

Lesson 1

The Letter to the Hebrews and to Us

Sabbath Afternoon, December 25

Study carefully the first chapter of Hebrews. Become interested in the Scriptures. Read and study them diligently. “In them ye think ye have eternal life,” Christ said, “and they are they which testify of Me.” It means everything to us to have an experimental and individual knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, “whom He hath sent.” “For this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.”

—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 404.

Men, women, and youth, God requires you to possess moral courage, steadiness of purpose, fortitude and perseverance, minds that cannot take the assertions of another, but which will investigate for themselves before receiving or rejecting, that will study and weigh evidence, and take it to the Lord in prayer. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” ... This petition for wisdom is not to be a meaningless prayer, out of mind as soon as finished. It is a prayer that expresses the strong, earnest desire of the heart, arising from a conscious lack of wisdom to determine the will of God.

After the prayer is made, if the answer is not realized immediately, do not weary of waiting and become unstable. Waver not. Cling to the promise, “Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.” Like the importunate widow, urge your case, being firm in your purpose. Is the object important and of great consequence to you? It certainly is. Then waver not, for your faith may be tried. If the thing you desire is valuable, it is worthy of a strong, earnest effort. You have the promise; watch and pray. Be steadfast and the prayer will be answered; for is it not God who has promised? If it costs you something to obtain it you will prize it the more when obtained. ... A caution is here given not to become weary, but to rest firmly upon the promise. If you ask, He will give you liberally and upbraid not.

—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 130, 131.

While in the world, the Christian will meet with adverse influences. There will be provocations to test the temper; and it is by meeting these in a right spirit that the Christian graces are developed. If injuries and insults are meekly borne, if insulting words are responded to by gentle answers, and oppressive acts by kindness, this is evidence that the Spirit of Christ dwells in the heart, that sap from the living Vine is flowing to the branches. We are in the school of Christ in this life, where we are to learn to be meek and lowly of heart; and in the day of final accounts we shall see that all the obstacles we meet, all the hardships and annoyances that we are called to bear, are practical lessons in the application of principles of Christian life. If well endured, they develop the Christlike in the character and distinguish the Christian from the worldling.

—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 344.

Sunday, December 26: A Glorious Beginning

Through His Holy Spirit the voice of God has come to us continually in warning and instruction, to confirm the faith of the believers in the Spirit of prophecy. Repeatedly the word has come, Write the things that I have given you to confirm the faith of My people in the position they have taken. Time and trial have not made void the instruction given, but through years of suffering and self-sacrifice have established the truth of the testimony given. The instruction that was given in the early days of the message is to be held as safe instruction to follow in these its closing days. ... If we study carefully the second chapter of Hebrews we shall learn how important it is that we hold steadfastly to every principle of truth that has been given.

—*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 18, 1907.

Christ determined that when He ascended from this earth He would bestow a gift on those who had believed on Him and those who should believe on Him. What gift could He bestow rich enough to signalize and grace His ascension to the mediatorial throne? It must be worthy of His greatness and His royalty. He determined to give His representative, the third person of the Godhead. This gift could not be excelled. He would give all gifts in one, and therefore the divine Spirit, that converting, enlightening, and sanctifying power, would be His donation. ... It came with a fullness and power, as if for ages it had been restrained, but was now being poured forth upon the church.

Believers were reconverted. Sinners united with Christians seeking the pearl of great price. ... Every Christian saw in his brother the divine similitude of benevolence and love. One interest prevailed. One object swallowed up all others. Every pulse beat in healthy concert. The only ambition of the believers was to see who could reveal most perfectly the likeness of Christ's character, who could do the most for the enlargement of His kingdom.

—*My Life Today*, p. 36.

When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven. No one sees the hand that lifts the burden, or beholds the light descend from the courts above. The blessing comes when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then that power which no human eye can see creates a new being in the image of God.

It is impossible for finite minds to comprehend the work of redemption. Its mystery exceeds human knowledge; yet he who passes from death to life realizes that it is a divine reality. The beginning of redemption we may know here through a personal experience. Its results reach through the eternal ages.

—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 173.

Monday, December 27: The Struggle

From Olivet the Saviour beheld the storms about to fall upon the apostolic church, and, penetrating deeper into the future, His eye discerned the fierce, wasting tempests that were to beat upon His followers in the coming ages of darkness and persecution. In a few brief utterances, of awful significance, He foretold the portion which the rulers of this world would mete out to the church of God. The followers of Christ must tread the same path of humiliation, reproach, and suffering which their Master trod. The enmity that burst forth against the world's Redeemer would be manifested against all who should believe on His name.

The history of the early church testified to the fulfillment of the Saviour's words. The powers of earth and hell arrayed themselves against Christ in the person of His followers. ... The fires of persecution were kindled. Christians were stripped of their possessions and driven from their homes. They "endured a great fight of afflictions." They "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment." Hebrews 11:36.

—*The Story of Redemption*, pp. 320, 321.

In Egypt a successful military leader and a favorite with the king and the nation, [Moses] had been accustomed to receiving praise and flattery. He had attracted the people to himself. He hoped to accomplish by his own powers the work of delivering Israel. Far different were the lessons he had to learn as God's representative. As he led his flocks through the wilds of the mountains and into the green pastures of the valleys, he learned faith and meekness, patience, humility, and self-forgetfulness. He learned to care for the weak, to nurse the sick, to seek after the straying, to bear with the unruly, to tend the lambs, and to nurture the old and the feeble.

In this work Moses was drawn nearer to the Chief Shepherd. He became closely united to the Holy One of Israel. No longer did he plan to do a great work. He sought to do faithfully as unto God the work committed to his charge. ... He knew God as a personal God, and, in meditating upon His character he grasped more and more fully the sense of His presence. He found refuge in the everlasting arms.

—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 474, 475.

Never is the tempest-tried soul more dearly loved by his Saviour than when he is suffering reproach for the truth's sake. When for the truth's sake the believer stands at the bar of unrighteous tribunals, Christ stands by his side. All the reproaches that fall upon the human believer fall upon Christ in the person of His saints. "I will love him," said Christ, "and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21). Christ is condemned over again in the person of His believing disciples. When for the truth's sake the believer is incarcerated in prison walls, Christ manifests Himself to him and ravishes his heart with His love. When he suffers death for the sake of Christ, Christ says to him, They may kill the body, but they cannot hurt the soul. "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

—*That I May Know Him*, p. 275.

Tuesday, December 28: Malaise

You may accomplish much for your brethren if you will hide in God and let His Spirit soften your spirit. You have a hard class to meet. They are filled with bitter prejudice, but no more so than was Saul. God can work mightily for your brethren if you do not allow yourself to get in the way and hedge up your own path. Let melting love, pity, and tenderness dwell in your heart while you labor. You may break down the iron walls of prejudice if you only cling to Christ. ...

You must not, as God's servant, be too easily discouraged by difficulties or by the fiercest opposition. Go forth, not in your own name, but in the might and power of Israel's God. Endure hardness as a good soldier of the cross of Christ. Jesus endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself. Consider the life of Christ and take courage, and press on in faith, courage, and hope.

—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 434.

Instead of matters taking a more favorable turn, wicked men, seducing teachers, will grow worse and worse, deceiving themselves and deceiving others. We may expect greater opposition than has yet been experienced. ... We must now make Christ our refuge, or in the days before us our souls will be overwhelmed with darkness and despair. There is a point beyond which human help cannot avail. Every one must live by faith as he is forced into close and apparently deadly conflict with the powers of darkness. Each must stand or fall for himself. The arrows of the destroyer are about to be hurled against the faithful ones, and no earthly power can turn aside the shaft. But could our eyes be opened we could see angels of God encircling the righteous, that no harm may come upon them. ...

We must look to Jesus, study His words, pray for His spirit. We should be more frequently alone with God in meditation and prayer. Let us pray more and talk less. We cannot trust to our own wisdom, our own experience, our own knowledge of the truth; we must be daily learners, looking to our heavenly Teacher for instruction, and then, without regard to ease, pleasure, or convenience, we must go forward, knowing that He is faithful who has called.

—*Our High Calling*, p. 362.

Whenever one is encompassed with clouds, perplexed by circumstances, or afflicted by poverty or distress, Satan is at hand to tempt and annoy. He attacks our weak points of character. He seeks to shake our confidence in God, who suffers such a condition of things to exist. We are tempted to distrust God, to question His love. Often the tempter comes to us as he came to Christ, arraying before us our weakness and infirmities. He hopes to discourage the soul and to break our hold upon God. Then he is sure of his prey. If we would meet him as Jesus did, we should escape many a defeat. By parleying with the enemy we give him an advantage.

—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 256.

Wednesday, December 29: Press Together

Elijah's retreat on Mount Horeb, though hidden from man, was known to God; and the weary and discouraged prophet was not left to struggle alone with the powers of darkness that were pressing upon him. At the entrance to the cave wherein Elijah had taken refuge, God met with him, through a mighty angel sent to inquire into his needs and to make plain the divine purpose for Israel.

Not until Elijah had learned to trust wholly in God could he complete his work for those who had been seduced into Baal worship. The signal triumph on the heights of Carmel had opened the way for still greater victories; yet from the wonderful opportunities opening before him, Elijah had been turned away by the threat of Jezebel. The man of God must be made to understand the weakness of his present position as compared with the vantage ground the Lord would have him occupy.

—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 167.

We can do nothing without courage and perseverance. Speak words of hope and courage to the poor and the disheartened. If need be, give tangible proof of your interest by helping them when they come into strait places. Those who have had many advantages should remember that they themselves still err in many things, and that it is painful to them when their errors are pointed out and there is held up before them a comely pattern of what they should be. Remember that kindness will accomplish more than censure.

—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 196.

Satan has ability to suggest doubts and to devise objections to the pointed testimony that God sends, and many think it a virtue, a mark of intelligence in them, to be unbelieving and to question and quibble. Those who desire to doubt will have plenty of room. God does not propose to remove all occasion for unbelief. He gives evidence, which must be carefully investigated with a humble mind and a teachable spirit, and all should decide from the weight of evidence. ... God gives sufficient evidence for the candid mind to believe; but he who turns from the weight of evidence because there are a few things which he cannot make plain to his finite understanding will be left in the cold, chilling atmosphere of unbelief and questioning doubts, and will make shipwreck of faith.

—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 675, 676.

When a person becomes of age, we expect from him a corresponding intelligence, according to his years and opportunities. ... But if we expect this manifestation of growing intelligence in the child, as he advances in years, should we not also expect to see the Christian grow in grace and experience?
...

God does not desire you to remain novices. He needs in His work everything that you can gain here in the lines of mental culture and clear discernment. He desires to have you reach the very highest round of the ladder, and then step off it into the kingdom of God.

—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 330.

Thursday, December 30: These Last Days

Just what Christ was to John in his exile He will be to His people who are made to feel the hand of oppression for the faith and testimony of Jesus Christ. ... These were driven by the storm and tempest of persecution to the crevices of the rocks, but were hiding in the Rock of Ages; and in the fastnesses of the mountains, in the caves and dens of the earth, the Saviour reveals His presence and His glory. Yet a little while, and He that is to come will come and will not tarry. His eyes as a flame of fire penetrate into the fast-closed dungeons and hunt out the hidden ones, for their names are written in the Lamb's book of life. These eyes of the Saviour are above us, around us, noting every difficulty, discerning every danger; and there is no place where His eyes cannot penetrate, no sorrows and sufferings of His people where the sympathy of Christ does not reach.

—*That I May Know Him*, p. 360.

“Hold fast.” This does not mean, Hold fast to your sins; but, Hold fast to the comfort, the faith, the hope, that God has given you in His Word. Never be discouraged. A discouraged man can do nothing. Satan is seeking to discourage you, telling you it is of no use to serve God, that it does not pay, and that it is just as well to have pleasure and enjoyment in this world. But “what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” You may have worldly pleasure at the expense of the future world; but can you afford to pay such a price?

We are to “hold fast” and live up to all the light we receive from heaven. Why? Because God wants us to grasp the eternal truth, and act as His helping hand by communicating the light to those who are not acquainted with His love for them. When you gave yourself to Christ, you made a pledge in the presence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—the three great personal Dignitaries of heaven. “Hold fast” to this pledge.

—**Ellen G. White Comments, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 959.**

You may have your choice as to who shall rule your heart and control your mind. If you choose to open the door to the suggestions of the evil one, your mind will be filled with distrust and rebellious questioning. You may talk out your feelings, but every doubt you utter is a seed that will germinate and bear fruit in another's life, and it will be impossible to counteract the influence of your words. You may be able to recover from your season of temptation ... , but others that have been swayed by your influence may not be able to escape from the unbelief you have suggested. How important it is that we speak to those around us only those things which will give spiritual strength and enlightenment!

—*That I May Know Him*, p. 228.

Friday, December 31: For Further Reading

Selected Messages, “To Have Lamps Trimmed and Burning,” book 1, pp. 189, 190;

The Acts of the Apostles, “Written From Rome,” pp. 475, 476.