

Lesson 10

Giving Back

Sabbath Afternoon, March 4

David was distressed as he saw those who once seemed to have the fear of God before them, now in old age seemingly forsaken of God and exposed to ridicule by the enemies of the Lord. . . .

David was strongly moved. He was distressed. He looked forward to the time when he should be aged, and feared that God would leave him and he would be as unhappy as other aged persons whose course he had noticed, and that he should be left to the reproach of the enemies of the Lord. With this burden upon him he earnestly prays [Psalm 71:9, 17, 19 quoted]. David felt the necessity of guarding against the evils which attend old age. . . .

If such would take the position God would have them, their last days might be their best, their happiest. Those who have children in whose honesty and management they have reason to confide, should allow them to manage for them and provide for their happiness. Unless they do this, Satan will take advantage of their lack of mental strength, and will manage for them. They should lay aside anxiety and burdens, and occupy their time as happily as they can, in ripening up for heaven.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1148.

There are living upon our earth men who have passed the age of fourscore and ten. The natural results of old age are seen in their feebleness. But they believe God, and God loves them. The seal of God is upon them, and they will be among the number of whom the Lord has said, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.” With Paul they can say, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also which love his appearing.” There are many whose grey hairs God honors because they have fought a good fight and kept the faith.—Letter 207, 1899.

What a glorious morning will the resurrection morning be! What a wonderful scene will open when Christ shall come to be admired of them that believe! All who were partakers with Christ in His humiliation and sufferings will be partakers with Him in His glory. By the resurrection of Christ from the dead every believing saint who falls asleep in Jesus will come forth from his prison house in triumph. The resurrected saint will proclaim, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Corinthians 15:55).

Jesus Christ has triumphed over death and rent the fetters of the tomb, and all who sleep in the tomb will share the victory; they will come forth from their graves as did the Conqueror.—Selected Messages, book 2, pp. 271, 272.

Sunday, March 5: The Rich Fool

The solemn warning that was given to the foolish rich man should be a sufficient warning for all men to the close of time. Lesson upon lesson was given by our Lord to take everyone away from selfishness, and to establish close bonds of fellowship and brotherhood between man and man. He desired that the hearts of believers should be closely knit together in strong bonds of sympathy, so that there might be unity in Himself. They are together to rejoice in hope of the glory of God, looking for eternal life through the virtue of Jesus Christ. If Christ is abiding in the heart, His love will diffuse itself to others through its possessor, and will bind heart to heart. . . .

Jesus gives the Holy Spirit in large measure for great emergencies, to help our infirmities, to give us strong consolation, to illuminate our minds, and purify and ennoble our hearts. Christ becomes unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.—Reflecting Christ, p. 103.

[The foolish rich] man's aims were no higher than those of the beasts that perish. He lived as if there were no God, no heaven, no future life; as if everything he possessed were his own, and he owed nothing to God or man. The psalmist described this rich man when he wrote, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Psalm 14:1.

This man has lived and planned for self. He sees that the future is abundantly provided for; there is nothing for him now but to treasure and enjoy the fruits of his labors. He regards himself as favored above other men, and takes credit to himself for his wise management. . . .

But "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." 1 Corinthians 3:19. While the rich man is looking forward to years of enjoyment, the Lord is making far different plans. . . .

The only thing that would be of value to him now he has not secured. In living for self he has rejected that divine love which would have flowed out in mercy to his fellow men. Thus he has rejected life. For God is love, and love is life. This man has chosen the earthly rather than the spiritual, and with the earthly he must pass away. —Christ's Object Lessons, p. 257, 258.

If men would do their duty as faithful stewards of their Lord's goods, there would be no cry for bread, none suffering in destitution, none naked and in want. It is the unfaithfulness of men that brings about the state of suffering in which humanity is plunged. If those whom God has made stewards would but appropriate their Lord's goods to the object for which He gave to them, this state of suffering would not exist. The Lord tests men by giving them an abundance of good things, just as He tested the rich man of the parable. If we prove ourselves unfaithful in the righteous mammon, who shall entrust us the true riches? It will be those who have stood the test on the earth, who have been found faithful, who have obeyed the words of the Lord in being merciful, in using their means for the advancement of His kingdom, that will hear from the lips of the Master, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." —"Parable of the Rich Man," Review and Herald, June 26, 1894.

Monday, March 6: You Can't Take It With You

The book of Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon in his old age, after he had fully proved that all the pleasures earth is able to give are empty and unsatisfying. He there shows how impossible it is for the vanities of the world to meet the longings of the soul. His conclusion is that it is wisdom to enjoy with gratitude the good gifts of God, and to do right; for all our works will be brought into judgment.

Solomon's autobiography is a mournful one. He gives us the history of his search for happiness. He engaged in intellectual pursuits; he gratified his love for pleasure; he carried out his schemes of commercial enterprise. He was surrounded by the fascinating splendor of court life. All that the carnal heart could desire was at his command; yet he sums up his experience in this sad record: [Ecclesiastes 1:14-2:11 quoted].

Solomon had great learning; but his wisdom was foolishness; for he did not know how to stand in moral independence, free from sin, in the strength of a character molded after the divine similitude. Solomon has told us the result of his research, his painstaking efforts, his persevering inquiry. He pronounces his wisdom altogether vanity.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, pp. 1164, 1165.

[E]very breath, every pulsation of the heart, is an evidence of the all-pervading care of Him in whom "we live, and move, and have our being." Acts 17:28. It is not because of inherent power that year by year the earth produces her bounties and continues her motion around the sun. The hand of God guides the planets and keeps them in position in their orderly march through the heavens. He "bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth." Isaiah 40:26. It is through His power that vegetation flourishes, that the leaves appear and the flowers bloom. He "maketh grass to grow upon the mountains" (Psalm 147:8), and by Him the valleys are made fruitful. "All the beasts of the forest . . . seek their meat from God," and every living creature, from the smallest insect up to man, is daily dependent upon His providential care.

In the beautiful words of the psalmist, "These wait all upon Thee. . . . That Thou givest them they gather: Thou openest Thine hand, they are filled with good." Psalm 104:20, 21, 27, 28. His word controls the elements; He covers the heavens with clouds and prepares rain for the earth. "He giveth snow like wool: He scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes." Psalm 147:16. "When He uttereth His voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and He causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of His treasures." Jeremiah 10:13.—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 115.

All who would have their names retained in the book of life, should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before God by sorrow for sin, and true repentance. There must be deep, faithful searching of heart. The light, frivolous spirit indulged in by so many professed Christians must be put away. There is earnest warfare before all who would subdue the evil tendencies that strive for the mastery. The work of preparation is an individual work.—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 355.

Tuesday, March 7: Begin With Personal Needs

Life is too solemn to be absorbed in temporal and earthly matters, in a treadmill of care and anxiety for the things that are but an atom in comparison with the things of eternal interest. Yet God has called us to serve Him in the temporal affairs of life. Diligence in this work is as much a part of true religion as is devotion. The Bible gives no indorsement to idleness. It is the greatest curse that afflicts our world. Every man and woman who is truly converted will be a diligent worker. . . .

It is the duty of every Christian to acquire habits of order, thoroughness, and dispatch. There is no excuse for slow bungling at work of any character. When one is always at work and the work is never done, it is because mind and heart are not put into the labor. The one who is slow and who works at a disadvantage should realize that these are faults to be corrected. He needs to exercise his mind in planning how to use the time so as to secure the best results. By tact and method, some will accomplish as much in five hours as others do in ten.—Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 343, 344.

Love to Jesus will be seen, will be felt. It cannot be hidden. It exerts a wondrous power. It makes the timid bold, the slothful diligent, the ignorant wise. It makes the stammering tongue eloquent, and rouses the dormant intellect into new life and vigor. It makes the desponding hopeful, the gloomy joyous. Love to Christ will lead its possessor to accept responsibilities for His sake, and to bear them in His strength. Love to Christ will not be dismayed by tribulation, nor turned aside from duty by reproaches. . . .

God considers more with how much love we work, than the amount we do. Love is a heavenly attribute. The natural heart cannot originate it. This heavenly plant only flourishes where Christ reigns supreme. Where love exists, there is power and truth in the life. Love does good and nothing but good. Those who have love bear fruit unto holiness, and in the end everlasting life.—That I May Know Him, p. 167.

David's public labor was about to close. He knew that he should soon die, and he does not leave his business matters in confusion, to vex the soul of his son; but while he has sufficient physical and mental strength, he arranges the affairs of his kingdom, even to the minutest matters, not forgetting to warn Solomon in regard to the case of Shimei. He knew that the latter would cause trouble in the kingdom. He was a dangerous man, of violent temper, and was kept in control only through fear. Whenever he dared, he would cause rebellion, or, if he had a favorable opportunity, would not hesitate to take the life of Solomon.

David, in arranging his business, sets a good example to all who are advanced in years, to settle their matters while they are capable of doing so, that when they shall be drawing near to death, and their mental faculties are dimmed, they shall have nothing of a worldly nature to divert their minds from God.—Ellen G. White Comments, in The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 2, pp. 1024, 1025.

Wednesday, March 8: Deathbed Charity

Trust . . . in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy. 1 Timothy 6:17.

We should be much happier and more useful, if our homelife and social intercourse were governed by the principles of the Christian religion, and illustrated the meekness and simplicity of Christ. Let visitors see that we try to make all around us happy by our cheerfulness, sympathy, and love. . . .

Then let us set our hearts and homes in order; let us teach our children that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and let us, by a cheerful, happy, well-ordered life, express our gratitude and love to Him “who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.” But above all things, let us fix our thoughts and the affections of our hearts on the dear Saviour who suffered for guilty man, and thus opened heaven for us.—Reflecting Christ, p. 183.

Much is said concerning our duty to the neglected poor; should not some attention be given to the neglected rich? Many look upon this class as hopeless, and they do little to open the eyes of those, who, blinded and dazed by the glitter of earthly glory, have lost eternity out of their reckoning. Thousands of wealthy men have gone to their graves unwarned. But indifferent as they may appear, many among the rich are soul-burdened. “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase.” He that says to fine gold, “Thou art my confidence,” has “denied the God that is above.” . . . Ecclesiastes 5:10; Job 31:24, 28.

Riches and worldly honor cannot satisfy the soul. Many among the rich are longing for some divine assurance, some spiritual hope. Many long for something that will bring to an end the monotony of their aimless lives. Many in official life feel their need of something which they have not. Few among them go to church; for they feel that they receive little benefit. The teaching they hear does not touch the heart. Shall we make no personal appeal to them?—The Ministry of Healing, p. 210.

I saw that many withhold from the cause while they live, quieting their consciences that they will be charitable at death; they hardly dare exercise faith and trust in God to give anything while living. But this deathbed charity is not what Christ requires of His followers; it cannot excuse the selfishness of the living. Those who hold fast their property till the last moment, surrender it to death rather than to the cause. Losses are occurring continually. Banks fail, and property is consumed in very many ways. Many purpose to do something, but they delay the matter, and Satan works to prevent the means from coming into the treasury at all. It is lost before it is returned to God, and Satan exults that it is so.

If you would do good with your means, do it at once lest Satan get it in his hands and thus hinder the work of God. Many times, when the Lord has opened the way for brethren to handle their means to advance His cause, the agents of Satan have presented some enterprise by which they were positive the brethren could double their means. They take the bait; their money is invested, and the cause, and frequently themselves, never receive a dollar.—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 154.

Thursday, March 9: Spiritual Legacy

It will not do for you to depend on making your charity gifts in testamentary bequests at death. You cannot calculate with the least degree of surety that the cause will ever be benefited by them. Satan works with acute skill to stir up the relatives, and every false position is taken to gain to the world that which was solemnly dedicated to the cause of God. Much less than the sum willed is always received. Satan even puts it into the hearts of men and women to protest against their relatives' doing what they wish in the bestowment of their property. They seem to regard everything given to the Lord as robbing the relatives of the deceased.

If you want your means to go to the cause, appropriate it, or all that you do not really need for a support, while you live. A few of the brethren are doing this and enjoying the pleasure of being their own executors. Will the covetousness of men make it necessary that they shall be deprived of life in order that the property which God has lent them shall not be useless forever? Let none of you draw upon yourselves the doom of the unprofitable servant who hid his Lord's money in the earth.—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 155.

The first Christian church had not the privileges and opportunities we have. They were a poor people, but they felt the power of the truth. The object before them was sufficient to lead them to invest all. They felt that the salvation or the loss of a world depended upon their instrumentality. They cast in their all and held themselves in readiness to go or come at the Lord's bidding.

We profess to be governed by the same principles, to be influenced by the same spirit. But instead of giving all for Christ many have taken the golden wedge and a goodly Babylonish garment and hid them in the camp. If the presence of one Achan was sufficient to weaken the whole camp of Israel, can we be surprised at the little success which attends our efforts when every church and almost every family has its Achan? Let us individually go to work to stimulate others by our example of disinterested benevolence. The work might have gone forward with far greater power had all done what they could to supply the treasury with means.—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, pp. 156, 157.

Many are making a great mistake in regard to the things of this life. They economize, withholding from themselves and others the good they might receive from a right use of the means which God has lent them, and become selfish and avaricious. They neglect their spiritual interests and become dwarfs in religious growth, all for the sake of accumulating wealth which they cannot use. They leave their property to their children, and nine times out of ten it is even a greater curse to their heirs than it has been to themselves. Children, relying upon the property of their parents, often fail to make a success of this life, and generally utterly fail to secure the life to come. The very best legacy which parents can leave their children is a knowledge of useful labor and the example of a life characterized by disinterested benevolence. By such a life they show the true value of money, that it is only to be appreciated for the good that it will accomplish in relieving their own wants and the necessities of others, and in advancing the cause of God.—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 3, p. 399.

Friday, March 10: For Further Reading

Our High Calling, "A Bank That Never Fails," p. 195;

The Upward Look, "Worship Nature's God," p. 327.