

Lesson 12

Dying Like a Seed

Sabbath Afternoon, September 10

All who would bring forth fruit as workers together with Christ must first fall into the ground and die. The life must be cast into the furrow of the world's need. Self-love, self-interest, must perish. But the law of self-sacrifice is the law of self-preservation. The seed buried in the ground produces fruit, and in turn this is planted. Thus the harvest is multiplied. The husbandman preserves his grain by casting it away. So in human life, to give is to live. The life that will be preserved is the life that is freely given in service to God and man. Those who for Christ's sake sacrifice their life in this world, will keep it unto life eternal.

—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 86.

Those who till the soil have the illustration ever before them. Year by year man preserves his supply of grain by apparently throwing away the choicest part. For a time it must be hidden under the furrow, to be watched over by the Lord. Then appears the blade, then the ear, and then the corn in the ear. But this development cannot take place unless the grain is buried out of sight, hidden, and to all appearance, lost.

The seed buried in the ground produces fruit, and in turn this is planted. Thus the harvest is multiplied. So the death of Christ on the cross of Calvary will bear fruit unto eternal life. The contemplation of this sacrifice will be the glory of those who, as the fruit of it, will live through the eternal ages.

—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 623.

The reason many in this age of the world make no greater advancement in the divine life is because they interpret the will of God to be just what they will to do. While following their own desires, they flatter themselves that they are conforming to God's will. These have no conflicts with self. There are others who for a time are successful in the struggle against their selfish desire for pleasure and ease. They are sincere and earnest, but grow weary of protracted effort, of daily death, of ceaseless turmoil. Indolence seems inviting, death to self repulsive; and they close their drowsy eyes and fall under the power of temptation instead of resisting it.

The directions laid down in the word of God leave no room for compromise with evil. The Son of God was manifested that He might draw all men unto Himself. He came not to lull the world to sleep, but to point out the narrow path in which all must travel who reach at last the gates of the City of God. His children must follow where He has led the way; at whatever sacrifice of ease or selfish indulgence, at whatever cost of labor or suffering, they must maintain a constant battle with self.

—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 565.

Sunday, September 11

Submission for Service

[Paul] bids us possess the mind “which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Philippians 2:4–8.

. . . [Paul] was convinced that if men could be led to consider the amazing sacrifice made by the Majesty of heaven, selfishness would be banished from their hearts. The apostle lingers over point after point, that we may in some measure comprehend the wonderful condescension of the Saviour in behalf of sinners. He directs the mind first to the position which Christ occupied in heaven in the bosom of His Father; he reveals Him afterward as laying aside His glory, voluntarily subjecting Himself to the humbling conditions of man’s life, assuming the responsibilities of a servant, and becoming obedient unto death, and that the most ignominious and revolting, the most agonizing—the death of the cross.

— *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 501.

I was shown the Waldenses, and what they suffered for their religion. They conscientiously studied the word of God, and lived up to the light which shone upon them. They were persecuted, and driven from their homes; their possessions, gained by hard labor, were taken from them, and their houses burned. They fled to the mountains and there suffered incredible hardships. They endured hunger, fatigue, cold, and nakedness. The only clothing which many of them could obtain was the skins of animals. And yet the scattered and homeless ones would assemble to unite their voices in singing, and praising God that they were accounted worthy to suffer for Christ’s name. They encouraged and cheered one another, and were grateful for even their miserable retreat. Many of their children sickened and died from cold and hunger, yet the parents did not for a moment think of yielding their religion. They prized the love and favor of God far above earthly ease or worldly riches. They received consolation from God and with pleasing anticipations looked forward to the recompense of reward.

— *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 371.

[God] wants prayerful, faithful workers who will sow beside all waters. Those who labor thus will be surprised to find how trials, resolutely borne in the name and strength of Jesus, will give firmness to the faith and renew the courage. In the path of humble obedience is safety and power, comfort and hope; but the reward will finally be lost by those who do nothing for Jesus. Weak hands will be unable to cling to the Mighty One, feeble knees will fail to support in the day of adversity. Bible readers and Christian workers will receive the glorious prize, and hear the “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

— *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 76.

Monday, September 12

Dying Comes Before Knowing God's Will

Those who are seeking the righteousness of Christ will be dwelling upon the themes of the great salvation. The Bible is the storehouse that supplies their souls with nourishing food. They meditate upon the incarnation of Christ, they contemplate the great sacrifice made to save them from perdition, to bring in pardon, peace, and everlasting righteousness. The soul is aglow with these grand and elevating themes. Holiness and truth, grace and righteousness, occupy the thoughts. Self dies, and Christ lives in His servants. In contemplation of the word, their hearts burn within them, as did the hearts of the two disciples while they went to Emmaus, and Christ walked with them by the way, and opened to them the scriptures concerning Himself.

—Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, pp. 87, 88.

Heaven will be cheap enough, if we obtain it through suffering. We must deny self all along the way, die to self daily, let Jesus alone appear, and keep His glory continually in view. I saw that those who of late have embraced the truth would have to know what it is to suffer for Christ's sake, that they would have trials to pass through that would be keen and cutting, in order that they may be purified and fitted through suffering to receive the seal of the living God. . . .

As I saw what we must be in order to inherit glory, and then saw how much Jesus had suffered to obtain for us so rich an inheritance, I prayed that we might be baptized into Christ's sufferings, that we might not shrink at trials, but bear them with patience and joy. . . . Said the angel, "Deny self; ye must step fast." Some of us have had time to get the truth and to advance step by step, and every step we have taken has given us strength to take the next. But now time is almost finished, and what we have been years learning, they will have to learn in a few months. They will also have much to unlearn and much to learn again.

—Early Writings, p. 67.

Christ is our example. For our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. He taught that all should come together in love and unity, to work as He worked, to sacrifice as He sacrificed, to love as the children of God.

. . . [P]ractice the self-denial of Christ. Dress plainly but neatly. Spend as little as possible upon yourselves. Keep in your homes a self-denial box into which you can put the money saved by little acts of self-denial. Day by day gain a clearer understanding of the word of God, and improve every opportunity to impart the knowledge you have gained. Do not become weary in well-doing, for God is constantly imparting to you the great blessing of His Gift to the world. Co-operate with the Lord Jesus, and He will teach you the priceless lessons of His love.

—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9, p. 131.

Tuesday, September 13

Willingness to Listen

Eli was a good man, pure in morals; but he was too indulgent. He incurred the displeasure of God because he did not strengthen the weak points in his character. He did not want to hurt the feelings of anyone and had not the moral courage to rebuke and reprove sin. His sons were vile men; yet he did not remove them from their position of trust. These sons profaned the house of God. He knew this, and felt sad in consequence of it, for he loved purity and righteousness; but he had not sufficient moral force to suppress the evil. He loved peace and harmony, and became more and more insensible to impurity and crime.

—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 516.

During the first three years of the life of Samuel the prophet, his mother carefully taught him to distinguish between good and evil. By every familiar object surrounding him she sought to lead his thoughts up to the Creator. In fulfillment of her vow to give her son to the Lord, with great self-denial she placed him under the care of Eli the high priest, to be trained for service in the house of God. . . . His early training led him to choose to maintain his Christian integrity. What a reward was Hannah's! And what an encouragement to faithfulness is her example!

—*Child Guidance*, p. 197.

God gave men eyes, that they might behold wondrous things out of His law. He gave them the hearing ear, that they might listen to His message, spoken by the living preacher. He gave men the talent of speech, that they might present Christ as the sin-pardoning Saviour. With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

. . . All should guard the senses, lest Satan gain victory over them; for these are the avenues of the soul.

You will have to become a faithful sentinel over your eyes, ears, and all your senses if you would control your mind and prevent vain and corrupt thoughts from staining your soul. The power of grace alone can accomplish this most desirable work.

Satan and his angels are busy creating a paralyzed condition of the senses so that cautions, warnings, and reproofs shall not be heard; or, if heard, that they shall not take effect upon the heart and reform the life.

— *The Adventist Home*, p. 401.

God requires that all of us should be self-sacrificing workers. Every part of the truth has a practical application to our daily lives. Blessed are they that hear the word of the Lord and keep it. Hearing is not enough; we must act, we must do. It is in the doing of the Commandments that there is great reward.

—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 59, 60.

Saul had failed to bear the test of faith in the trying situation at Gilgal, and had brought dishonor upon the service of God; but his errors were not yet irretrievable, and the Lord would grant him another opportunity to learn the lesson of unquestioning faith in His word and obedience to His commands.

When reproved by the prophet at Gilgal, Saul saw no great sin in the course he had pursued. He felt that he had been treated unjustly, and endeavored to vindicate his actions and offered excuses for his error. From that time he had little [interaction] with the prophet. Samuel loved Saul as his own son, while Saul, bold and ardent in temper, had held the prophet in high regard; but he resented Samuel's rebuke, and thenceforth avoided him so far as possible.

—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 627.

When called to the throne, Saul had a humble opinion of his own capabilities, and was willing to be instructed. He was deficient in knowledge and experience and had serious defects of character. But the Lord granted him the Holy Spirit as a guide and helper, and placed him in a position where he could develop the qualities requisite for a ruler of Israel. Had he remained humble, seeking constantly to be guided by divine wisdom, he would have been enabled to discharge the duties of his high position with success and honor. . . .

But Saul presumed upon his exaltation, and dishonored God by unbelief and disobedience. Though when first called to the throne he was humble and self-distrustful, success made him self-confident. The very first victory of his reign had kindled that pride of heart which was his greatest danger . . . and though at first Saul ascribed the glory to God, he afterward took honor to himself. He lost sight of his dependence upon God, and in heart departed from the Lord. Thus the way was prepared for his sin of presumption and sacrilege at Gilgal. The same blind self-confidence led him to reject Samuel's reproof. Saul acknowledged Samuel to be a prophet sent from God; hence he should have accepted the reproof, though he could not himself see that he had sinned. Had he been willing to see and confess his error, this bitter experience would have proved a safeguard for the future. . . .

When Saul turned away from the reproof sent him by God's Holy Spirit, and persisted in his stubborn self-justification, he rejected the only means by which God could work to save him from himself. He had willfully separated himself from God. He could not receive divine help or guidance until he should return to God by confession of his sin.

— *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 632–634.

Thursday, September 15

Substitutes

He who loses sight of his entire dependence upon God is sure to fall. We are contending with those who are stronger than we. Satan and his hosts are constantly watching to assail us with temptations, and in our own strength and wisdom it is impossible for us to withstand them. Hence, whenever we permit our hearts to be drawn away from God, whenever we indulge self-exaltation or self-dependence, we are sure to be overthrown.

—*Gospel Workers*, pp. 322, 323.

Make God your entire dependence. When you do otherwise, then it is time for a halt to be called. Stop right where you are, and change the order of things. . . . In sincerity, in soul-hunger, cry after God. Wrestle with the heavenly agencies until you have the victory. Put your whole being into the Lord's hands soul, body, and spirit, and resolve to be His loving, consecrated agency, moved by His will, controlled by His mind, infused by His Spirit . . . then you will see heavenly things clearly.

If we would permit our minds to dwell more upon Christ and the heavenly world, we should find a powerful stimulus and support in fighting the battles of the Lord. Pride and love of the world will lose their power as we contemplate the glories of that better land so soon to be our home. Beside the loveliness of Christ, all earthly attractions will seem of little worth.

—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 105.

Zerubbabel had gone to Jerusalem to build the house of the Lord. But he was compassed with difficulties. His adversaries "weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building," "and made them to cease by force and power." But the Lord interposed in their behalf, and the house was finished. [Zechariah 4:6, 7, 10 quoted.]

The very same difficulties which were created to hinder the restoration and upbuilding of the work of God, the great mountains of difficulty which loomed in Zerubbabel's way, will be met by all who today are loyal to God and to His work. Many human inventions are used to carry out plans after the mind and will of men with whom God is not working. But it is not boastful words nor a multitude of ceremonies that show that the Lord is working with His people. The assumed power of the human agent does not decide this question. Those who place themselves in opposition to the Lord's work may hinder for a time, but the same Spirit that has guided the Lord's work all the way through will guide it today. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." . . .

The Lord would have every soul strong in His strength. He would have us look to Him, receiving our directions from Him.

—*Ellen G. White Comments*, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1179.

The dispensation in which we are now living is to be, to those that ask, the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. Ask for His blessing. It is time we were more intense in our devotion. To us is committed the arduous, but happy, glorious work of revealing Christ to those who are in darkness. We are called to proclaim the special truths for this time. For all this the outpouring of the Spirit is essential. We should pray for it. The Lord expects us to ask Him. We have not been wholehearted in this work.

— *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 511, 512.

Friday, September 16

For Further Reading

Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, “The Lord Has a Controversy With His People,” p. 374;

Patriarchs and Prophets, “The Presumption of Saul,” pp. 616–626.