

What More Could I Have Done?

Sabbath Afternoon, March 8

Jesus would contrast His manner of work with that of His accusers. This midnight seizure by a mob, this cruel mockery and abuse before He was even accused or condemned, was their manner, not His. His work was open to all. He had nothing in His doctrines that He concealed. Thus He rebuked their position, and unveiled the hypocrisy of the Sadducees.

Truth never languished on His lips, never suffered in His hands for want of perfect obedience to its requirements. "To this end was I born," Christ declared, "and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." And the mighty principles of truth fell from His lips with the freshness of a new revelation. The truth was spoken by Him with an earnestness proportionate to its infinite importance and to the momentous results depending on its success. —*Ellen G. White Comments, in The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1148.*

Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt. —*The Desire of Ages, p. 753.*

We are safe only in following where Christ leads the way. The path will grow clearer, brighter and brighter, unto the perfect day.

Man's business is to work in cooperation with God. Alone, his feet will slip, in apparently the safest path. We cannot walk one step safely in mere human wisdom. If we would walk without fear, we must know that the hand of Jesus Christ holds our own firmly. And we can only know this by searching the Word of the living God.

God desires that men shall feel their dependence upon Him and trust to that Hand that can save to the uttermost, that Heart that throbs in response to the appeals of suffering humanity. We must not trust in man or make flesh our arm. Our trust must be placed in a Hand that is warm with life and a Heart that throbs with love for the helpless. —*In Heavenly Places, p. 258.*

Sunday, March 9

Christ the Victor

[Satan] tempts men to distrust God's love and to doubt His wisdom. He is constantly seeking to excite a spirit of irreverent curiosity, a restless, inquisitive desire to penetrate the secrets of divine wisdom and power. In their efforts to search out what God has been pleased to withhold, multitudes overlook the truths which He has revealed, and which are essential to salvation. Satan tempts men to disobedience by leading them to believe they are entering a wonderful field of knowledge. But this is all a deception. Elated with their ideas of progression, they are, by trampling on God's requirements, setting their feet in the path that leads to degradation and death. —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 54.

[Christ] loved the poor sinner and took upon Himself the form of a servant, that He might suffer and die in man's behalf. Jesus might have remained at His Father's right hand, wearing His kingly crown and royal robes. But He chose to exchange all the riches, honor, and glory of heaven for the poverty of humanity, and His station of high command for the horrors of Gethsemane and the humiliation and agony of Calvary. He became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, that by His baptism of suffering and blood He might purify and redeem a guilty world. . . .

Christ suffered without the gates of Jerusalem, for Calvary was outside the city walls. This was to show that Christ did not die for the Hebrews alone, but for all mankind. He proclaims to a fallen world that He has come to be their Redeemer and urges them to accept the salvation He offers them. . . . "And having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 121.

The government of God is not, as Satan would make it appear, founded upon a blind submission, an unreasoning control. It appeals to the intellect and the conscience. "Come now, and let us reason together" is the Creator's invitation to the beings He has made. Isaiah 1:18. God does not force the will of His creatures. He cannot accept an homage that is not willingly and intelligently given. A mere forced submission would prevent all real development of mind or character; it would make man a mere automaton. Such is not the purpose of the Creator. He desires that man, the crowning work of His creative power, shall reach the highest possible development. He sets before us the height of blessing to which He desires to bring us through His grace. He invites us to give ourselves to Him, that He may work His will in us. It remains for us to choose whether we will be set free from the bondage of sin, to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God. —*Steps to Christ*, p. 43.

Monday, March 10

The Just and the Justifier

The atonement of Christ is not a mere skillful way to have our sins pardoned; it is a divine remedy for the cure of transgression and the restoration of spiritual health. It is the Heaven-ordained means by which the righteousness of Christ may be not only upon us but in our hearts and characters.

Christ came to this world to show us what God can do and what we can do in cooperation with God. In human flesh He went into the wilderness to be tempted by the enemy. He knows what it is to hunger and thirst. He knows the weakness and the infirmities of the flesh. He was tempted in all points like as we are tempted.

Our ransom has been paid by our Saviour. No one need be enslaved by Satan. Christ stands before us as our divine example, our all-powerful Helper. We have been bought with a price that it is impossible to compute. Who can measure the goodness and mercy of redeeming love. —Ellen G. White *Comments, in The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 1074.*

The abundant evidence given by God that He desires the salvation of all, will be the condemnation of those who refuse the gift of heaven. At the last great day, when all will be rewarded or punished according to their obedience or disobedience, the cross of Calvary will appear plainly before those standing before the Judge of all the earth to receive sentence for eternity. . . .

With deep solicitude Heaven watches the conflict between good and evil. None but the obedient can enter the gates of the city of God. Upon those who choose to continue in transgression the death sentence must at last be pronounced. The earth will be purified from their misdoings, their defiance of God.

God's law is the transcript of His character. . . . The rules of life that the Lord has given will make men pure and happy and holy. Those only who obey these rules can hear from the lips of Christ the words, "Come up higher." —*In Heavenly Places, p. 361.*

Every manifestation of God's power for His people arouses the enmity of Satan. Every time God works in their behalf, Satan with his angels works with renewed vigor to compass their ruin. . . . He endeavors to affright their souls with the thought that their case is hopeless, that the stain of their defilement can never be washed away. He hopes so to destroy their faith that they will yield fully to his temptations, and turn from their allegiance to God.

The Lord's people cannot of themselves answer the charges of Satan. As they look to themselves they are ready to despair. But they appeal to the divine Advocate. They plead the merits of the Redeemer. God can be "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26. With confidence the Lord's children cry unto Him to silence the accusations of Satan, and bring to naught his devices. . . . [A]nd with the mighty argument of the cross, Christ silences the bold accuser. —*Christ's Object Lessons, p. 168.*

Tuesday, March 11

The Song of My Beloved

God in His Son had been seeking fruit, and had found none. Israel was a cumberer of the ground. Its very existence was a curse; for it filled the place in the vineyard that a fruitful tree might fill. It robbed the world of the blessings that God designed to give. The Israelites had misrepresented God among the nations. They were not merely useless, but a decided hindrance. To a great degree their religion was misleading, and wrought ruin instead of salvation.

In the parable the dresser of the vineyard does not question the sentence that the tree, if it remained fruitless, should be cut down; but he knows and shares the owner's interest in that barren tree. Nothing could give him greater joy than to see its growth and fruitfulness. He responds to the desire of the owner, saying, "Let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well."

The gardener does not refuse to minister to so unpromising a plant. He stands ready to give it still greater care. He will make its surroundings most favorable, and will lavish upon it every attention. —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 215.

On the hills of Palestine our heavenly Father had planted this goodly Vine, and He Himself was the husbandman. Many were attracted by the beauty of this Vine, and declared its heavenly origin. But to the leaders in Israel it appeared as a root out of a dry ground. They took the plant, and bruised it, and trampled it under their unholy feet. Their thought was to destroy it forever. But the heavenly Husbandman never lost sight of His plant. After men thought they had killed it, He took it, and replanted it on the other side of the wall. The vine stock was to be no longer visible. It was hidden from the rude assaults of men. But the branches of the Vine hung over the wall. They were to represent the Vine. Through them grafts might still be united to the Vine. From them fruit has been obtained. There has been a harvest which the passers-by have plucked. —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 675.

Could God give us any greater proof of His love than in thus giving His Son to pass through this scene of suffering? And as the gift of God to man was a free gift, His love infinite, so His claims upon our confidence, our obedience, our whole heart, and the wealth of our affections are correspondingly infinite. He requires all that it is possible for man to give. The submission on our part must be proportionate to the gift of God; it must be complete and wanting in nothing. We are all debtors to God. He has claims upon us that we cannot meet without giving ourselves a full and willing sacrifice. He claims prompt and willing obedience, and nothing short of this will He accept. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 369.

Christ's Parable of the Vineyard

This parable [of the vineyard] is of great importance to all who are entrusted with responsibilities in the Lord's service. God selected a people to be educated by Christ. He brought them into the wilderness to be trained for His service, and there gave them the highest code of morality—His holy law. To them was committed God's lesson book, the Old Testament Scriptures. Enshrouded in the pillar of cloud Christ led them in their wilderness wandering. By His own power He transplanted the wild vine from Egypt to His vineyard. Well might God ask, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done?" (Isaiah 5:4).

The history of the children of Israel is written for our admonition and instruction upon whom the ends of the world are come. Those who would stand firm in the faith in these last days, and finally gain an entrance into the heavenly Canaan, must listen to the words of warning spoken by Jesus Christ to the Israelites. These lessons were given to the church in the wilderness to be studied and heeded by God's people throughout their generations forever. The experience of the people of God in the wilderness will be the experience of His people in this age. Truth is a safeguard in all time to those who will hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints. —*The Upward Look*, p. 232.

The Jewish people might have repented, if they would, but they were clothed with the garments of their own self-righteousness. They claimed to be the descendants of Abraham, and looked upon every promise made to Israel as theirs. But the Israel of God are those who are converted, not those who are the lineal descendants of Abraham. —*The Upward Look*, p. 80.

With amazement the angels beheld the infinite love of Jesus, who, suffering the most intense agony of mind and body, thought only of others, and encouraged the penitent soul to believe. In His humiliation He as a prophet had addressed the daughters of Jerusalem; as priest and advocate He had pleaded with the Father to forgive His murderers; as a loving Saviour He had forgiven the sins of the penitent thief. . . .

And now the Lord of glory was dying, a ransom for the race. In yielding up His precious life, Christ was not upheld by triumphant joy. All was oppressive gloom. It was not the dread of death that weighed upon Him. It was not the pain and ignominy of the cross that caused His inexpressible agony. Christ was the prince of sufferers; but His suffering was from a sense of the malignity of sin, a knowledge that through familiarity with evil, man had become blinded to its enormity. Christ saw how deep is the hold of sin upon the human heart, how few would be willing to break from its power. He knew that without help from God, humanity must perish, and He saw multitudes perishing within reach of abundant help. —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 752.

Thursday, March 13

The Vindication of God's Name

Fallen man, because of his guilt, could no longer come directly before God with his supplications; for his transgression of the divine law had placed an impassable barrier between the holy God and the transgressor. But a plan was devised that the sentence of death should rest upon a Substitute. In the plan of redemption there must be the shedding of blood, for death must come in consequence of man's sin. The beasts for sacrificial offerings were to prefigure Christ. In the slain victim, man was to see the fulfillment for the time being of God's word, "Thou shalt surely die." And the flowing of the blood from the victim would also signify an atonement. There was no virtue in the blood of animals; but the shedding of the blood of beasts was to point forward to a Redeemer who would one day come to the world and die for the sins of men. And thus Christ would fully vindicate His Father's law. — *Confrontation*, p. 21.

What sustained the Son of God during His life of toil and sacrifice? He saw the results of the travail of His soul and was satisfied. Looking into eternity, He beheld the happiness of those who through His humiliation had received pardon and everlasting life. His ear caught the shout of the redeemed. He heard the ransomed ones singing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

We may have a vision of the future, the blessedness of heaven. In the Bible are revealed visions of the future glory, scenes pictured by the hand of God, and these are dear to His church. By faith we may stand on the threshold of the eternal city, and hear the gracious welcome given to those who in this life co-operate with Christ, regarding it as an honor to suffer for His sake. As the words are spoken, "Come, ye blessed of My Father," they cast their crowns at the feet of the Redeemer, exclaiming, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. . . . Honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Matthew 25:34; Revelation 5:12, 13. — *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 601.

Ever before Him, Christ saw the result of His mission. His earthly life, so full of toil and self-sacrifice, was cheered by the thought that He would not have all this travail for nought. By giving His life for the life of men, He would restore in humanity the image of God. He would lift us up from the dust, reshape the character after the pattern of His own character, and make it beautiful with His own glory. . . .

Although the baptism of blood must first be received, although the sins of the world were to weigh upon His innocent soul, although the shadow of an unspeakable woe was upon Him; yet for the joy that was set before Him He chose to endure the cross and despised the shame. — *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 504.

Friday, March 14

For Further Reading

The Acts of the Apostles, "God's Purposes for His Church," pp. 14–16;
Lift Him Up, "What More Could I Have Done?" p. 216.