34.

Then the redeemed will be welcomed to the home that Jesus is preparing for them. There their companions will not be the vile of earth, liars, idolaters, the impure, and unbelieving; but they will associate with those who have overcome Satan and through divine grace have formed perfect characters. Every sinful tendency, every imperfection, that afflicts them here has been removed by the blood of Christ, and the excellence and brightness of His glory, far exceeding the brightness of the sun, is imparted to them. And the moral beauty, the perfection of His character, shines through them, in worth far exceeding this outward splendour. They are without fault before the great white throne, sharing the dignity and the privileges of the angels.

In view of the glorious inheritance that may be his, "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matthew 16:26. He may be poor, yet he possesses in himself a wealth and dignity that the world could never bestow. The soul redeemed and cleansed from sin, with all its noble powers dedicated to the service of God, is of surpassing worth; and there is joy in heaven in the presence of God and the holy angels over one soul redeemed, a joy that is expressed in songs of holy triumph.

LESSON 9*“THE COSMIC CONFLICT”***February 22 - February 28*****EGW Study Notes 1******Preparation Day, February 28th, 2025*****Testimonies for the Church, Volume 5
Chapter 56, p. 503-504****“Religion and Scientific Education”**

You were presenting the idea that education must stand as an independent work. This mixing of religious matters and Bible doctrines with scientific education you considered as a drawback in our educational work and as a hindrance in the work of carrying the students to the higher degrees of scientific knowledge.

The great reason why so few of the world's great men and those having a college education are led to obey the commandments of God is that they have separated education from religion, thinking that each should occupy a field by itself. God presented a field large enough to perfect the knowledge of all who should enter it. This knowledge was obtained under divine supervision; it was bound about with the immutable law of Jehovah, and the result would have been perfect blessedness.

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?

The history of the past shows an active, working devil. He can no more be idle than harmless. Satan was found in only one tree to endanger the safety of Adam and Eve. He planned to attract the holy pair to that one tree, that they might do the very thing God had said they should not do—eat of the tree of knowledge. There was no danger to them in approaching any other tree. How plausible his speech! He laid hold of the very arguments which he uses today,—flattery, envy, distrust, questioning, and unbelief. If Satan was so cunning at first, what must he be now after gaining an experience of many thousands of years? Yet God and holy angels, and all those who abide in obedience to all the Lord's expressed will, are wiser than he. The subtlety of Satan will not decrease, but the wisdom given to men through a living connection with the Source of all light and divine knowledge will be proportionate to his arts and wiles.

If men would stand the test which Adam failed to endure, and would, in the strength of Jesus, obey all the requirements of God, because they are righteousness, then they would never become acquainted with

the objectionable knowledge. God never designed that men should have this knowledge which comes of disobedience, and which, carried into practice, ends in eternal death. When men almost invariably choose the knowledge that Satan presents; when their taste is so perverted that it craves that knowledge as though it were a fountain of supreme wisdom, then they give evidence that they are separated from God and are in rebellion against Christ.

EGW Study Notes 2**Preparation Day, February 28th, 2025****God's Amazing Grace
Chapter 1, p. 36****"The Kingdom of Grace"****"The Battlefield"****January 8th**

We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Ephesians 6:12.

The fallen world is the battlefield for the greatest conflict the heavenly universe and earthly powers have ever witnessed. It was appointed as a theatre 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.

Battles are to be fought every day. A great warfare is going on over every soul, between the prince of darkness and the Prince of life.... As God's agents you are to yield yourselves to Him, that He may plan and direct and fight the battle for you, with your cooperation. The Prince of life is at the head of His work. He is to be with you in your daily battle with self, that you may be true to principle; that passion, when warring for the mastery, may be subdued by the grace of Christ; that you come off more than conqueror through Him that hath loved us. Jesus has been over the ground. He knows the power of every temptation. He knows just how to meet every emergency, and how to guide you through every path of danger.

God will have a people zealous of good works, standing firm amid the pollutions of this degenerate age. There will be a people who hold so fast to the divine strength that they will be proof against every temptation. Evil communications in flaming handbills may seek to speak to their senses and corrupt their minds; yet they will be so united to God and angels that they will be as those who see not and hear not. They have a work to do which no one can do for them, which is to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life....

The youth may have principles so firm that the most powerful temptations of Satan will not draw them away from their allegiance.

LESSON 10***“RULES OF ENGAGEMENT”*****March 1 - March 7*****EGW Study Notes 1******Preparation Day, March 7th, 2025*****In Heavenly Places****Chapter 9, p. 271****“Heaven's Honour Roll”****September 21st****But he knows the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.****Job 23:10**

The Christian who loves his heavenly Father may not discern by outward providences or visible signs any heavenly favour above that given those with little or no consecration. Often he is sorely afflicted, distressed, perplexed, and hedged in on every side. Appearances seem to be against him....

Joseph was virtuous and his character was marked for true goodness and strength of purpose, yet he was maligned, persecuted, and dealt with as a criminal; but God had signal victories for Joseph, even as he appeared to suffer because of his right doing.

Daniel was cast into the lion's den because of his firm adherence to principle and his loyalty to God, but he triumphed in the end, and God was glorified through His servant whom He permitted to be humbled. Job was stripped of his earthly treasures, bereaved of his children, and made a spectacle of loathing to his friends, but in God's time He showed He had not forsaken His servant....

A true and faithful Stephen was stoned to death by the enemies of Christ. Surely it did not appear that God was strengthening His cause in the earth by thus permitting wicked men to triumph, but from this very circumstance Paul was converted to the faith, and through his word thousands were brought to the light of the gospel.

A precious, affectionate John was an exile on the lonely Isle of Patmos, but here Jesus met with him and revealed to him events ... stretching over the ages to the coming of Christ, and making known the counsel of the Lord for future ages.... He was permitted to look upon the throne of God and to behold the white-robed redeemed ones who had come out of great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

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.

EGW Study Notes 2**Preparation Day, March 7th, 2025****God's Amazing Grace
Chapter 6, p. 162****"The Cost of Grace"****"Incomparable Temptations"****June 3rd****The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.****John 14:30**

From the moment that Christ entered the world, the whole confederacy of Satanic agencies was set at work to deceive and overthrow Him as Adam had been deceived and overthrown....

When Christ was born in Bethlehem, the angels of God appeared to the shepherds, who were watching their flocks by night, and gave divine credentials of the authority of the newborn babe. Satan knew that One had come to the earth with a divine commission to dispute his authority. He heard the angel declare: "... Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord ..." (Luke 2:10, 11).

The heavenly heralds aroused all the wrath of the synagogue of Satan. He followed the steps of those who had charge of the infant Jesus. He heard the prophecy of Simeon in the temple courts.... "Lord, now let You your servant depart in peace, according to Your word: for mine eyes have seen Your salvation," ... (Luke 2:29-32). Satan was filled with frenzy as he saw that the aged Simeon recognized the divinity of Christ.

The Commander of heaven was assailed by the tempter.... From the time that He was a helpless babe in Bethlehem, when the agencies of hell sought to destroy Him in His infancy through the jealousy of Herod, until He came to Calvary's cross, He was continually assailed by the evil one. In the councils of Satan it was determined that He must be overcome. No human being had come into the world and escaped the power of the deceiver. The whole forces of the confederacy of evil were set upon His track.... Satan knew that he must either conquer or himself be conquered. Success or failure involved too much for him to leave the work with any one of his agents of evil. The prince of evil himself must personally conduct the warfare....

The life of Christ was a perpetual warfare against Satanic agencies. Satan rallied the whole energies of apostasy against the Son of God.

On not one occasion was there a response to his manifold temptations. Not once did Christ step on Satan's ground, to give him any advantage.

LESSON 11*“WHAT MORE COULD I HAVE DONE?”***March 8 - March 14*****EGW Study Notes 1******Preparation Day, March 14th, 2025*****The Acts of The Apostles
Chapter 1, p. 14-16****“God’s Purposes for His Church”**

God chose Israel to reveal His character to men. He desired them to be as wells of salvation in the world. To them were committed the oracles of heaven, the revelation of God’s will. In the early days of Israel the nations of the world, through corrupt practices, had lost the knowledge of God. They had once known Him; but because “they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, ... their foolish heart was darkened.” Romans 1:21. Yet in His mercy God did not blot them out of existence. He purposed to give them an opportunity of again becoming acquainted with Him through His chosen people. Through the teachings of the sacrificial service, Christ was to be uplifted before all nations, and all who would look to Him should live. Christ was the foundation of the Jewish economy. The whole system of types and symbols was a compacted prophecy of the gospel, a presentation in which were bound up the promises of redemption.

But the people of Israel lost sight of their high privileges as God’s representatives. They forgot God and failed to fulfill their holy mission. The blessings they received brought no blessing to the world. All their advantages they appropriated for their own glorification. They shut themselves away from the world in order to escape temptation. The restrictions that God had placed upon their association with idolaters as a means of preventing them from conforming to the practices of the heathen, they used to build up a wall of separation between themselves and all other nations. They robbed God of the service He required of them, and they robbed their fellow men of religious guidance and a holy example.

Priests and rulers became fixed in a rut of ceremonialism. They were satisfied with a legal religion, and it was impossible for them to give to others the living truths of heaven. They thought their own righteousness all-sufficient, and did not desire that a new element should be brought into their religion. The good will of God to men they did not accept as something apart from themselves, but connected it with their own merit because of their good works. The faith that works by love and purifies the soul could find no place for union with the religion of the Pharisees, made up of ceremonies and the injunctions of men.

Of Israel God declared: “I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto Me?” Jeremiah 2:21. “Israel is an empty vine, he brings forth fruit unto himself.” Hosea 10:1. “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard. What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?”

“And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor dug; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant: and He looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.” Isaiah 5:3-7. “The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.” Ezekiel 34:4.

The Jewish leaders thought themselves too wise to need instruction, too righteous to need salvation, too highly honoured to need the honour that comes from Christ. The Saviour turned from them to entrust to others the privileges they had abused and the work they had slighted. God's glory must be revealed, His word established. Christ's kingdom must be set up in the world. The salvation of God must be made known in the cities of the wilderness; and the disciples were called to do the work that the Jewish leaders had failed to do.

EGW Study Notes 2**Preparation Day, March 14th, 2025****Lift Him Up
Chapter 7, p. 216****“Lift Him Up as the Chief Shepherd”****“What More Could I Have Done?”****July 21st****Last of all he sent unto them his son.****Matthew 21:37**

Is there no power that can take hold of our sensibilities and show us that we are near the verge of the eternal world? Can we not get our minds on the other side? What can be done to arouse our people? Why, these light afflictions, how we talk about them. Hear what Paul says about them: *“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”* (2 Corinthians 4:17). Would you consider that to be beaten with rods, to be a night and a day in the deep, suffer with hunger, cold, nakedness, and all these things—and worst of all from false brethren—were light afflictions? But he says, These light afflictions....

There is too much self. We want self to die and be hid in Christ Jesus, then we will not talk of discouragement and difficulties and all these small things, but we will talk of the great plan of redemption and the matchless power of Jesus Christ to come to our world and take upon Him human nature that we through Him might be elevated and have a seat at His right hand. What could be more pleasant than that?

If this is not enough, what more could heaven do for the fallen race than has been done? “What more,” says Christ, “could I do for My sheep than that I have done?” What more? Will He have to let us go? He will unless you change your attitude toward God, for He has done all He could to save us. According to the light that we have received, so is our accountability before God. Walk in the light as He is in the light....

Evil surmising and evil speaking will be put away. You will talk and we will not be thinking of ourselves and what others are doing, but what God and Jesus are doing.... What are they doing? They are cleansing the sanctuary.... We should be with Him in this work and be cleansing the sanctuary of our souls of all unrighteousness, that our names may be written in the Lamb's book of life, that our sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. It is the most solemn work that was ever given to mortals.

You have no time to be exalting self, but [only to] lift Jesus up. Oh, lift Him up! How can we do this? How can we be seeking all the time to be saving ourselves, and exalting ourselves? ... Says the shepherd of the flock, “Who does He mean—ministers? No. Everyone who has named the name of Christ, who has tasted and knows that the Lord is good....

God will put His power on you, and combine His divine with our human efforts, and we can work out our salvation with fear and trembling. That is a power that Satan cannot resist or overthrow (Manuscript 26, 1888)

LESSON 12***“LOVE AND JUSTICE: THE TWO GREATEST COMMANDMENTS”*****March 15 - March 21*****EGW Study Notes 1******Preparation Day, March 21st, 2025*****Manuscript 62
August 18, 1894****“Home Missionary Work”**

Those who love Christ will be imbued with the Holy Spirit, and whether they be at home or afar off, they will do missionary work. It is essential to devise plans, to advance money for the progress of the cause of God, but even more than this is required. Personal effort must be put forth to interest souls in the church, to attract the children and the youth. Missionaries should visit families and become acquainted with every member of the home circle, so working that they shall do their best to awaken an interest in every one to love the truth. This kind of work will not be in vain, but will leave results that will be as lasting as eternity. This is true home missionary work.

At present there is not the interest that should be manifested toward those for whom Christ died. The youth are passed by, and because no one seems to have an interest in them, they become reckless and irreligious. Those who love God ought to feed both the sheep and the lambs. They are God's agents to do this very work. With busy hands, with sensitive hearts, with tongues that are as a pen of a ready writer, they are to win the unconcerned and unbelieving, and inspire their brethren and sisters with a missionary spirit. They are not to say, “Go on,” but “come on.”

As yet not one hundredth part of the efforts that should be made have been made in our large cities to diffuse the light of truth, yet the Lord holds the church accountable for the souls of those who are in darkness, who have not yet heard the warning message. There is altogether too much self-indulgence, too much investing of money in houses, in adornments, in picture taking, in buying unnecessary things for display; and souls are perishing out of Christ. Men, women, and youth, according to their capacity, should be engaged in some part of the Lord's vineyard. Now is our time and opportunity. We are now in the midst of our God-given probation in which we are to develop character after Christ's order.

A mere profession of faith does not make us Christians. The vital question is, Have we the mind of Christ? Our heavenly Father gave Christ to our world as a sin-bearer in order that not one who should believe in Him should perish, but have everlasting life. Having made so priceless a donation to men, will He not with Christ freely give us all things? In the gift of His Son, all heaven was opened up that its priceless treasures might enrich the men and women of faith. The love of God has been revealed to the hearts of believers that they should diffuse the light of heaven and not spend their time and money investing in and cultivating lands, and in taking pleasure in the things which their imaginations might picture as desirable, as did the inhabitants of the Noachic world.

Let every believer act his faith, and thus give a testimony to the unbelieving world that he does believe that the end of all things is at hand. “Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord.” [Isaiah 43:10.] Self is not to figure so largely in the plans of those who claim to believe the truth. The truth for this time is a testing truth which should stimulate the mind, purify the soul, and sanctify the desires. Its reality should be demonstrated in saving those who are perishing out of Christ. God's work is to be done in His way and in His Spirit.

In various places small companies are to consecrate themselves to God, body, soul, and spirit; and laying hold of the throne of God by faith, they are to work zealously, keeping their souls in the love of God. The vital current

of His love will make itself felt, and will be recognized as from heaven in the good works of His people. These little companies, who know the truth, with one voice should bid their minister to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Each one should seek to do individual work in the home, in the family, one for another. Not one who has tasted the goodness, the mercy, and the love of God can be excused from working for the souls of others.

What a large amount of the talents that God has given to His people are now bound up and buried in the earth in selfish worldly interests! But let every spiritually slothful man, woman, or youth who is not employing his talents by putting them out to the exchangers, remember that he will lose the precious treasures, God's gifts to him, if he does not put them to use. Talents that are not improved [by men] will be taken from them and given to those who will make use of the heaven-intrusted capability. The people of God should realize the fact that God has not given them talents to be used almost entirely for the purpose of enriching themselves with earthly goods, but in order that they may lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold or come into possession of eternal life.

Let the churches say to those who preach the Word, "Go into the cities and villages, and preach the warning message. You are God's watchmen on the walls of Zion, and however much we should be gratified to have your labours, we shall not hold you with us. We shall draw for ourselves from the treasure house of heaven by living faith. We shall not take upon ourselves the work of sermonizing—this cannot help the church—but we will fear God and serve Him, and speak often one to another. Not one of us will be guilty of seeking the supremacy, or [of] cherishing a burning zeal for speechifying; but in all humility of mind we will speak often one to another of our individual experiences in our daily life, and will present the precious things we have found in the Word of God by digging as for hid treasure. We will work in simplicity, and will pray much, that our prayers as sharp sickles may follow God's delegated sowers and reapers in the harvest."

In this kind of work the church will flourish in the Lord. They will have a growing experience in learning how to work and how to honour God with their self-denial and their gifts and offerings. They will learn how to help those who are weak and lame and deficient. By being witnesses for Christ, by their example in the faithful discharge of every duty, making manifest the fact that they are good servants, serving the Lord in singleness of heart, they will reveal to all that they are living out the truth which they profess to believe. In letting their light shine in the home missionary work, they will accomplish great results. Their earnest zeal will encourage the messenger for God as he labours for the conversion of sinners, proclaiming to the unbelieving the message of warning, and bidding men, women, youth, and children to escape from the wrath of God that is coming upon all who do not love and obey the truth.

Will not the large and small churches awake to their God-given responsibilities? Will they not love God in deed and in truth, and their fellow men as themselves? Will they not open the door of their hearts to Jesus, that He may come in and abide with them, and as a heavenly Guest accompany them wherever they shall go, that they may introduce Him to others? Shall not the people of God show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light? To be a child of God means to be perfectly obedient to His words, to learn of Christ, and to teach others that which you have been taught. To be a child of God means to be constantly receiving grace, and constantly imparting it to others. You will then understand what these words mean: He giveth "grace for grace." [John 1:16.]

The young man who came to Jesus asked what he should do that he might inherit eternal life. Jesus told him to keep the commandments, and enumerated several of the precepts of the law. The young man said, "All these have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" [Matthew 19:16-20.] The first four commandments enjoin upon man the duty of loving God supremely and the last six present the requirement of loving our neighbours as ourselves. How many are truly, sincerely, and wholeheartedly doing this? The Lord is coming in a little while, and are we performing the duties that result from righteousness? Love is the basis of godliness.

No man has love to God, no matter what his profession may be, unless he has unselfish love for his brother. As we love God because He first loved us, we shall love all for whom Christ died. We shall not feel like letting the soul who is in the greatest peril, and in the greatest need, go unwarned, unlaboured for, and uncared for. We shall not feel like holding the erring off, and being critical and exacting, or letting them alone to plunge into further unhappiness and discouragement, and to fall on Satan's battleground, for God will deal with us as He deals with our brethren or the younger members of the Lord's family.

Cultivate tenderness of heart; surround yourselves in your home life with the atmosphere of love. The spirit that has largely pervaded the church is an offense to God. Everyone who has been free to condemn, to dishearten, and to discourage, who has failed to give tender kindness, sympathy, and compassion to the tempted and tried, will in his own experience be brought over the ground which others have passed over and suffered with their hardheartedness, and will feel what others have suffered because of his want of sympathy, until he shall abhor his hardness of heart and open the door for Jesus to come in.

The converting power of God must come to every soul who has any connection with the work and cause of God, that each one may be filled with the love and compassion of Christ, or many will never see the kingdom of heaven. The mutual admiration that is manifested among special friends will not abide the test of trial, for it is not of a holy character. When Christ abides in the soul, He will be revealed in the uplifting of those who most need uplifting. Our neighbour is every person who needs our help. Our neighbour is every soul who is wounded and bruised by the adversary. Our neighbour is everyone who is the property of God. We have not seen the good Samaritan largely represented in our churches, or in our offices of publication. We have not seen the men who are reckoned to be God-fearing, manifesting tender compassion for needy souls that are straying away from Christ. Many who claim to have been God's servants have been indifferent, unfeeling, and hard of heart. Oh that all who claim to be serving God would be baptized with the tenderness, the compassion, of Christ, in order that they may feel for those who need words of love and acts of compassion!

The people of God who profess to be keeping His commandments are but a few in comparison to those whom the world loves and honours. Those who obey the teachings of Christ must bear the cross and know what self-renunciation means. Those who have a true Christian experience with Sabbath-keepers should be the better for their association, for if they live out the commandments of God, they are representatives of the Father and the Son.

Many of those who have filled responsible positions of trust in the Review and Herald office have failed to practice the keeping of the commandments of God. They have not been particular to keep holy the Sabbath day which God has sanctified and blessed. The very ones they could have helped, they have passed by, as the priest and the Levite passed by the wounded and bruised stranger who had been left to die by the wayside. The very ones who needed the power of the divine Healer to cure their wounds have been left uncared for and unnoticed. Many have acted as though it were enough to know that Satan had his trap all set for a soul, and they could go home, and rest, and be at ease, and care no more for the one lost sheep. In manifesting such a spirit, it is evident that we have not been partakers of the divine nature, but partakers of the attributes of the enemy of God. This is how the Lord regards it. "He that gathers not with me scatters abroad." [Matthew 12:30.] Jesus said, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." [Matthew 7:12.]

To practice the principles of love which Christ taught by precept and example will make the experience of every one who follows Him like the experience of Christ. Such souls will labour in Christ's lines, seeking to uplift and bless their fellow men. If we desire healthfulness of soul, a sunshiny experience, we must put into practice the rules given us in the 58th chapter of Isaiah. When those who are connected with the sacred work of God in all our institutions shall open the door of their hearts, Jesus will come in. For a long time He has been knocking for an entrance. When He is permitted to enter, the sunshine of His righteousness will pervade the soul; but "he that loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loves abundance with increase." [Ecclesiastes 5:10.]

Souls are perishing out of Christ. I inquire, Who are earnestly making personal efforts to seek the straying ones? Who will seek to roll back every reproach from the sacred truth of God? The voice of Christ is heard giving the invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." [Matthew 11:28.] Shall we, who claim to know by experience what is the blessing to be obtained in coming to Christ, lead others to Jesus? Shall anyone who professes to love God, and to love the truth, be cold, unsympathetic, and hardhearted toward those who stumble, toward those who err, and fail to give them a helping hand when they need help? By their neglect of the erring, by their unsympathetic words and indifferent deportment, some show themselves to be of that class who pass by on the other side. Some pour out words of gall and bitterness in censure, in reproach to the erring, and it is like pouring vitriol into an open wound, instead of pouring in the healing oil.

Oh, let us be witnesses for Christ, testifying to the power of His grace by representing Him in character! We are to work along Christ's lines, and if we fail to do this, our experience will be marred, and our character will be defective. We are to be continually labouring together with Christ, seeking to turn the darkness of benighted souls

into day. By our words, by our actions, we are to let heaven's light shine upon them, and do nothing that will cut off one ray of the light of Christ, who is the light that lights every man that cometh into the world.

Many professed Christians have interposed themselves between Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, and the world. In place of diffusing light, peace, hope, and comfort, they diffuse darkness, discouragement, and hopelessness. Every poor, tried soul needs light, needs tender, sympathizing, hopeful words. Every widow needs the comfort of helpful and encouraging words that others can bestow.

Orphans who are lent to Christians in trust for God are too often passed by and neglected, and yet they are bought with a price, and are just as valuable in the sight of God as we are. They may be ragged, uncouth, rough, destitute, cold, and hungry; yet as God's property, Christians should have a lively interest in them. They are members of the household of God, for whom Christians are responsible. "Their souls," saith God, "will I require at thine hands." [Ezekiel 3:18.] They must be cared for, they must receive special attention. You cannot expend your means in a better way than by opening your doors to make homes for them. When the Lord sees that you are faithful in doing what you can to relieve human misery, He will move upon others to provide means to care for those who need help. Those who enlarge their hearts in this kind of work do no more than their duty.

Christ is our Example. He was the Majesty of heaven, yet He did more for our fellow men than any of us can possibly do. "Ye are labourers together with God." [1 Corinthians 3:9.] Let not one needless expenditure be made for the gratification of pride and vanity. Put your mites and your larger sums in the bank of heaven, where they will accumulate. Many who have had precious opportunities to wear the yoke of Christ in this most precious line of work have refused to submit to the yoke. It has not been pleasant to practice unselfishness, and they have neglected to make the cases of the poor and unfortunate their own. They do not heed the injunctions of Christ, and improve every talent that the Lord has given them, cooperating with heavenly intelligences in gathering souls who will serve, honour, and glorify the name of Christ.

There is a large work to be done in our world, and as we approach the close of earth's history it does not lessen in the least degree; but when the perfect love of God is in the heart, wonderful things will be done. Christ will be in the heart of the believer as a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. But those who manifest indifference to the suffering ones of humanity will be charged with indifference to Jesus Christ in the person of His suffering saints. Nothing saps spirituality from the soul more quickly than to enclose it in selfishness and self-caring. Those who indulge self and neglect to care for the souls and bodies of those for whom Christ has given His life are not eating of the bread of life, nor drinking of the water of the well of salvation. They are dry and sapless, like a tree that bears no fruit. They are spiritual dwarfs, who consume their means on self; but "whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap." [Galatians 6:7.]

Christian principles will always be made visible. In a thousand ways the inward principles will be made manifest. Christ abiding in the soul is as a well that never runs dry. Where He abides there will be an overflowing of beneficence. There will be acts of love for the needy, and provision will be made for the destitute. "But this I say, he which sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which sows bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposes in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work (as it is written, he hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth forever. Now he that ministers seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness); being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causes through us (the living human agency) thanksgiving to God." [2 Corinthians 9:6-11.]

How many, through selfish plans, rob God of the praise and the thanksgiving due to His holy name, because they would hold the goods lent them in trust and fail to relieve the necessities of their brethren who are in poverty and distress. They do not break the yoke of oppression. Many rob God in tithes and in offerings, so that there is no meat in the house of God. The Lord says of them, They have "gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them." [Malachi 3:7.]

Listen to the voice of God, speaking to every church, to every family, to every individual: "Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." [Verses 7-9.]

How many are in the position where they are professing to serve God, but are diligently serving themselves and dishonouring the God whose representatives they claim to be? They say, "I do not see that it is my duty to give to the Lord a certain portion of all my income, and I do not feel condemned in not giving it." Wherein have we robbed God? The Lord answers through His servant the prophet. Listen to His words which you must meet in the judgment. You will have to meet with a revelation of the good you might have done in acts of charity, in giving back to God all that He claimed.

Open your hearts that you may be impressed with the words of the Lord: "Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed; for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts." [Verses 8-12.]

It is a serious thing to embezzle the Lord's goods, to practice robbery toward God, for in so doing the perceptions become perverted and the heart hardened. How barren is the religious experience, how clouded is the understanding, of one who loves not God with pure, unselfish love, and who fails, therefore, to love his neighbour as himself. Though precious opportunities are often presented, he does not accept the opportunity, and refuses to wear the yoke of Christ, to be a labourer together with God. Those who follow their selfish, natural inclination, do not make their hearts an abiding place for Christ. They fail to bless others with means that God has lent to them in trust, in order that they may be His almoners; and instead of dispensing it to the poor, like the slothful servant they bury it in lands or in stocks, or give it to their relations, and the Lord receives neither interest nor principal.

The last great day will reveal to them and to the whole universe what good might have been done had they not followed their selfish inclinations, and thus robbed God in tithes and offerings. They might have placed their treasure in the bank of heaven, and preserved it in bags that wax not old; but instead of this, they expended it upon themselves and [their] children, and seemed to feel afraid that the Lord would get any of their money or their influence, and thus they met with eternal loss. Let them contemplate the consequence of withholding from God. The slothful servant, who put not out his Lord's money to usury, loses an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of glory.

The Lord says, "Return unto me, and I will return unto you." [Verse 7.] Do not, like the slothful servant, ask, Wherein have I return? Wherein have I robbed thee? God has laid out the truth plain and clear before every one who has embezzled his Lord's goods. God is in earnest with us. We make desperate efforts to accumulate money, and there may be flattering appearances of our success, but God says, "I will blow upon it, I will scatter their substance as the wind scatters the chaff." [See Haggai 1:9.]

Those who believe in Christ as a personal Saviour will grow in healthful experience, because they fulfill the conditions laid down in the 58th chapter of Isaiah. The Lord says, "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou see the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee (the Lord my Righteousness); and the glory of the Lord shall be they rereward." [Verses 6-8.]

Consider these words, ye complaining, downcast, discontented, homesick souls. Here is the prescription that the prophet Isaiah [was] commanded of the Lord to present to you for the healing of the spiritual and bodily maladies. "Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am." [Verse 9.] I am "thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." [Isaiah 41:14.] "If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;" (not exalting yourself, not thinking yourself very wise and prudent, while censuring and oppressing those who meet with trials and misfortunes; not grieving others by unfeeling, reproachful words and actions); "And 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." Oh, how many souls are starving for words of tenderness, for words of brotherly kindness, for words of hope, of faith, of forgiveness, of Christlike love, that will not quench

the last spark of hope. "And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." [Isaiah 58:9-11.]

Let us consider that all these rich blessings are for those who keep the commandments of God. What more can we desire? What richer reward can we ask? "And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Isaiah 58:12-14.

"I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses. For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. 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 63:7-9.

"Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people. Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say you to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken." Isaiah 62:10-12.

The Lord Jesus has come to our world to seek and to save that which was lost. He said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." [Mark 2:17.] "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.] How earnestly we should believe in Christ as our personal Saviour, cultivating an intense desire to use every God-given faculty, every God-intrusted capability of means and influence to present a crucified and risen Saviour to those who are in darkness. What a pity it is that so many professed Christians are infatuated and deluded with the flattering prospect of becoming rich, in order to make a display and to glorify self before the world!

Let every follower of Christ become a living epistle, known and read of all men. Where Christ abides in the heart there will be deep yearnings of soul for the salvation of those who do not believe in Him. Let Christians reveal to every son and daughter of Adam the fact that they are more anxious to practice the good works of Christ in this world, and to be numbered as God's chosen ones, than to be seeking for riches. Let your words and your example be a continual sermon, making manifest the fact that you are laying up your treasure above, that your life is hid with Christ in God, and that it is your hope to appear with Christ, who is your life, when He shall appear in glory.

"Whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." [James 4:4.] Let this be your theme for both precept and example, for conformity to the world and harmony with Christ cannot be maintained. Worldly maxims and worldly practices sap spirituality from heart and life. Conformity to the world means resemblance to the world in meeting the world's standard. But how dwelleth the love of God in the soul of him who assimilates to the world? No man can serve the world and Jesus Christ at the same time. There is an irreconcilable antagonism between Christ and the world. Everyone who loves Jesus has a solemn work to do for the world, for "ye are labourers together with God." [1 Corinthians 3:9.]

Christ sought to save the world, not by conformity to it, but by revealing to the world the transforming power of the grace of God to mold and fashion the human character after the likeness of the character of Christ. To go over to the world in our practices will not influence the world to change its principles and practices. With an eye single to the glory of God, we are to live above the world, and yet in every way we are to seek to let the heavenly light shine forth in Christlike actions, and thus exert a powerful influence to save sinners. The moment a professed Christian goes over the line, and follows the fashions of the world, he becomes an idolater, and a stumbling block to sinners. You can draw the world with you only as you wear Christ's yoke; but you can have no influence upon the world in lowering yourself to its low level. Remember, Christ gave Himself to save you, and you can do no less than give yourself to save souls for whom Christ died.

EGW Study Notes 2**Preparation Day, March 21st, 2025****Reflecting Christ
Chapter 7, p. 200****“Lift Him Up as the Chief Shepherd”****“Perfect Oneness Will Give Success”****July 5th**

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

John 17:21

I urge our people to cease their criticism and evil-speaking, and go to God in earnest prayer, asking Him to help them to help the erring. Let them link up with one another and with Christ. Let them study the seventeenth of John, and learn how to pray and how to live the prayer of Christ. He is the Comforter. He will abide in their hearts, making their joy full. His words will be to them as the bread of life, and in the strength thus gained they will be enabled to develop characters that will be an honour to God. Perfect Christian fellowship will exist among them. There will be seen in their lives the fruit that always appears as the result of obedience to the truth.

Let us make Christ's prayer the rule of our life, that we may form characters that will reveal to the world the power of the grace of God. Let there be less talk about petty differences, and a more diligent study of what the prayer of Christ means to those who believe on His name. We are to pray for union, and then live in such a way that God can answer our prayers.

Perfect oneness—a union as close as the union existing between the Father and the Son—this is what will give success to the efforts of God's workers.—*Manuscript 1, 1903.*

Complete union with Christ and with one another is absolutely necessary to the perfection of believers. Christ's presence by faith in the hearts of believers is their power, their life. It brings union with God. “Thou in me.” Union with God through Christ makes the church perfect.—*Manuscript 182, 1905.*

He who seeks to serve others by self-denial and self-sacrifice will be given the attributes of character that commend themselves to God, and develop wisdom, true patience, forbearance, kindness, compassion. This gives him the chiefest place in the kingdom of God.—*Manuscript 165, 1898*

Nothing can perfect a perfect unity in the church but the spirit of Christlike forbearance. Satan can sow discord; Christ alone can harmonize the disagreeing elements.... When you as individual workers of the church love God supremely and your neighbour as yourself, then there will be no laboured efforts to be in unity, there will be oneness in Christ, the ears to report will be closed, and no one will take up a reproach against his neighbour. The members of the church will cherish love and unity and be as one great family. Then we shall bear the credentials to the world that will testify that God has sent His Son into the world. Christ has said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”—*Letter 29, 1889.*

LESSON 13*“LOVE IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW”***March 22 - March 28*****EGW Study Notes 1******Preparation Day, March 28th, 2025*****That I May Know Him
Chapter 10, p. 299****“God’s Law in the Heart”****October 19th**

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.

Hebrews 8:10

The blessings of the new covenant are grounded purely on mercy in forgiving unrighteousness and sins. The Lord specifies, I will do this and this to all who turn to Me, forsaking the evil and choosing the good. “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” (Hebrews 8:12). All who humble their hearts, confessing their sins, will find mercy and grace and assurance.

Has God, in showing mercy to the sinner, ceased to be just? Has He dishonoured His holy law, and will He henceforth pass over the violation of it? God is true. He changes not. The conditions of salvation are ever the same. Life, eternal life, is for all who will obey God’s law. Perfect obedience, revealed in thought, word, and deed, is as essential now as when the lawyer asked Christ, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “What is written in the law? how read you? ... this do, and thou shalt live” (Luke 10:25-28).

Under the new covenant the conditions by which eternal life may be gained are the same as under the old—perfect obedience. Under the old covenant there were many offences of a daring, presumptuous character for which there was no atonement specified by law. In the new and better covenant Christ has fulfilled the law for the transgressors of law if they receive Him by faith as a personal Saviour.... Mercy and forgiveness are the reward of all who come to Christ trusting in His merits to take away their sins. In the better covenant we are cleansed from sin by the blood of Christ.... The sinner is helpless to atone for one sin. The power is in Christ’s free gift, a promise appreciated by those only who are sensible of their sins and who forsake their sins and cast their helpless souls upon Christ, the sin-pardoning Saviour. He will put into their hearts His perfect law, which is “holy, and just, and good” (Romans 7:12), the law of God’s own nature.

EGW Study Notes 2**Preparation Day, March 28th, 2025****In Heavenly Places
Chapter 10, p. 287****“A Relationship of Interdependence”****October 7th**

And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

1 Corinthians 12:26-27

In the Lord's plan human beings have been made necessary to one another. To every one God has entrusted talents, to be used in helping others to walk in the path of right. It is by unselfish service for others that we improve and increase our talents.

Like the different parts of a machine, all are closely related to one another, and all dependent upon one great Center. There is to be unity in diversity. No member of the Lord's firm can work successfully in independence. Each is to work under the supervision of God; all are to use their entrusted capabilities in His service, that each may minister to the perfection of the whole....

He who claims to be a Christian should examine himself and see if he is as kind and considerate of his fellow beings as he desires his fellow beings to be of him.... Christ taught that rank or wealth should make no difference in our treatment of one another and that in the light of heaven all are brethren. Earthly possessions or worldly honour do not count in God's valuation of man. He created all men equal; He is no respecter of persons. He values a man according to the virtue of his character.

To possess true godliness means to love one another, to help one another, to make apparent the religion of Jesus in our lives. We are to be consecrated channels through which the love of Christ flows to those who need help.... He who approaches nearest to obedience to the divine law will be of the most service to God. He who follows Christ, reaching out after His goodness, His compassion, His love for the human family, will be accepted by God as a worker together with Him....

When the Lord's people are filled with meekness and tenderness for one another, they will realize that His banner over them is love and His fruit will be sweet to their taste. Heaven will begin on earth. They will make a heaven below in which to prepare for heaven above.

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