

Lesson 4

Offerings for Jesus

Sabbath Afternoon, January 21

God does not receive the offerings of any because He needs them and cannot have glory and riches without them, but because it is for the interest of His servants to render to God the things which are His. The freewill offerings of the humble, contrite heart He will receive, and will reward the giver with the richest blessings. He receives them as the sacrifice of grateful obedience. He requires and accepts our gold and silver as an evidence that all we have and are belongs to Him. He claims and accepts the improvement of our time and of our talents as the fruit of His love existing in our hearts. To obey is better than sacrifice. Without pure love the most expensive offering is too poor for God to accept.—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2, p. 652.

Unselfish liberality threw the early church into a transport of joy; for the believers knew that their efforts were helping to send the gospel message to those in darkness. Their benevolence testified that they had not received the grace of God in vain. What could produce such liberality but the sanctification of the Spirit? In the eyes of believers and unbelievers it was a miracle of grace.

Spiritual prosperity is closely bound up with Christian liberality. The followers of Christ should rejoice in the privilege of revealing in their lives the beneficence of their Redeemer. As they give to the Lord they have the assurance that their treasure is going before them to the heavenly courts.—The Acts of the Apostles, p. 344.

We are to be Christ's representatives on the earth—pure, kind, just, and merciful, full of compassion, showing unselfishness in word and deed. Avarice and covetousness are vices that God abominates. They are the offspring of selfishness and sin, and they spoil every work with which they are allowed to mingle. Roughness and coarseness of character are imperfections which the Scriptures decidedly condemn as dishonoring to God.

“Let your conversation”—your disposition and habits—“be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” “Therefore as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also”—the grace of Christian liberality. “To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”—Medical Ministry, p. 184.

The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within. It is the atmosphere of this love surrounding the soul of the believer that makes him a savor of life unto life and enables God to bless his work.

Supreme love for God and unselfish love for one another—this is the best gift that our heavenly Father can bestow. This love is not an impulse, but a divine principle, a permanent power. The unconsecrated heart cannot originate or produce it. Only in the heart where Jesus reigns is it found. “We love Him, because He first loved us.” In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the ruling principle of action. It modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, and ennoble the affections. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the life and sheds a refining influence on all around.—The Acts of the Apostles, p. 551.

Sunday, January 22: Motivation for Giving

It is for the eternal interest of everyone to search his own heart, and to improve every God-given faculty. Let all remember that there is not a motive in the heart of any man that the Lord does not clearly see. The motives of each one are weighed as carefully as if the destiny of the human agent depended upon this one result. We need a connection with divine power, that we may have an increase of clear light and an understanding of how to reason from cause to effect. We need to have the powers of the understanding cultivated, by our being partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Let each one consider carefully the solemn truth, God in heaven is true, and there is not a design, however intricate, nor a motive, however carefully hidden, that He does not clearly understand. He reads the secret devisings of every heart.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1160.

If you have cherished a wrong spirit, let it be banished from the soul. It is your duty to eradicate from your heart everything that is of a defiling nature. Every root of bitterness should be plucked up, lest others be contaminated by its baleful influence. Do not allow one poisonous plant to remain in the soil of your heart. Root it out this very hour, and plant in its stead the plant of love. Let Jesus be enshrined in the soul. Christ is our example. He went about doing good. He lived to bless others. Love beautified and ennobled all His actions, and we are commanded to follow in His steps.—*That I May Know Him*, p. 187.

Christians should not allow themselves to be troubled with anxious care as to the necessities of life. If men love and obey God, and do their part, God will provide for all their wants. Although your living may have to be obtained by the sweat of your brow, you are not to distrust God; for in the great plan of His providence, He will supply your need from day to day. This lesson of Christ's is a rebuke to the anxious thoughts, the perplexities and doubts, of the faithless heart. No man can add one cubit to his stature, no matter how solicitous he may be to do so. It is no less unreasonable to be troubled about the morrow and its needs. Do your duty, and trust in God; for He knows of what things you have need.—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 227.

Liberality both in spiritual and in temporal things is taught in the lesson of seed sowing. The Lord says, "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters." Isaiah 32:20. "This I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." 2 Corinthians 9:6. To sow beside all waters means a continual imparting of God's gifts. It means giving wherever the cause of God or the needs of humanity demand our aid. This will not tend to poverty. "He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." The sower multiplies his seed by casting it away. So it is with those who are faithful in distributing God's gifts. By imparting they increase their blessings. God has promised them a sufficiency that they may continue to give. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." Luke 6:38.

And more than this is wrapped up in the sowing and the reaping. As we distribute God's temporal blessings, the evidence of our love and sympathy awakens in the receiver gratitude and thanksgiving to God. The soil of the heart is prepared to receive the seeds of spiritual truth. And He who ministers seed to the sower will cause the seed to germinate and bear fruit unto eternal life.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 85, 86.

Monday, January 23: What Portion for Offerings

Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee. Deuteronomy 16:17. . . .

In the Bible system of tithes and offerings the amounts paid by different persons will of course vary greatly, since they are proportioned to the income. With the poor man the tithe will be a comparatively small sum, and his gifts will be according to his ability. . . .

The one to whom God has entrusted a large capital will not, if he loves and fears God, find it a burden to meet the demands of an enlightened conscience according to the claims of God. . . .

All who possess the spirit of Christ will with cheerful alacrity press their gifts into the Lord's treasury.—In Heavenly Places, p. 304.

When Jesus sent forth the Twelve on their first mission of mercy, He commissioned them "to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick." Luke 9:2. "As ye go," He said, "preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give." Matthew 10:7, 8. And as they "went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere" (Luke 9:6), the blessing of heaven accompanied their labors. The fulfillment of the Saviour's commission by the disciples made their message the power of God unto salvation, and through their efforts many were brought to a knowledge of the Messiah. . . .

The Saviour's commission to the disciples includes all believers to the end of time. All to whom the heavenly inspiration has come are put in trust with the gospel. All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be co-workers with Christ.—Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, pp. 465, 466.

It is not for you to expect every blessing of God and return nothing. Through Christ we possess all things; without Christ we should have had nothing but poverty, misery, and despair. Shall we respond to this love which Jesus has bestowed upon us? To be sons of God is to possess all things. What more can you want? If the Christian is not content with such an inheritance, nothing can give him contentment. We are indebted to the Lord for all we possess. Then let us return to the Giver all that He claims as His own. Let us not commit robbery toward God.

He who so loved man that He came from the realms of bliss, from His royal throne, and humiliated Himself to clothe His divinity with humanity, has given us unmistakable tokens of His love and the value He places upon man. He who has made for us this infinite sacrifice summons us to estimate the value of the soul, to strike the balance between earthly gain and heavenly loss, between temporal success and everlasting failure.—In Heavenly Places, p. 305.

Tuesday, January 24: Offerings and Worship

“God loveth a cheerful giver,” and those who love Him will give freely and cheerfully when by so doing they can advance His cause and promote His glory. . . . Let willing obedience and pure love bind upon the altar every offering that is made to God; for with such sacrifices He is well pleased, while those that are offered grudgingly are an offense to Him. When churches or individuals have no heart in their offerings, but would limit the cost of carrying forward the work of God, and gauge it by their own narrow views, they show decidedly that they have no living connection with God.—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 269.

To praise God in fullness and sincerity of heart is as much a duty as is prayer. We are to show to the world and to all the heavenly intelligences that we appreciate the wonderful love of God for fallen humanity and that we are expecting larger and yet larger blessings from His infinite fullness. . . .

God imparts His gifts to us that we also may give, and thus make known His character to the world. Under the Jewish economy, gifts and offerings formed an essential part of God’s worship. The Israelites were taught to devote a tithe of all their income to the service of the sanctuary. Besides this they were to bring sin offerings, freewill gifts, and offerings of gratitude. These were the means for supporting the ministry of the gospel for that time. God expects no less from us than He expected from His people anciently.—Christ’s Object Lessons, pp. 299, 300.

Our house of worship may be very humble, but it is none the less acknowledged by God. If we worship in spirit and in truth and in the beauty of holiness, it will be to us the very gate of heaven. As lessons of the wondrous works of God are repeated, and as the heart’s gratitude is expressed in prayer and song, angels from heaven take up the strain and unite in praise and thanksgiving to God. These exercises drive back the power of Satan. They expel murmurings and complainings, and Satan loses ground.

God teaches us that we should assemble in His house to cultivate the attributes of perfect love. This will fit the dwellers of earth for the mansions Christ has gone to prepare for those who love Him, where, from Sabbath to Sabbath, from one new moon to another, they will assemble in the sanctuary to unite in loftier strains of song, in thanksgiving and praise to Him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever.—In Heavenly Places, p. 288.

The psalmist says: “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name. . . . Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” . . . “Sing unto the Lord, . . . and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.”

In the gracious blessings which our heavenly Father has bestowed upon us, we may discern innumerable evidences of a love that is infinite, and a tender pity surpassing a mother’s yearning sympathy for her wayward child. . . . In the language of John we exclaim, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”—Reflecting Christ, p. 284.

Wednesday, January 25: God Takes Note of Our Offerings

The act of the widow who cast two mites—all that she had—into the treasury, is placed on record for the encouragement of those who, struggling with poverty, still desire by their gifts to aid the cause of God. Christ called the attention of the disciples to this woman, who had given “all her living.” Mark 12:44. He esteemed her gift of more value than the large offerings of those whose alms did not call for self-denial. From their abundance they had given a small portion. To make her offering, the widow had deprived herself of even the necessities of life, trusting God to supply her needs for the morrow. Of her the Saviour declared, “Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury.” Verse 43. Thus He taught that the value of the gift is estimated not by the amount, but by the proportion that is given and the motive that actuates the giver.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 342.

Frequently those who receive the truth are among the poor of this world; but they should not make this an excuse for neglecting those duties which devolve upon them in view of the precious light they have received. They should not allow poverty to prevent them from laying up a treasure in heaven. The blessings within reach of the rich are also within their reach. If they are faithful in using what little they do possess, their treasure in heaven will increase according to their fidelity. It is the motive with which they work, not the amount they do, that makes their offering valuable in the sight of Heaven.

All should be taught to do what they can for the Master; to render to Him according as He has prospered them. He claims as His just due a tenth of their income, be it large or small; and those who withhold this, commit robbery toward Him, and cannot expect His prospering hand to be with them. Even if the church is composed mostly of poor brethren, the subject of systematic benevolence should be thoroughly explained, and the plan heartily adopted. God is able to fulfil His promises. His resources are infinite, and He employs them all in accomplishing His will. And when He sees a faithful performance of duty in the payment of the tithe, He often, in His wise providence, opens ways whereby it shall increase. He who follows God's arrangement in the little that has been given him, will receive the same returns as he who bestows of his abundance.—*Gospel Workers*, p. 222.

Some are not naturally devotional, and therefore should encourage and cultivate a habit of close examination of their own lives and motives, and should especially cherish a love for religious exercises and for secret prayer. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 513.

Thursday, January 26: Special Projects: “Big Jar” Giving

In His mercy, Jesus had pardoned her sins, He had called forth her beloved brother from the grave, and Mary’s heart was filled with gratitude. . . . At great personal sacrifice she had purchased an alabaster box of “ointment of spikenard, very costly,” with which to anoint His body. . . . Breaking her box of ointment, she poured its contents upon the head and feet of Jesus; then, as she knelt weeping, moistening them with her tears, she wiped His feet with her long, flowing hair. . . .

Mary heard the words of criticism. Her heart trembled within her. She feared that her sister would reproach her for extravagance. The Master, too, might think her improvident. Without apology or excuse she was about to shrink away, when the voice of her Lord was heard, “Let her alone; why trouble ye her?” He saw that she was embarrassed and distressed. He knew that in this act of service she had expressed her gratitude for the forgiveness of her sins, and He brought relief to her mind. Lifting His voice above the murmur of criticism, He said, “She hath wrought a good work on Me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but Me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying.”—The Desire of Ages, pp. 559, 560.

The apostle Paul in his ministry among the churches was untiring in his efforts to inspire in the hearts of the new converts a desire to do large things for the cause of God. Often he exhorted them to the exercise of liberality. In speaking to the elders of Ephesus of his former labors among them, he said, “I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.” “He which soweth sparingly,” he wrote to the Corinthians, “shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” Acts 20:35; 2 Corinthians 9:6, 7.

Nearly all the Macedonian believers were poor in this world’s goods, but their hearts were overflowing with love for God and His truth, and they gladly gave for the support of the gospel. When general collections were taken up in the Gentile churches for the relief of the Jewish believers, the liberality of the converts in Macedonia was held up as an example to other churches. Writing to the Corinthian believers, the apostle called their attention to “the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. . . .

The willingness to sacrifice on the part of the Macedonian believers came as a result of wholehearted consecration. Moved by the Spirit of God, they “first gave their own selves to the Lord” (2 Corinthians 8:5), then they were willing to give freely of their means for the support of the gospel.—The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 342, 343.

Friday, January 27: For Further Reading

Counsels on Stewardship, "Cheerful Liberality in the Closing Work," pp. 40, 41;

Conflict and Courage, "The Work Lying Nearest," p. 220.