

Lesson 9

Jesus, the Perfect Sacrifice

Sabbath Afternoon, February 19

It was the cross, that instrument of shame and torture, which brought hope and salvation to the world. The disciples were but humble men, without wealth, and with no weapon but the word of God; yet in Christ's strength they went forth to tell the wonderful story of the manger and the cross, and to triumph over all opposition. Without earthly honor or recognition, they were heroes of faith. From their lips came words of divine eloquence that shook the world.

—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 77.

[I]n Paul's day the cross was regarded with feelings of repulsion and horror. To uphold as the Saviour of mankind one who had met death on the cross, would naturally call forth ridicule and opposition. ...

But to Paul the cross was the one object of supreme interest. Ever since he had been arrested in his career of persecution against the followers of the crucified Nazarene he had never ceased to glory in the cross. At that time there had been given him a revelation of the infinite love of God, as revealed in the death of Christ; and a marvelous transformation had been wrought in his life, bringing all his plans and purposes into harmony with heaven. From that hour he had been a new man in Christ. He knew by personal experience that when a sinner once beholds the love of the Father, as seen in the sacrifice of His Son, and yields to the divine influence, a change of heart takes place, and henceforth Christ is all and in all.

—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 245.

The cross of Calvary appeals to us in power, affording a reason why we should love our Saviour, and why we should make Him first and last and best in everything. We should take our fitting place in humble penitence at the foot of the cross. Here, as we see our Saviour in agony, the Son of God dying, the just for the unjust, we may learn lessons of meekness and lowliness of mind. Behold Him who with one word could summon legions of angels to His assistance, a subject of jest and merriment, of reviling and hatred. He gives Himself a sacrifice for sin. When reviled, He threatens not; when falsely accused, He opens not His mouth. He prays on the cross for His murderers. He is dying for them; He is paying an infinite price for every one of them. He bears the penalty of man's sins without a murmur. And this uncomplaining victim is the Son of God. His throne is from everlasting, and His kingdom shall have no end.

—*Lift Him Up*, p. 233.

Sunday, February 20: Why Were Sacrifices Needed?

The covenant of grace was first made with man in Eden, when after the Fall there was given a divine promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. To all men this covenant offered pardon and the assisting grace of God for future obedience through faith in Christ. It also promised them eternal life on condition of fidelity to God's law. Thus the patriarchs received the hope of salvation.

This same covenant was renewed to Abraham in the promise, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Genesis 22:18. This promise pointed to Christ. So Abraham understood it (see Galatians 3:8, 16), and he trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. It was this faith that was accounted unto him for righteousness. The covenant with Abraham also maintained the authority of God's law. ...

Though this covenant was made with Adam and renewed to Abraham, it could not be ratified until the death of Christ. It had existed by the promise of God since the first intimation of redemption had been given; it had been accepted by faith; yet when ratified by Christ, it is called a new covenant. The law of God was the basis of this covenant, which was simply an arrangement for bringing men again into harmony with the divine will, placing them where they could obey God's law.

—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 370, 371.

Christ is our Mediator and officiating High Priest in the presence of the Father. He was shown to John as a Lamb that had been slain, as in the very act of pouring out His blood in the sinner's behalf. When the law of God is set before the sinner, showing him the depth of his sins, he should then be pointed to the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. He should be taught repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus will the labor of Christ's representative be in harmony with His work in the heavenly sanctuary.

—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 395.

Cain came before God with murmuring and infidelity in his heart in regard to the promised sacrifice and the necessity of the sacrificial offerings. His gift expressed no penitence for sin. He felt, as many now feel, that it would be an acknowledgment of weakness to follow the exact plan marked out by God, of trusting his salvation wholly to the atonement of the promised Saviour. He chose the course of self-dependence. He would come in his own merits. He would not bring the lamb, and mingle its blood with his offering, but would present his fruits, the products of his labor. He presented his offering as a favor done to God, through which he expected to secure the divine approval. Cain obeyed in building an altar, obeyed in bringing a sacrifice; but he rendered only a partial obedience. The essential part, the recognition of the need of a Redeemer, was left out.

—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 72.

Monday, February 21: Diverse Kinds of Sacrifices

It is not only the privilege but the duty of every Christian to maintain a close union with Christ and to have a rich experience in the things of God. ... When we read the lives of men who have been eminent for their piety we often regard their experiences and attainments as far beyond our reach. But this is not the case. Christ died for all; and we are assured in His word that He is more willing to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their children. The prophets and apostles did not perfect Christian character by a miracle. They used the means which God had placed within their reach; and all who will put forth the same effort will secure the same results.

In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul ... assures them of his earnest prayers for their spiritual prosperity:

“I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ... that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Ephesians 3:14-19).

—*The Sanctified Life*, pp. 83, 84.

[Jesus] “was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death.” He voluntarily assumed human nature. It was His own act, and by His own consent. He clothed His divinity with humanity. He was all the while as God, but He did not appear as God. He veiled the demonstrations of Deity, which had commanded the homage, and called forth the admiration, of the universe of God. He was God while upon earth, but He divested Himself of the form of God, and in its stead took the form and fashion of a man. He walked the earth as a man. For our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. He laid aside His glory and His majesty. He was God, but the glories of the form of God He for a while relinquished. Though He walked among men in poverty, scattering His blessings wherever He went, at His word legions of angels would surround their Redeemer, and do Him homage. But He walked the earth unrecognized, unconfessed, with but few exceptions, by His creatures. The atmosphere was polluted with sin and curses, in place of the anthem of praise. His lot was poverty and humiliation. As He passed to and fro upon His mission of mercy to relieve the sick, to lift up the depressed, scarce a solitary voice called Him blessed, and the very greatest of the nation passed Him by with disdain.

—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 1126, 1127.

Tuesday, February 22: Jesus' Perfect Sacrifice

While God has desired to teach men that from His own love comes the Gift which reconciles them to Himself, the archenemy of mankind has endeavored to represent God as one who delights in their destruction. Thus the sacrifices and ordinances designed of Heaven to reveal divine love have been perverted.

In word and in deed the Messiah, during His earthly ministry, was to reveal to mankind the glory of God the Father. Every act of His life, every word spoken, every miracle wrought, was to make known to fallen humanity the infinite love of God. ...

Thus, through patriarchs and prophets, as well as through types and symbols, God spoke to the world concerning the coming of a Deliverer from sin.

—*Lift Him Up*, p. 26.

The foundation of our hope in Christ is the fact that we recognize ourselves as sinners in need of restoration and redemption. It is because we are sinners that we have courage to claim Him as our Saviour. Then let us take heed lest we deal with the erring in a way that would say to others that we have no need of redemption. Let us not denounce, condemn, and destroy as though we were faultless. It is the work of Christ to mend, to heal, to restore. God is love. ... He ... gives Satan no occasion for triumphing by making the worst appear or by exposing our weaknesses to our enemies.

Christ came to bring salvation within the reach of all. ... The most erring, the most sinful, were not passed by; His labors were especially for those who most needed the salvation He came to bring. The greater their need of reform, the deeper was His interest, the greater His sympathy, and the more earnest His labors. His great heart of love was stirred to its depths for the ones whose condition was most hopeless and who most needed His transforming grace.

—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 291.

There is no rest for the living Christian this side of the eternal world. To obey God's commandments is to do right and only right. This is Christian manliness. But many need to take frequent lessons from the life of Christ, who is the Author and Finisher of our faith. "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." You are to show a growth in the Christian graces. By manifesting meekness under provocation and growing away from low earthliness you give evidence that you have an indwelling Saviour, and every thought, word, and deed attracts men to Jesus rather than to self. There is a great amount of work to be done and but little time in which to do it. Let it be your lifework to inspire all with the thought that they have a work to do for Christ. Wherever there are duties to be done which others do not understand because they do not wish to see their lifework, accept them and do them.

The standard of morality is not exalted high enough among God's people.

—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 597.

Wednesday, February 23: The Cross and the Cost of Forgiveness

Only once a year could the high priest enter into the most holy place, after the most careful and solemn preparation. No mortal eye but that of the high priest could look upon the sacred grandeur of that apartment, because it was the especial dwelling place of God's visible glory. The high priest always entered it with trembling, while the people waited his return with solemn silence. Their earnest desires were to God for His blessing. Before the mercy seat God conversed with the high priest. If he remained an unusual time in the most holy, the people were often terrified, fearing that because of their sins or some sin of the priest, the glory of the Lord had slain him. But when the sound of the tinkling of the bells upon his garments was heard, they were greatly relieved. He then came forth and blessed the people.

—*The Story of Redemption*, pp. 155, 156.

The spotless Son of God hung upon the cross, His flesh lacerated with stripes; those hands so often reached out in blessing, nailed to the wooden bars; those feet so tireless on ministries of love, spiked to the tree; that royal head pierced by the crown of thorns; those quivering lips shaped to the cry of woe. And all that He endured—the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands, His feet, the agony that racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father's face—speaks to each child of humanity, declaring, It is for thee that the Son of God consents to bear this burden of guilt; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise. He who stilled the angry waves and walked the foam-capped billows, who made devils tremble and disease flee, who opened blind eyes and called forth the dead to life,—offers Himself upon the cross as a sacrifice, and this from love to thee. He, the Sin Bearer, endures the wrath of divine justice, and for thy sake becomes sin itself.

—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 755, 756.

In this life we can only begin to understand the wonderful theme of redemption. With our finite comprehension we may consider most earnestly the shame and the glory, the life and the death, the justice and the mercy, that meet in the cross; yet with the utmost stretch of our mental powers we fail to grasp its full significance. The length and the breadth, the depth and the height, of redeeming love are but dimly comprehended. The plan of redemption will not be fully understood, even when the ransomed see as they are seen and know as they are known; but through the eternal ages new truth will continually unfold to the wondering and delighted mind. Though the griefs and pains and temptations of earth are ended and the cause removed, the people of God will ever have a distinct, intelligent knowledge of what their salvation has cost.

—*The Great Controversy*, p. 651.

Thursday, February 24: Judgment and the Character of God

Christ humbled Himself to stand at the head of humanity, to meet the temptations and endure the trials that humanity must meet and endure. He must know what humanity has to meet from the fallen foe, that He might know how to succor those who are tempted.

And Christ has been made our Judge. The Father is not the Judge. The angels are not. He who took humanity upon Himself, and in this world lived a perfect life, is to judge us. He only can be our Judge. Will you remember this, brethren? Will you remember it, ministers? Will you remember it, fathers and mothers? Christ took humanity that He might be our Judge. No one of you has been appointed to be a judge of others. It is all that you can do to discipline yourselves. In the name of Christ I entreat you to heed the injunction that He gives you never to place yourselves on the judgment seat. From day to day this message has been sounded in my ears: "Come down from the judgment seat. Come down in humility."

—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 185, 186.

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Here is language that expresses His mind toward a corrupt and idolatrous people: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? ... Mine heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together." Must He give up the people for whom such a provision has been made, even His only-begotten Son, the express image of Himself? God permits His Son to be delivered up for our offenses. He Himself assumes toward the Sin Bearer the character of a judge, divesting Himself of the endearing qualities of a father.

Herein His love commends itself in the most marvelous manner to the rebellious race. What a sight for angels to behold! What a hope for man, "that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"! The just suffered for the unjust; He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. "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?"

—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 245, 246.

We need to have higher and more distinct views of the character of Christ. ... We are not to think of God only as a judge and to forget Him as a loving Father. Nothing can do our souls greater harm than this, for our whole spiritual life is molded from our conceptions of God's character. We have lessons to learn of Jesus' love.

"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour." Ephesians 5:1, 2. This is the height of the love we are required to reach. And the texture of this love is not tainted with selfishness.

—*Our High Calling*, p. 176.

Friday, February 25: For Further Reading

The Desire of Ages, “Calvary,” pp. 741–757;

The Great Controversy, “God’s People Delivered,” pp. 651, 652.