

## Lesson 7

### Unto the Least of These

#### Sabbath Afternoon, February 11

Methods of helping the needy should be carefully and prayerfully considered. We are to seek God for wisdom, for He knows better than shortsighted mortals how to care for the creatures He has made. . . .

We should help those who with large families to support have constantly to battle with feebleness and poverty. Many a widowed mother with her fatherless children is working far beyond her strength in order to keep her little ones with her, and provide them with food and clothing. Many such mothers have died from overexertion. Every widow needs the comfort of hopeful, encouraging words, and there are very many who should have substantial aid.

Men and women of God, persons of discernment and wisdom, should be appointed to look after the poor and needy, the household of faith first. These should report to the church and counsel as to what should be done. —Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, pp. 277, 278.

The Majesty of heaven identifies His interests with that of suffering humanity. Our associates and companions are in need of heartfelt kindness and tender sympathy. It is impossible to grow up into Christ our living head, unless we practice the lesson He has given us of sympathy, compassion, and love. It is impossible to reflect the image of Christ unless this love which is of heavenly birth, is in the soul. No one will pass the portals of the city of God who does not reflect this attribute.—Sons and Daughters of God, p. 148.

A religion that leads men to place a low estimate upon human beings, whom Christ has esteemed of such value as to give Himself for them; a religion that would lead us to be careless of human needs, sufferings, or rights, is a spurious religion. In slighting the claims of the poor, the suffering, and the sinful, we are proving ourselves traitors to Christ. It is because men take upon themselves the name of Christ, while in life they deny His character, that Christianity has so little power in the world. The name of the Lord is blasphemed because of these things.

Of the apostolic church, in those bright days when the glory of the risen Christ shone upon them, it is written that no man said “that aught of the things which he possessed was his own.” “Neither was there any among them that lacked.” “And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.” “And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” Acts 4:32, 34, 33; 2:46, 47.

Search heaven and earth, and there is no truth revealed more powerful than that which is made manifest in works of mercy to those who need our sympathy and aid. This is the truth as it is in Jesus. When those who profess the name of Christ shall practice the principles of the golden rule, the same power will attend the gospel as in apostolic times.—Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, pp. 136, 137.

## **Sunday, February 12: The Life and Ministry of Jesus**

Few realize the full meaning of the words that Christ spoke when, in the synagogue at Nazareth, He announced Himself as the Anointed One. He declared His mission to comfort, bless, and save the sorrowing and the sinful; and then, seeing that pride and unbelief controlled the hearts of His hearers, He reminded them that in time past God had turned away from His chosen people because of their unbelief and rebellion, and had manifested Himself to those in heathen lands who had not rejected the light of heaven. The widow of Sarepta and Naaman the Syrian had lived up to all the light they had; hence they were accounted more righteous than God's chosen people who had backslidden from Him and had sacrificed principle to convenience and worldly honor.

Christ told the Jews at Nazareth a fearful truth when He declared that with backsliding Israel there was no safety for the faithful messenger of God. They would not know his worth or appreciate his labors. While the Jewish leaders professed to have great zeal for the honor of God and the good of Israel, they were enemies of both. By precept and example they were leading the people farther and farther from obedience to God—leading them where He could not be their defense in the day of trouble.—The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 416, 417.

In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free. All are brought nigh by His precious blood. (Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:13).

Whatever the difference in religious belief, a call from suffering humanity must be heard and answered. Where bitterness of feeling exists because of difference in religion, much good may be done by personal service. Loving ministry will break down prejudice, and win souls to God.

We should anticipate the sorrows, the difficulties, the troubles of others. We should enter into the joys and cares of both high and low, rich and poor. "Freely ye have received," Christ says, "freely give." Matthew 10:8. All around us are poor, tried souls that need sympathizing words and helpful deeds. There are widows who need sympathy and assistance. There are orphans whom Christ has bidden His followers receive as a trust from God. Too often these are passed by with neglect. They may be ragged, uncouth, and seemingly in every way unattractive; yet they are God's property. They have been bought with a price, and they are as precious in His sight as we are. They are members of God's great household, and Christians as His stewards are responsible for them. "Their souls," He says, "will I require at thine hand."—Christ's Object Lessons, p. 386.

Pure religion and undefiled before the Father is this: "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Good deeds are the fruit that Christ requires us to bear: kind words, deeds of benevolence, of tender regard for the poor, the needy, the afflicted. When hearts sympathize with hearts burdened with discouragement and grief, when the hand dispenses to the needy, when the naked are clothed, the stranger made welcome to a seat in your parlor and a place in your heart, angels are coming very near, and an answering strain is responded to in heaven. Every act of justice, mercy, and benevolence makes melody in heaven. The Father from His throne beholds those who do these acts of mercy, and numbers them with His most precious treasures. . . . When you succor the poor, sympathize with the afflicted and oppressed, and befriend the orphan, you bring yourselves into a closer relationship to Jesus.—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2, p. 25.

## Monday, February 13: God's Provision for the Poor

Although God had promised greatly to bless His people, it was not His design that poverty should be wholly unknown among them. He declared that the poor should never cease out of the land. There would ever be those among His people who would call into exercise their sympathy, tenderness, and benevolence.

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The law of God gave the poor a right to a certain portion of the produce of the soil. When hungry, a man was at liberty to go to his neighbor's field or orchard or vineyard, and eat of the grain or fruit to satisfy his hunger. It was in accordance with this permission that the disciples of Jesus plucked and ate of the standing grain as they passed through a field upon the Sabbath day.

All the gleanings of harvest field, orchard, and vineyard, belonged to the poor. "When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field," said Moses, "and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it. . . . When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt." Deuteronomy 24:19; Leviticus 19:9, 10.—Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 530, 531.

We should study to copy the Pattern, that the Spirit that dwelt in Christ may dwell in us. The Saviour was not found among the exalted and honorable of the world. He did not spend His time among those who were seeking their ease and pleasure. He went about doing good. His work was to help those who needed help, to save the lost and perishing, to lift up the bowed down, to break the yoke of oppression from those who were in bondage, to heal the afflicted, and to speak words of sympathy and consolation to the distressed and sorrowing. We are required to copy this pattern. Let us be up and doing, seeking to bless the needy and comfort the distressed. The more we partake of the spirit of Christ, the more we shall see to do for our fellow men. We shall be filled with a love for perishing souls, and shall find our delight in following the footsteps of the Majesty of heaven.—Our High Calling, p. 180.

There are many to whom life is a painful struggle; they feel their deficiencies and are miserable and unbelieving; they think they have nothing for which to be grateful. Kind words, looks of sympathy, expressions of appreciation, would be to many a struggling and lonely one as the cup of cold water to a thirsty soul. A word of sympathy, an act of kindness, would lift burdens that rest heavily upon weary shoulders. And every word or deed of unselfish kindness is an expression of the love of Christ for lost humanity. . . .

There is sweet peace for the compassionate spirit, a blessed satisfaction in the life of self-forgetful service for the good of others. The Holy Spirit that abides in the soul and is manifest in the life will soften hard hearts and awaken sympathy and tenderness. You will reap that which you sow. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor. . . . The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and Thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." Psalm 41:1-3.—Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, p. 23.

## **Tuesday, February 14: The Rich Young Ruler**

Don't you know that when the young man came to Christ and asked Him what he should do that he might have life, Christ told him to keep the commandments. Said he, "I have done it." Now the Lord wanted to bring this lesson right home. "What lack I yet? I am perfectly whole" (Matthew 19:20). He did not see that there was a thing the matter with him or why he should not have eternal life. "I have done it," he said. Now Christ touches the plague spot of his heart. He says, "Come, follow Me, and ye shall have life."

What did he do? He turned away very sorrowful, for he had great possessions.—Faith and Works, p. 70.

The rich man who had so many privileges is represented to us as one who should have cultivated his gifts, so that his works should reach to the great beyond, carrying with them improved spiritual advantages. It is the purpose of redemption, not only to blot out sin, but to give back to man those spiritual gifts lost because of sin's dwarfing power. Money cannot be carried into the next life; it is not needed there; but the good deeds done in winning souls to Christ are carried to the heavenly courts. But those who selfishly spend the Lord's gifts on themselves, leaving their needy fellow creatures without aid and doing nothing to advance God's work in the world, dishonor their Maker. Robbery of God is written opposite their names in the books of heaven.

The rich man had all that money could procure, but he did not possess the riches that would have kept his account right with God. He had lived as if all that he possessed were his own. He had neglected the call of God and the claims of the suffering poor. But at length there comes a call which he cannot neglect. By a power which he cannot question or resist he is commanded to quit the premises of which he is no longer steward. The onerich man is reduced to hopeless poverty. The robe of Christ's righteousness, woven in the loom of heaven, can never cover him. He who once wore the richest purple, the finest linen, is reduced to nakedness. His probation is ended. He brought nothing into the world, and he can take nothing out of it.—Christ's Object Lessons, p. 267.

There are many professedly Christian men who will make any sacrifice in order to gain riches, and the more successful they are in obtaining the object of their desires, the less they care for the precious truth and its advancement in the world. They lose their love for God, and act like men who are insane. The more they are prospered in material wealth, the less they invest in the cause of God.

The works of those who have an insane love for riches, make it evident that it is impossible to serve two masters, God and mammon. They show to the world that money is their god. They yield their homage to its power, and to all intents and purposes they serve the world. The love of money becomes a ruling power, and for its sake they violate the law of God.—Counsels on Stewardship, pp. 213, 214.

### **Wednesday, February 15: Zacchaeus**

Zacchaeus had been overwhelmed, amazed, and silenced at the love and condescension of Christ in stooping to him, so unworthy. Now love and loyalty to his new-found Master unseal his lips. He will make public his confession and his repentance.

In the presence of the multitude, "Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

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When the rich young ruler had turned away from Jesus, the disciples had marveled at their Master's saying, "How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" They had exclaimed one to another, "Who then can be saved?" Now they had a demonstration of the truth of Christ's words, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." Mark 10:24, 26; Luke 18:27. They saw how, through the grace of God, a rich man could enter into the kingdom.—The Desire of Ages, pp. 554, 555.

Lead the people to look to Jesus as their only hope and helper; leave the Lord room to work upon the mind, to speak to the soul, and to impress the understanding. It is not essential for you to know and tell others all the whys and wherefores as to what constitutes the new heart, or as to the position they can and must reach so as never to sin. You have no such work to do.

All are not constituted alike. Conversions are not all alike. Jesus impresses the heart, and the sinner is born again to new life. Often souls have been drawn to Christ when there was no violent conviction, no soul rending, no remorseful terrors. They looked upon an uplifted Saviour, they lived. They saw the soul's need, they saw the Saviour's sufficiency, and His claims, they heard His voice saying, "Follow Me," and they rose up and followed Him. This conversion was genuine, and the religious life was just as decided as was that of others who suffered all the agony of a violent process.—Selected Messages, book 1, p. 177.

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.—In Heavenly Places, p. 291.

### **Thursday, February 16: Consider the Man Job**

In every church there should be established a treasury for the poor. Then let each member present a thank offering to God once a week or once a month, as is most convenient. This offering will express our gratitude for the gifts of health, of food, and of comfortable clothing. And according as God has blessed us with these comforts will we lay by for the poor, the suffering, and the distressed. I would call the attention of our brethren especially to this point. Remember the poor. Forego some of your luxuries, yea, even comforts, and help those who can obtain only the most meager food and clothing. In doing for them you are doing for Jesus in the person of His saints. He identifies Himself with suffering humanity. Do not wait until your imaginary wants are all satisfied. Do not trust to your feelings and give when you feel like it and withhold when you do not feel like it. Give regularly, either ten, twenty, or fifty cents a week, as you would like to see upon the heavenly record in the day of God.

Your good wishes we will thank you for, but the poor cannot keep comfortable on good wishes alone. They must have tangible proofs of your kindness in food and clothing. God does not mean that any of His followers should beg for bread. He has given you an abundance that you may supply those of their necessities which by industry and economy they are not able to supply. Do not wait for them to call your attention to their needs. Act as did Job. The thing that he knew not he searched out. Go on an inspecting tour and learn what is needed and how it can be best supplied.—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, pp. 150, 151.

Lay hold of every opportunity within your reach of doing good. Idle hands will reap a small harvest. For what do older persons live but to care for the young and help the helpless? God has committed them to us who are older and have experience, and He will call us to account if our duties in this direction are neglected.

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But few have a true sense of what is comprised in the word Christian. It is to be Christlike, to do others good, to be divested of all selfishness, and to have our lives marked with acts of disinterested benevolence.

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Notice the rich reward promised to those who do this. "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily." Here is an abundantly precious promise for all who will interest themselves in the cases of those who need help. How can God come in and bless and prosper those who have no special care for anyone except themselves, and who do not use that which He has entrusted to them, to glorify His name on the earth?—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2, pp. 330, 331.

**Friday, February 17: For Further Reading**

*Sons and Daughters of God*, "In Love for Others," p. 147;

*The Upward Look*, "Witnessing to Others," p. 264.