

The Wrath of Divine Love

Sabbath Afternoon, January 25

Christ's indignation was directed against the hypocrisy, the gross sins, by which men were destroying their own souls, deceiving the people and dishonoring God. In the specious deceptive reasoning of the priests and rulers He discerned the working of satanic agencies. Keen and searching had been His denunciation of sin; but He spoke no words of retaliation. He had a holy wrath against the prince of darkness; but He manifested no irritated temper. So the Christian who lives in harmony with God, possessing the sweet attributes of love and mercy, will feel a righteous indignation against sin; but he will not be roused by passion to revile those who revile him. Even in meeting those who are moved by a power from beneath to maintain falsehood, in Christ he will still preserve calmness and self-possession. —*Lift Him Up*, p. 337.

The forbearance of God has been very great—so great that when we consider the continuous insult to His holy commandments, we marvel. The Omnipotent One has been exerting a restraining power over His own attributes. But He will certainly arise to punish the wicked, who so boldly defy the just claims of the Decalogue.

God allows men a period of probation; but there is a point beyond which divine patience is exhausted, and the judgments of God are sure to follow. The Lord bears long with men, and with cities, mercifully giving warnings to save them from divine wrath; but a time will come when pleadings for mercy will no longer be heard, and the rebellious element that continues to reject the light of truth will be blotted out, in mercy to themselves and to those who would otherwise be influenced by their example. —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 276.

Let us study more diligently the Word of God. The Bible is so plain and clear that all who will may understand. Let us thank the Lord for His precious Word, and for the messages of His Spirit that give so much light. I am instructed that the more we study the Old and New Testaments, the more we shall have impressed on our mind the fact that each sustains a very close relation to the other, and the more evidence we shall receive of their divine inspiration. We shall see clearly that they have but one Author. The study of these precious volumes will teach us how to form characters that will reveal the attributes of Christ. —*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 359.

The Old Testament . . . was not written merely for the ancients; it was for all ages and for all people. Jesus would have the teachers of His doctrine diligently search the Old Testament for that light which establishes His identity as the Messiah foretold in prophecy, and reveals the nature of His mission to the world. The Old and the New Testament are inseparable, for both are the teachings of Christ. —*Ellen G. White Comments, in The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentaries*, vol. 5, p. 1094.

Sunday, January 26

Grieved by Evil

"For all this they [the children of Israel] sinned still, and believed not for His wondrous works. . . . When He slew them, then they sought Him: and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer." Psalm 78:32-35. Yet they did not turn to God with a sincere purpose. Though when afflicted by their enemies they sought help from Him who alone could deliver, yet "their heart was not right with Him, neither were they steadfast in His covenant. But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned He His anger away. . . . For He remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again." Verses 37-39. —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 410.

Christ was approaching the end of His mission, and He knew that when that time should come, Jerusalem's day of probation would have ended. But He was reluctant to pronounce the words of doom. For three years He had come, seeking fruit and finding none. During these years one object was ever upon His soul—to present before His thankless, disobedient people the solemn warnings and gracious invitations of heaven. . . .

He carried them on His heart. He did all that He could do to save them. But at the end of His work in this world He was forced to say in an agony of tears, "Ye would not come unto Me that ye might have life."

The cloud of divine wrath was gathering over Jerusalem. Christ saw the city beleaguered. He saw it lost. In a voice full of tears he exclaimed, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." —*This Day With God*, p. 109.

God has sent messages from His Word to the souls who are living careless lives, and who are unashamed of their wrong course of action. I heard the words spoken: "Why sayest thou . . . My way is hid from the Lord and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" (Isaiah 40:27, 28). . . .

God is constantly appealing to the human heart, bidding it recognize His love and mercy, and accept His righteousness in the place of the principles of evil. Thus He has pleaded with mankind in all ages. In Noah's day Christ spoke to men through a human agency and preached to those who were in bondage to sin. He came to Israel enshrouded in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. He it was who educated that vast multitude in their wilderness wandering.

There are many who do not weigh these things sufficiently. The instruction given to Israel should be understood today by every soul living. —*This Day With God*, p. 278.

Monday, January 27

God Is Slow to Anger

When Jonah learned of God's purpose to spare the city that, notwithstanding its wickedness, had been led to repent in sackcloth and ashes, he should have been the first to rejoice because of God's amazing grace; but instead he allowed his mind to dwell upon the possibility of his being regarded as a false prophet. Jealous of his reputation, he lost sight of the infinitely greater value of the souls in that wretched city. The compassion shown by God toward the repentant Ninevites "displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." "Was not this my saying," he inquired of the Lord, "when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest Thee of the evil." Jonah 4:1, 2. . . .

Losing sight of the interests of others, and feeling as if he would rather die than live to see the city spared, in his dissatisfaction he exclaimed, "Now, O Lord, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 271.

The lesson [taught to Jonah] is for God's messengers today, when the cities of the nations are as verily in need of a knowledge of the attributes and purposes of the true God as were the Ninevites of old. Christ's ambassadors are to point men to the nobler world, which has largely been lost sight of. According to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, the only city that will endure is the city whose builder and maker is God. With the eye of faith man may behold the threshold of heaven, flushed with God's living glory. Through His ministering servants the Lord Jesus is calling upon men to strive with sanctified ambition to secure the immortal inheritance. He urges them to lay up treasure beside the throne of God. —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 274.

Divine love makes its most touching appeals to the heart when it calls upon us to manifest the same tender compassion that Christ manifested. That man only who has unselfish love for his brother has true love for God. The true Christian will not willingly permit the soul in peril and need to go unwarned, uncared for. He will not hold himself aloof from the erring, leaving them to plunge farther into unhappiness and discouragement or to fall on Satan's battleground.

Those who have never experienced the tender, winning love of Christ cannot lead others to the fountain of life. His love in the heart is a constraining power, which leads men to reveal Him in the conversation, in the tender, pitiful spirit, in the uplifting of the lives of those with whom they associate. Christian workers who succeed in their efforts must know Christ; and in order to know Him, they must know His love. In heaven their fitness as workers is measured by their ability to love as Christ loved and to work as He worked. —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 550.

Tuesday, January 28

Righteous Indignation

[Jesus] slowly descended the [temple] steps, and, raising the whip, which in his hand seemed changed to a kingly scepter, bade the bargaining company to quit the sacred limits of the temple, and take hence their merchandise. With a lofty zeal, and a severity he had never before manifested, he overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the coin fell, ringing sharply upon the marble floor. The most hardened and defiant did not presume to question his authority, but, with prompt obedience, the dignitaries of the temple, the speculating priests, the cattle traders and brokers, rushed from his presence. . . .

A panic of fear swept over the multitude who felt the over-shadowing of Christ's divinity. Cries of terror escaped from hundreds of blanched lips as the crowd rushed headlong from the place. Jesus smote them not with the whip of cords, but, to their guilty eyes, that simple instrument seemed like gleaming, angry swords, circling in every direction, and threatening to cut them down. . . . If the presence of the Lord sanctified the mount, his presence made equally sacred the temple reared to his honor. —*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 118.

How easily could that vast throng have resisted the authority of one man; but the power of His divinity overwhelmed them with confusion and a sense of their guilt. They had no strength to resist the divine authority of the Saviour of the world. The desecrators of God's holy place were driven from its portals by the Majesty of Heaven.

After the temple was cleansed, the demeanor of Jesus changed; the terrible majesty of his countenance gave place to an expression of tenderest sympathy. He looked after the flying crowd with eyes full of sorrow and compassion. There were some who remained, held by the irresistible attraction of his presence. They were unterrified by his awful dignity, their hearts were drawn toward him with love and hope. These people were not the great and powerful, who expected to impress him with a sense of their grandeur; they were the poor, the sick, and the afflicted. —*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 119.

It is true there is an indignation that is justifiable, even in the followers of Christ. When they see that God is dishonored, and His service brought into disrepute, when they see the innocent oppressed, a righteous indignation stirs the soul. Such anger, born of sensitive morals, is not a sin. But those who at any supposed provocation feel at liberty to indulge anger or resentment are opening the heart to Satan. Bitterness and animosity must be banished from the soul if we would be in harmony with heaven. . . .

Many are zealous in religious services, while between them and their brethren are unhappy differences which they might reconcile. God requires them to do all in their power to restore harmony. Until they do this, He cannot accept their services. The Christian's duty in this matter is clearly pointed out. —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 310.

God Does Not Afflict Willingly

Divine pity marked the countenance of the Son of God as He cast one lingering look upon the Temple and then upon His hearers. In a voice choked by deep anguish of heart and bitter tears He exclaimed, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often I would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" This is the separation struggle. In the lamentation of Christ the very heart of God is pouring itself forth. —*Lift Him Up*, p. 337.

Our heavenly Father doth not willingly afflict and grieve the children of men.

This world is the scene of our trials, our griefs, our sorrows. We are here to bear the test of God. The fire of the furnace is to kindle till our dross is consumed and we come forth as gold purified in the furnace of affliction. Light will come out of this darkness. . . . "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). Let this be the language of [the] heart. The cloud of mercy is hovering over [our heads] even in the darkest hour. God's benefits to us are as numerous as the drops of rain falling from the clouds upon the parched earth to water and refresh it. The mercy of God is over you. . . .

Could your eyes be opened, you would see your heavenly Father bending over you in love; and could you hear His voice it would be in tones of compassion to you who are prostrate with suffering and affliction. Stand fast in His strength; there is rest for you. —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 272.

Within a few short years the king of Babylon was to be used as the instrument of God's wrath upon impenitent Judah. Again and again Jerusalem was to be invested and entered by the besieging armies of Nebuchadnezzar. Company after company—at first a few only, but later on thousands and tens of thousands—were to be taken captive to the land of Shinar, there to dwell in enforced exile. Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah—all these Jewish kings were in turn to become vassals of the Babylonian ruler, and all in turn were to rebel. Severer and yet more severe chastisements were to be inflicted upon the rebellious nation, until at last the entire land was to become a desolation, Jerusalem was to be laid waste and burned with fire, the temple that Solomon had built was to be destroyed, and the kingdom of Judah was to fall, never again to occupy its former position among the nations of earth.

Those times of change, so fraught with peril to the Israelitish nation, were marked with many messages from Heaven through Jeremiah. Thus the Lord gave the children of Judah ample opportunity of freeing themselves from entangling alliances with Egypt, and of avoiding controversy with the rulers of Babylon. As the threatened danger came closer, he taught the people by means of a series of acted parables, hoping thus to arouse them to a sense of their obligation to God, and also to encourage them to maintain friendly relations with the Babylonian government. —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 422, 423.

Thursday, January 30

Show Compassion

Could Satan in the least particular have tempted Christ to sin, he would have bruised the Saviour's head. As it was, he could only touch His heel. Had the head of Christ been touched, the hope of the human race would have perished. Divine wrath would have come upon Christ as it came upon Adam. Christ and the church would have been without hope.

We should have no misgivings in regard to the perfect sinlessness of the human nature of Christ. Our faith must be an intelligent faith, looking unto Jesus in perfect confidence, in full and entire faith in the atoning Sacrifice. This is essential that the soul may not be enshrouded in darkness. This holy Substitute is able to save to the uttermost; for He presented to the wondering universe perfect and complete humility in His human character, and perfect obedience to all the requirements of God. Divine power is placed upon man, that he may become a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. This is why repenting, believing man can be made the righteousness of God in Christ. —*Selected Messages, book 1, p. 256.*

There are scarcely two whose experiences are alike in every particular. The trials of one may not be the trials of another; and our hearts should ever be open to kindly sympathy, and aglow with the divine love that Jesus manifested for all his brethren. Christ sometimes reproved with severity, and in some cases it may be necessary for us to do so; but we should consider that while Christ knew the exact condition of the ones he rebuked,—just the amount of reproof they could bear, and what was necessary to correct their course of wrong,—he also knew just how to pity the erring, comfort the unfortunate and encourage the weak. He knew just how to inspire hope and courage; for he was acquainted with the exact motives and the peculiar trials of every mind. He reproved with pity, and loved those he rebuked with a divine love.

Jesus could make no mistake; but human judgment is erring, and may be wrong. Men may misjudge motives; they may be deceived by appearances, and when they think they are doing right to reprove wrong, they may go too far, censure too severely, and wound where they wished to heal; or they may exercise sympathy unwisely, and, in their ignorance, counteract reproof that is merited and timely.

The Lord would have us submissive to his will, and sanctified to his service. Selfishness must be put away, with every other defect in our characters. There must be a daily death to self. Paul had this experience. He said, "I die daily." Every day he had a new conversion; every day he took an advance step toward Heaven. We, too, must gain daily victories in the divine life, if we would enjoy the favor of God.

Our God is gracious, of tender pity, and plenteous in mercy. He knows our weaknesses and needs, and he will help our infirmities if we will only trust in him. —"Love the Fulfilling of the Law," *Signs of the Times*, March 3, 1887.

Friday, January 31

For Further Reading

The Great Controversy, "The Destruction of Jerusalem," pp. 21, 22;
In Heavenly Places, "Sweetness in Affliction," p. 273.