

Lesson 2

God's Covenants With Us

Sabbath Afternoon, January 7

God is always giving; and upon whom are His gifts bestowed? Upon those who are faultless in character? "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Matthew 5:45. Notwithstanding the sinfulness of humanity, notwithstanding that we so often grieve the heart of Christ and prove ourselves most undeserving, yet when we ask His forgiveness, He does not turn us away. His love is freely extended to us, and He bids us: Love one another as I have loved you. John 13:34. — Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, p. 284.

As the multitudes followed Christ through the open fields, He unfolded to them the beauties of the natural world. He sought to open the eyes of their understanding, that they might see how the hand of God upholds the world. In order to call out an appreciation of God's goodness and benevolence, He called the attention of His hearers to the gently falling dew, to the soft showers of rain and the bright sunshine, given alike to good and evil. He desired men to realize more fully the regard that God bestows on the human instrumentalities He has created. —The Desire of Ages, p. 524.

It is the keeping of the commandments of God that honors and glorifies Him in His chosen. Wherefore every soul to whom God has given reasoning faculties is under obligation to God to search the Word and ascertain all that is enjoined upon us as God's purchased possession. We should seek to understand all that the Word requires of us. . . . We cannot show greater honor to our God, whose we are by creation and redemption, than to give evidence to the beings of heaven, to the worlds unfallen, and to fallen men, that we diligently hearken unto all His commandments, which are the laws that govern His kingdom.

We need to study diligently that we may gain a knowledge of the laws of God. How can we be obedient subjects if we fail to understand the laws that govern the kingdom of God? Then open your Bibles and search for everything that will enlighten you in regard to the precepts of God; and when you discern a Thus saith the Lord, ask not the opinion of men, but whatever the cost to yourself, obey cheerfully. Then the blessing of God will rest upon you.—Letter 82, 1895.

The question of deepest interest to each one should be, Am I meeting the requirements of the law of God? That law is holy, just, and good, and God would have us daily compare our actions with this, His great standard of righteousness. Only by a close examination of self in the light of God's Word can we discover our deviations from His holy rule of right.

Love is the principle that underlies God's government in heaven and on earth, and this love must be interwoven in the life of the Christian. The love of Christ is not a fitful love; it is deep, and broad, and full. Its possessor will not say, "I will love only those who love me." The heart that is influenced by this holy principle will be carried above everything of a selfish nature.—That I May Know Him, p. 298.

Sunday, January 8: The Salvation Covenant

[D]o not therefore conclude that the upward path is the hard and the downward road the easy way. All along the road that leads to death there are pains and penalties, there are sorrows and disappointments, there are warnings not to go on. God's love has made it hard for the heedless and headstrong to destroy themselves. It is true that Satan's path is made to appear attractive, but it is all a deception. . . .

The [narrow] road may be rough and the ascent steep; there may be pitfalls upon the right hand and upon the left; we may have to endure toil in our journey; when weary, when longing for rest, we may have to toil on; when faint, we may have to fight; when discouraged, we must still hope; but with Christ as our guide we shall not fail of reaching the desired haven at last. Christ Himself has trodden the rough way before us and has smoothed the path for our feet.—Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, pp. 139, 140.

Patient continuance in well-doing will lead you through this world of sorrow and strife to glory and honor and eternal life. Have God within and God overhead and you have nothing to fear. The Bible is a light to those who are in darkness. In the prospect of a blissful immortality held out to those who endure unto the end, you will find an elevating power, a strength which you need to resist evil. Be steadfast in the hour of trial, and you will gain at last a crown which will never fade away.

You need guidance from above. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and He will never betray your trust. If you will ask help of God you need not ask in vain. In order to encourage us to have confidence and trust He comes near us by His holy Word and Spirit, and seeks in a thousand ways to win our confidence. But in nothing does He take more delight than in receiving the weak who come to Him for strength. If we will find heart and voice to pray, He will be sure to find an ear to hear and an arm to save.—This Day With God, p. 194.

“Give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:10, 11).

Here are your life-insurance papers. This is not an insurance policy the value of which someone else will receive after your death; it is a policy that assures you a life measuring with the life of God—even eternal life. O what an assurance! what a hope! Let us ever reveal to the world that we are seeking for a better country, even a heavenly. Heaven has been made for us, and we want a part in it. We cannot afford to allow anything to separate us from God and heaven. In this life we must be partakers of the divine nature. Brethren and sisters, you have only one life to live. O let it be a life of virtue, a life hid with Christ in God!—In Heavenly Places, p. 29.

Monday, January 9: To Hearken Diligently

The book of Deuteronomy should be carefully studied by those living on the earth today. It contains a record of the instruction given to Moses to give to the children of Israel. In it the law is repeated.

The law of God was often to be repeated to Israel. That its precepts might not be forgotten, it was to be kept before the people, and was ever to be exalted and honored. Parents were to read the law to their children, teaching it to them line upon line, precept upon precept. And on public occasions the law was to be read in the hearing of all the people.

Upon obedience to this law depended the prosperity of Israel. If they were obedient, it would bring them life; if disobedient, death. . . .

Had Israel obeyed the directions given them by Moses, not one of those who started on the journey from Egypt would in the wilderness have fallen a prey to disease or death. They were under a safe Guide. Christ had pledged Himself to lead them safely to the promised land if they would follow His guidance.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 1117, 1118.

The faith that is unto salvation is not a casual faith, it is not the mere consent of the intellect, it is belief rooted in the heart, that embraces Christ as a personal Saviour, assured that He can save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. To believe that He will save others, but will not save you is not genuine faith; but when the soul lays hold upon Christ as the only hope of salvation, then genuine faith is manifested. This faith leads its possessor to place all the affections of the soul upon Christ; his understanding is under the control of the Holy Spirit, and his character is molded after the divine likeness. His faith is not a dead faith, but a faith that works by love, and leads him to behold the beauty of Christ, and to become assimilated to the divine character. [Deuteronomy 30:11-14 quoted.] “And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live” (Deuteronomy 30:6). —Selected Messages, book 1, p. 391.

He who has the love of God shed abroad in his heart, will reflect the purity and love which exist in Jehovah, and which Christ represented in our world. He who has the love of God in his heart has no enmity against the law of God, but renders willing obedience to all His commandments, and this constitutes Christianity. He who has supreme love to God will reveal love to his fellow-men, who belong to God both by creation and redemption. Love is the fulfilling of the law; and it is the duty of every child of God to render obedience to His commandments.

The law of God, which is perfect holiness, is the only true standard of character. Love is expressed in obedience, and perfect love casteth out all fear.—Sons and Daughters of God, p. 51.

Tuesday, January 10: Honor the Lord

Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. Proverbs 3:9, 10.

This scripture teaches that God, as the giver of all our benefits, has a claim upon them all; that His claim should be our first consideration; and that a special blessing will attend all who honor this claim. . . .

All we possess is the Lord's, and we are accountable to Him for the use we make of it. In the use of every penny, it will be seen whether we love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves. Money has great value, because it can do great good. In the hands of God's children it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, and clothing for the naked.—The Faith I Live By, p. 160.

Some give of their abundance, yet feel no lack. They do not practice self-denial for the cause of Christ. They give liberally and heartily, but they still have all that heart can wish. God regards it. The action and motive are strictly marked by Him, and they will not lose their reward. But those who have less means must not excuse themselves because they cannot do as much as some others. Do what you can. Deny yourself of some article you can do without, and sacrifice for the cause of God. Like the poor widow, cast in your two mites. You will actually give more than all those who give of their abundance; and you will know how sweet it is to deny self, to give to the needy, to sacrifice for the truth, and to lay up treasure in heaven. . . .

Give what you can now, and as you cooperate with Christ, your hand will open to impart still more. And God will refill your hand, that the treasure of truth may be taken to many souls. He will give to you that you may give to others.—Our High Calling, p. 199.

Our Saviour refers us to the fowls of the air, which sow not, neither reap, nor gather into barns, yet their heavenly Father feedeth them. Then He says: "Are ye not much better than they? . . . And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." . . . "Wherefore, 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?" Can you not trust in your heavenly Father? Can you not rest upon His gracious promise? "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Precious promise! Can we not rely upon it? Can we not have implicit trust, knowing that He is faithful who hath promised? . . . [L]et your trembling faith again grasp the promises of God. Bear your whole weight upon them with unwavering faith; for they will not, they cannot, fail.—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2, p. 296.

Wednesday, January 11: The Tithe Contract

He whose heart is aglow with the love of Christ will regard it as not only a duty, but a pleasure, to aid in the advancement of the highest, holiest work committed to man—the work of presenting to the world the riches of goodness, mercy, and truth.

It is the spirit of covetousness which leads men to keep for gratification of self means that rightfully belong to God, and this spirit is as abhorrent to Him now as when through His prophet He sternly rebuked His people, saying, “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.” Malachi 3:8, 9.

The spirit of liberality is the spirit of heaven.—The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 338, 339.

The Lord bestows His gifts abundantly upon us. He “so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Every blessing we have comes through Jesus Christ. Then shall we not arouse, and do our duty toward God, upon whom we are dependent for life and health, for His blessing upon our crops and fields, our cattle, our herds, and our vineyards? We are assured if we give to the Lord’s treasury, we shall receive of Him again; but if we withhold of our means, He will withhold His blessing from us, and send a curse upon the unfaithful.

God has said, “Prove Me now herewith, . . . 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.” What a wonderful presentation in promised blessings is He giving us! Who can venture to rob God in tithes and offerings with such a promise as this! “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.”—Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, pp. 307, 308.

God’s plan in the tithing system is beautiful in its simplicity and equality. All may take hold of it in faith and courage, for it is divine in its origin. In it are combined simplicity and utility, and it does not require depth of learning to understand and execute it. All may feel that they can act a part in carrying forward the precious work of salvation. Every man, woman, and youth may become a treasurer for the Lord and may be an agent to meet the demands upon the treasury. Says the apostle: “Let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.”

Great objects are accomplished by this system. If one and all would accept it, each would be made a vigilant and faithful treasurer for God, and there would be no want of means with which to carry forward the great work of sounding the last message of warning to the world.—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 3, pp. 388, 389.

Thursday, January 12: Seek Ye First

Those who take Christ at His word, and surrender their souls to His keeping, their lives to His ordering, will find peace and quietude. Nothing of the world can make them sad when Jesus makes them glad by His presence. In perfect acquiescence there is perfect rest. The Lord says, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee." Isaiah 26:3. Our lives may seem a tangle; but as we commit ourselves to the wise Master Worker, He will bring out the pattern of life and character that will be to His own glory. And that character which expresses the glory—character—of Christ will be received into the Paradise of God. A renovated race shall walk with Him in white, for they are worthy.—The Desire of Ages, p. 331.

The examples in God's word of genuine repentance and humiliation reveal a spirit of confession in which there is no excuse for sin or attempt at self-justification. Paul did not seek to shield himself; he paints his sin in its darkest hue, not attempting to lessen his guilt. He says, "Many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." Acts 26:10, 11. He does not hesitate to declare that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." 1 Timothy 1:15.

The humble and broken heart, subdued by genuine repentance, will appreciate something of the love of God and the cost of Calvary; and as a son confesses to a loving father, so will the truly penitent bring all his sins before God. And it is written, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9.—Steps to Christ, p. 41.

For stricken Israel there was but one remedy—a turning away from the sins that had brought upon them the chastening hand of the Almighty, and a turning to the Lord with full purpose of heart. To them had been given the assurance, "If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people; if My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:13, 14. It was to bring to pass this blessed result that God continued to withhold from them the dew and the rain until a decided reformation should take place.—Prophets and Kings, p. 128.

Every soul has a heaven to win, and a hell to shun. And the angelic agencies are all ready to come to the help of the tried and tempted soul. He, the Son of the infinite God, endured the test and trial in our behalf. The cross of Calvary stands vividly before every soul. When the cases of all are judged, and they [the lost] are delivered to suffer for their contempt for God and their disregard of His honor in their disobedience, not one will have an excuse, not one will need to have perished. It was left to their own choice who should be their prince, Christ or Satan. All the help Christ received, every man may receive in the great trial. The cross stands as a pledge that not one need be lost, that abundant help is provided for every soul.—Selected Messages, book 1, p. 96.

Friday, January 13: For Further Reading

Counsels on Stewardship, "For Every Dispensation," p. 67;

Counsels on Stewardship, "Continual Recipients to Give Continually," p. 18.