

Lesson 2

The Crucibles That Come Sabbath Afternoon, July 2

Our wrong traits of character are not always visible to ourselves, although they may be very apparent to others. But time and circumstances will surely prove us and bring to light the gold of character or discover the baser metal. Not one of us is known or read of all men, till the crucible of God tests us. Every base thought, every wrong action, reveals some defect in the character. These rugged traits must be brought under the chisel and hammer in God's great workshop, and the grace of God must smooth and polish before we can be fitted for a place in the glorious temple.

— *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 540, 541.

Many today think that when they begin their Christian life they will find freedom from all want and difficulty. But everyone who takes up his cross to follow Christ comes to a Rephidim in his experience. Life is not all made up of green pastures and cooling streams. Disappointment overtakes us, privations come, circumstances occur which bring us into difficult places. As we follow in the narrow way, doing our best, as we think, we find that grievous trials come to us. . . . Conscience stricken, we reason, if we had walked with God, we would never have suffered so. . . .

But of old the Lord led His people to Rephidim, and He may choose to bring us there also, in order to test our faithfulness and loyalty to Him. In mercy to us, He does not always place us in the easiest places; for if He did, in our self-sufficiency we would forget that the Lord is our helper in time of necessity. But He longs to manifest Himself to us in our emergencies, and reveal the abundant supplies that are at our disposal, independent of our surroundings; and disappointment and trial are permitted to come upon us that we may realize our own helplessness, and learn to call upon the Lord for aid, as a child, when hungry and thirsty, calls upon its earthly father.

—*Signs of the Times*, September 10, 1896.

There are thorns in every path. All who follow the Lord's leading must expect to meet with disappointments, crosses, and losses. But a spirit of true heroism will help them to overcome these. Many greatly magnify seeming difficulties, and then begin to pity themselves and give way to despondency. Such need to make an entire change in themselves. They need to discipline themselves to put forth exertion, and to overcome all childish feelings. . . .

Every one should have an aim, an object, in life. The loins of the mind should be girded up, and the thoughts be trained to keep to the point, as the compass to the pole. . . . Worthy purposes should be kept constantly in view, and every thought and act should tend to their accomplishment. Let there ever be a fixedness of purpose to carry out that which is undertaken.

—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 316.

Sunday, July 3

Surprises

It was to Peter a bitter lesson, and one which he learned but slowly, that the path of Christ on earth lay through agony and humiliation. The disciple shrank from fellowship with his Lord in suffering. But in the heat of the furnace fire he was to learn its blessing. Long afterward, when his active form was bowed with the burden of years and labors, he wrote, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” 1 Peter 4:12, 13.

. . . [Jesus] said, “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” The cross was associated with the power of Rome. It was the instrument of the most cruel and humiliating form of death. The lowest criminals were required to bear the cross to the place of execution; and often as it was about to be laid upon their shoulders, they resisted with desperate violence, until they were overpowered, and the instrument of torture was bound upon them. But Jesus bade His followers take up the cross and bear it after Him. To the disciples His words, though dimly comprehended, pointed to their submission to the most bitter humiliation,—submission even unto death for the sake of Christ. No more complete self-surrender could the Saviour’s words have pictured.

—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 416, 417.

The followers of Christ know little of the plots which Satan and his hosts are forming against them. But He who sitteth in the heavens will overrule all these devices for the accomplishment of His deep designs. The Lord permits His people to be subjected to the fiery ordeal of temptation, not because He takes pleasure in their distress and affliction, but because this process is essential to their final victory.

By God’s mighty cleaver of truth we have been taken from the quarry of the world and brought into the workshop of the Lord to be prepared for a place in His temple. In this work the hammer and chisel must act their part, and then comes the polishing. Rebel not under this process of grace. You may be a rough stone, on which much work must be done before you are prepared for the place God designs you to fill. You need not be surprised if with the hammer and the chisel of trial God cuts away your defects of character. He alone can accomplish this work. And be assured that He will not strike one useless blow.

—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 317.

The bright and cheerful side of our religion will be represented by all who are daily consecrated to God. We should not dishonor God by the mournful relation of trials that appear grievous. All trials that are received as educators will produce joy.

—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 365.

Monday, July 4

Crucibles of Satan

Satan . . . counseled with his angels, and with bitter hatred against God's government told them that while he retained his power and authority upon earth their efforts must be tenfold stronger against the followers of Jesus. They had prevailed nothing against Christ but must overthrow His followers, if possible. In every generation they must seek to ensnare those who would believe in Jesus. He related to his angels that Jesus had given His disciples power to rebuke them and cast them out, and to heal those whom they should afflict. Then Satan's angels went forth like roaring lions, seeking to destroy the followers of Jesus.

—*Early Writings*, pp. 191, 192.

Let every soul be on the alert. The adversary is on your track. Be vigilant, watching diligently lest some carefully concealed and masterly snare shall take you unawares. Let the careless and indifferent beware lest the day of the Lord come upon them as a thief in the night. Many will wander from the path of humility, and, casting aside the yoke of Christ, will walk in strange paths. Blinded and bewildered, they will leave the narrow path that leads to the city of God. . . .

He who overcomes must watch; for, with worldly entanglements, error, and superstition, Satan strives to win Christ's followers from Him. It is not enough that we avoid glaring dangers and perilous, inconsistent moves. We are to keep close to the side of Christ, walking in the path of selfdenial and sacrifice. We are in an enemy's country. He who was cast out of heaven has come down with great power. With every conceivable artifice and device he is seeking to take souls captive. Unless we are constantly on guard we shall fall an easy prey to his unnumbered deceptions.

—*Maranatha*, p. 90.

Henceforward Christ's followers [are] to look upon Satan as a conquered foe. Upon the cross, Jesus was to gain the victory for them; that victory He desired them to accept as their own. "Behold," He said, "I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you."

. . . The Saviour is by the side of His tempted and tried ones. With Him there can be no such thing as failure, loss, impossibility, or defeat; we can do all things through Him who strengthens us. When temptations and trials come, do not wait to adjust all the difficulties, but look to Jesus, your helper.

There are Christians who think and speak altogether too much about the power of Satan. They think of their adversary, they pray about him, they talk about him, and he looms up greater and greater in their imagination. It is true that Satan is a powerful being; but, thank God, we have a mighty Saviour, who cast out the evil one from heaven. Satan is pleased when we magnify his power. Why not talk of Jesus? Why not magnify His power and His love?

—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 490–493.

Tuesday, July 5

Crucibles of Sin

It is no light matter to sin against God, to set the perverse will of man in opposition to the will of his Maker. It is for the best interest of men, even in this world, to obey God's commandments. And it is surely for their eternal interest to submit to God, and be at peace with Him. . . . Of all the creatures that God has made upon the earth, man alone is rebellious. Yet he possesses reasoning powers to understand the claims of the divine law and a conscience to feel the guilt of transgression and the peace and joy of obedience. God made him a free moral agent, to obey or disobey. The reward of everlasting life—an eternal weight of glory—is promised to those who do God's will, while the threatenings of His wrath hang over all who defy His law.

—*The Sanctified Life*, p. 76.

Heaven with its attractions is before you, an eternal weight of glory, which you may lose or gain. Which shall it be? Your life and your character will testify the choice you have made. I feel the more anxious because I see so many indifferent upon the subjects of infinite importance. They are always busy here and there about matters of minor importance, and the one great subject is put out of their thoughts. They have no time to pray, no time to watch, no time to search the Scriptures. They are altogether too busy to make the necessary preparation for the future life. They cannot devote time to perfect Christian characters and in diligence to secure a title to heaven.

If you have life eternal, you must be earnest and work to the point. Glorify God by choosing His way, His will. He will be your wise counselor and your fast, unchanging friend.

—*Our High Calling*, p. 44.

Few believe that humanity has sunk so low as it has or that it is so thoroughly bad, so desperately opposed to God, as it is. When the mind is not under the direct influence of the Spirit of God, Satan can mold it as he chooses. All the rational powers which he controls he will carnalize. He is directly opposed to God in his tastes, views, preferences, likes and dislikes, choice of things and pursuits; there is no relish for what God loves or approves, but a delight in those things which He despises. . . .

If Christ is abiding in the heart, He will be in all our thoughts. Our deepest thoughts will be of Him, His love, His purity. He will fill all the chambers of the mind. Our affections will center about Jesus. All our hopes and expectations will be associated with Him. To live the life we now live by faith in the Son of God, looking forward to and loving His appearing, will be the soul's highest joy. He will be the crown of our rejoicing.

—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 163.

Wednesday, July 6

Crucibles of Purification

A refining, purifying process is going on among the people of God, and the Lord of hosts has set His hand to this work. This process is most trying to the soul, but it is necessary in order that defilement may be removed. Trials are essential in order that we may be brought close to our heavenly Father, in submission to His will, that we may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. The Lord brings His children over the same ground again and again, increasing the pressure until perfect humility fills the mind, and the character is transformed; then they are victorious over self, and in harmony with Christ and the Spirit of heaven. The purification of God's people cannot be accomplished without suffering. . . . He passes us from one fire to another, testing our true worth. True grace is willing to be tried. If we are loath to be searched by the Lord, our condition is one of peril. . . .

. . . In order to bring to them a true knowledge of their condition, He permits the fire of affliction to assail them, so that they may be purified. The trials of life are God's workmen to remove the impurities, infirmities, and roughness from our characters, and fit them for the society of pure, heavenly angels in glory. The fire will not consume us, but only remove the dross, and we shall come forth seven times purified, bearing the impress of the Divine.

—*My Life Today*, p. 92.

The Lord will work to purify His church. . . .

Just how soon this refining process will begin I cannot say, but it will not be long deferred. He whose fan is in His hand will cleanse His temple of its moral defilement. He will thoroughly purge His floor. God has a controversy with all who practice the least injustice; for in so doing they reject the authority of God and imperil their interest in the atonement, the redemption which Christ has undertaken for every son and daughter of Adam. Will it pay to take a course abhorrent to God? Will it pay to put upon your censers strange fire to offer before God, and say it makes no difference?

—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 373.

Trials and obstacles are the Lord's chosen methods of discipline and His appointed conditions of success. . . .

The fact that we are called upon to endure trial shows that the Lord Jesus sees in us something precious which He desires to develop. If He saw in us nothing whereby He might glorify His name, He would not spend time in refining us. He does not cast worthless stones into His furnace. It is valuable ore that He refines. The blacksmith puts the iron and steel into the fire that he may know what manner of metal they are.

—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 471.

Thursday, July 7

Crucibles of Maturity

The apostle Paul was highly honored of God, being taken in holy vision to the third heaven, where he looked upon scenes whose glories might not be revealed to mortals. Yet all this did not lead him to boastfulness or self-confidence. He realized the importance of constant watchfulness and self-denial, and plainly declares, “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.” . . .

Paul had a bodily affliction; his eyesight was bad. He thought that by earnest prayer the difficulty might be removed. But the Lord had His own purpose, and He said to Paul, Speak to Me no more of this matter. My grace is sufficient. It will enable you to bear the infirmity.

—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1107.

When we take into our hands the management of things with which we have to do, and depend upon our own wisdom for success, we are taking a burden which God has not given us, and are trying to bear it without His aid. We are taking upon ourselves the responsibility that belongs to God, and thus are really putting ourselves in His place. We may well have anxiety and anticipate danger and loss, for it is certain to befall us. But when we really believe that God loves us and means to do us good we shall cease to worry about the future. We shall trust God as a child trusts a loving parent. Then our troubles and torments will disappear, for our will is swallowed up in the will of God.

Christ has given us no promise of help in bearing today the burdens of tomorrow. He has said, “My grace is sufficient for thee” (2 Corinthians 12:9); but, like the manna given in the wilderness, His grace is bestowed daily, for the day’s need. Like the hosts of Israel in their pilgrim life, we may find morning by morning the bread of heaven for the day’s supply.

— *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 100, 101.

Untiring energy is required of the Christian; but he is not obliged to work in his own strength; divine power awaits his demand. Everyone who is sincerely striving for the victory over self will appropriate the promise, “My grace is sufficient for thee.”

Through personal effort joined with the prayer of faith the soul is trained. Day by day the character grows into the likeness of Christ. It may cost a severe conflict to overcome habits which have been long indulged, but we may triumph through the grace of Christ.

If we are true to the promptings of the Spirit of God, we shall go on from grace to grace and from glory to glory until we shall receive the finishing touch of immortality.

—*My Life Today*, p. 99.

Friday, July 8
For Further Reading

That I May Know Him, “How to Resist Satan,” p. 245;

Signs of the Times, “Effectual Prayer,” November 18, 1903.