

Ellen G. White

SIGNS ^{OF} THE TIMES

ARTICLES



BOOK I OF III

1875 - 1883

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April 1, 1875.

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM

ABRAM WAS directed of God to go up to Mount Moriah, and there offer up his son as a burnt offering. There the Lord tested Abraham by a most fearful trial. In taking Hagar for his wife he showed distrust in the promises of God. If he had patiently waited for the promise to be fulfilled in God's own time and manner, and had not sought to make a providence himself, he would not have been subjected to this the closest test that was ever required of man.

This command of God was calculated to stir his soul to its depths. He was one hundred and twenty years old when this terrible and startling command came to him, in a vision of the night. He was to travel three days' journey, and would have ample time for reflection. Fifty years previous, at the divine command, he had left father and mother, relatives and friends, and had become a pilgrim and a stranger in a land not his own. He had obeyed the command of God to send away his son Ishmael to wander in the wilderness. His soul was bowed down with grief at this separation, and his faith was sorely tried, yet he submitted because God required it.

But now a trial was before him which caused all his other afflictions to appear insignificant. The words of the command were sufficient to harrow up his soul and give him the deepest pain. "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." Over and over again did the burdened soul say, Oh! my son, my son, would to God my life would be accepted in the place of thine; then should my light not go out in darkness. Abraham arose before day, and as he looked up to the starry heavens, he called to mind the promise which God made to him fifty years before. "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." And now the same voice had commanded him to slay this only son, through whom this promise was to be fulfilled.

Abraham was tempted to believe that after all this might be a delusion. Stricken with grief, he bowed before God, and prayed as never before for a confirmation of this strange command, for greater light if he must perform this terrible duty. He

remembered the angels sent to tell him of God's purpose to destroy Sodom, and those who bore to him the promise that he should have this same son Isaac. He walked forth where he had several times met the heavenly messengers, hoping to meet them again and receive some special direction from them; but he gained no light, darkness seemed to close about him, day was approaching, and he must be on his journey before light.

He first passed to the couch upon which Isaac slept in peaceful innocency; he was the joy of his heart, the comfort of his old age. Abraham's lips quivered, he turned quickly away, and looked upon the couch where Sarah was quietly sleeping. He knew that Isaac was her pride, that her heart was entwined with his. Should he awake Sarah, that she might look upon her son for the last time? Should he tell her the requirement of God? He knew that he himself had strength of faith, and confidence in God; he did not know the strength of Sarah's faith; but he did know the strength of her love for Isaac.

He passed from one sleeper to the other, undecided in regard to the wisest course to pursue. He finally awakened Isaac softly, informing him that he was commanded of God to offer sacrifice upon a distant mountain, and that he must accompany him. He called his servants, and made every necessary preparation for his long journey. If he could unburden his mind to Sarah, and they together bear the suffering and responsibility, it might bring him some relief; but he decided that this would not do; for her heart was bound up in her son, and she might hinder him. He went forth on his journey, with Satan by his side to suggest unbelief and impossibility.

While walking by the side of Isaac, he could not engage in conversation as usual, for a deep sorrow was concealed in his own breast. The night approaches, the longest day Abraham ever experienced has come to a close. He saw his loved son Isaac and the servants locked in slumber, but he could not sleep. He spent the night in prayer. He would pray, still hoping that some heavenly messenger would appear to tell him that it is enough, that he may return to Sarah, with Isaac unharmed. The stars seem to shine forth more beautiful than ever before, reminding him of the promise, As the number of the stars, so shall thy seed be.

No new light dawned upon the tor-

mented soul of Abraham. A heavy pressure was upon him, but he staggered not at the promise. He reasoned not that his posterity, which would be as the stars, must now come through Ishmael, for God had plainly stated that through Isaac should the promise be fulfilled. Then again was that voice ringing in his ears, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest." That terrible command which would leave him childless can scarcely be realized. He rises early to continue his toilsome journey. Satan whispers his doubts, but Abraham resists his suggestions.

All day he had hopes of meeting an angel coming to bless and comfort him, or perhaps to revoke the command of God, but no messenger of mercy appeared. Satan suggested that he must be deceived, for God had said, "Thou shalt not kill," and that it was not like God to require what he had forbidden. The second long day comes to a close, another sleepless night is spent in humiliation and prayer, and the journey of the third day is commenced. Abraham lifts his eyes to the mountains, and upon one he beholds the promised sign. He looks earnestly, and lo, a bright cloud hovered over the top of Mount Moriah. Now he knows it is all a terrible certainty, and no delusion.

He was yet a great distance from the mountain, but he removed the burden from the shoulders of his servants and bade them remain behind; while he placed the wood upon the shoulders of his son, and himself took the knife and fire. Abraham braced himself for his sad work which he must perform. He did not murmur against God, for Isaac had been given to him unexpectedly. He had received him with gratitude and great joy, and though he was the son of his old age, the son of his love, he yet believed that the same power that gave him Isaac, could raise him again even from the ashes of the burnt sacrifice. He strengthens his soul by the evidences he has had of the goodness and faithfulness of God. Had not God, who had graciously given Isaac to him perfect right to recall the gift, and demand him back?

Isaac had been a comfort, a sunbeam, a blessing to Abraham in his old age, and although this gift of God seemed so precious, so dear to him, yet he was now commanded to give it back to God. The words of God's command showed that he fully realized the pain which Abraham must feel in obeying his requirement, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou

lovest." Abraham wanted no witnesses. It was enough that God could look on and not only see the full consecration of his darling Isaac, but read the heart and fully understand how severely he felt the test. He wished no one but God to witness this parting scene between father and son.

Abraham knew not how Isaac would receive the command of God. As they drew near the mountain, "Isaac spake to Abraham, his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" These endearing words, "My Father," pierced his affectionate heart, and again he thought, Oh! that I, in my old age, might die instead of Isaac. Still reluctant to open before his son the true purpose of his errand, Abraham answered, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering."

Isaac assisted his Father in building the altar. Together they placed on the wood, and the last work preparatory to the sacrifice is done. With quivering lips and trembling voice, Abraham revealed to his son the message that God had sent him. In obedience to God's command, he had taken the journey. Everything was ready. Isaac was the victim, the lamb to be slain. Had Isaac chosen to resist his father's command, he could have done so, for he was grown to manhood; but he had been so thoroughly instructed in the knowledge of God that he had perfect faith in his promises and requirements.

Abraham assured his son that his affection for him was not diminished, and that he would rather give his own life than to deprive him of life. But God had chosen Isaac, and his requirement must be fulfilled to the letter. He told Isaac that God had miraculously given him to his parents, and now he had required him again. He assured his son that God's promise, that "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," would be fulfilled; that doubtless God would raise him to life again from the dead. He told Isaac that he had hoped that the Messiah would spring from him. In this he was disappointed, and then, that his darling son must die by his own hand, increased his grief a hundred-fold.

Isaac at first heard the purpose of God with amazement amounting to terror. He considered the matter fully. He was the child of a miracle. If God had accepted him as a worthy sacrifice, he would cheerfully submit. Life was dear, life was precious, but his Creator had specified him, Isaac, to

be offered up as a sacrifice. He comforted his father, by assuring him that God conferred honor upon him, in accepting him as a sacrifice; that in this requirement he saw not the wrath and displeasure of God, but special tokens that God loved him, in that he required him to be consecrated to himself in sacrifice.

He encouraged the almost nerveless hands of his father to bind the cords which confined him to the altar. The last words of endearing love were spoken by father and son, the last affectionate, filial, and parental tears were shed, the last embrace was given, and the father had pressed his beloved son to his aged breast for the last time. His hand is uplifted, grasping firmly the instrument of death, which was to take the life of Isaac, when suddenly his arm is stayed. "And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen. And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."

God estimated Abraham's obedience and unswerving faith, and gave him the name of "Father of the faithful." The example of Abraham is recorded in sacred history for the benefit of his believing children. This great act of faith teaches the lesson of implicit confidence in God, perfect obedience to his requirements, and a complete surrender to the divine will. In the example of Abraham we are taught that nothing we possess is too precious to give to God.

All that we have is the Lord's. Our

money, our time, talents and ourselves, all belong to him. He has lent them to us, to test and prove us, and to develop what is in our hearts. If we selfishly claim as our own the favors God has graciously entrusted to us, we shall meet with great loss, for we rob God, and in robbing him, we rob ourselves of heavenly blessings, and the benediction Christ will give the faithful and obedient: "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

How many now who profess to be Christians would yield up to God their beloved Isaac? Our dearest treasure belongs to God. A solemn duty rests upon Christian parents to so educate and mold the minds of their children that they will ever have a high respect and exalted reverence for God and everything sacred and holy. Such will feel that God's claims must first be regarded, that nothing is too precious to sacrifice for him. Such will, like Abraham, exemplify their faith by their works.

How many now who profess to believe God, and pass for Christians, will not obey his voice when he calls upon them to deny self, and yield to him their darling treasures. They will hesitate, and cling to earthly things. Their affections are upon the world and the things of the world, and some of these very ones will have the most to say about how much they have sacrificed to obey the truth. Isaac felt that it was a privilege to yield his life as a sacrifice to God. If God could accept him, he felt that he was honored.

Human judgment may look upon the command given to Abraham as severe, too great for human strength to bear. Abraham's strength was from God. He looked not at the things which are seen with mortal vision, but at the things which are eternal. God required no more of Abraham than he had, in divine compassion and infinite love, given to man. He gave his only begotten Son to die, that guilty man might live. Abraham's offering of Isaac was especially designed of God to prefigure the sacrifice of his Son.

Every step that Abraham advanced toward Mount Moriah, the Lord went with him. All the agony and grief that Abraham endured during the three days of his dark and fearful trial, were imposed upon him to give us a lesson in perfect faith and obedience, and that we might better comprehend how real was the great self-denial and infinite sacrifice of the Father in giving

The world before the flood reasoned that for centuries the laws of nature had been fixed. The recurring seasons had come in their order. The rivers and brooks had never yet passed their boundaries, but had borne their waters safely to the proud sea. Fixed decrees had kept the waters from overflowing their banks. But these reasons did not recognize the Hand that had stayed the waters, saying, thus far shalt thou go and no farther. As time passed on without any apparent change in nature men began to be reassured whose hearts had trembled at times with fear. They felt secure in their unbelief. They reasoned then as men reason now, as though nature was above the God of nature, and her ways were so fixed that God himself could not change them, thus making in the minds of the world God's messages of warning a delusion, a grand deception, reasoning that if the message of Noah was correct nature would be turned out of her course of order.

The days of Noah, Christ tells us, were as the days prior to his appearing in the clouds of heaven. Noah's day prefigures the present age. The world's Redeemer, who knew best the history of the past, is the true prophet of the characters of the future. Human nature in Noah's day uninfluenced by the Spirit of God is the same in our age. Jesus in his assertions and representations recognizes Genesis as the words of inspiration. Many admit the New Testament to be divine, while they show no special regard for the Old Testament scriptures; but these two grand books cannot be divorced. Inspired apostles who wrote the New Testament are continually carrying back the minds of the searchers of Scriptures to the Old. Christ carries the minds of all generations, present and future, to the Old Testament. He refers to Noah as a literal person who lived; he refers to the flood as a fact in history; he shows the specification of that generation, as characteristics of this age. The Truth and Life has anticipated the questioning and doubts of men in regard to the Old Testament by pronouncing it divine.

December 20, 1877.

HOME DUTIES OF THE FATHER

FEW FATHERS are fitted for the responsibility of training their children. They, themselves need strict discipline that they may learn self-control, forbearance, and sympathy. Until they possess these attributes they are not capable of properly

teaching their children. What can we say to awaken the moral sensibilities of fathers, that they may understand and undertake their duty to their offspring? The subject is of intense interest and importance, having a bearing upon the future welfare of our country. We would solemnly impress upon fathers, as well as mothers, the grave responsibility they have assumed in bringing children into the world. It is a responsibility from which nothing but death can free them. True the chief care and burden rests upon the mother during the first years of her children's lives, yet even then the father should be her stay and counsel, encouraging her to lean upon his large affections, and assisting her as much as possible.

The father's duty to his children should be one of his first interests. It should not be, set aside for the sake of acquiring a fortune, or of gaining a high position in the world. In fact, those very conditions of affluence and honor frequently separate a man from his family, and cut off his influence from them more than anything else. If the father would have his children develop harmonious characters, and be an honor to him and a blessing to the world, he has a special work to do. God holds him responsible for that work. In the great day of reckoning it will be asked him: Where are the children that I entrusted to your care to educate for me, that their lips might speak my praise, and their lives be as a diadem of beauty in the world, and they live to honor me through all eternity?

In some children the moral powers strongly predominate. They have power of will to control their minds and actions. In others the animal passions are almost irresistible. To meet these diverse temperaments, which frequently appear in the same family, fathers, as well as mothers, need patience and wisdom from the divine Helper. There is not so much to be gained by punishing children for their transgressions, as by teaching them the folly and heinousness of their sin, understanding their secret inclinations, and laboring to bend them toward the right.

The hours which many fathers spend in smoking should be improved in studying God's plan of government, and gathering lessons from those divine methods. The teachings of Jesus unfold to the father modes of reaching the human heart, and impressing upon it important lessons of truth and right. Jesus used the familiar objects of nature to illustrate and intensify his meaning. He drew lessons from ev-

ery-day life, the occupations of men, and their dealing with one another.

The father should frequently gather his children around him, and lead their minds into channels of moral and religious light. He should study their different tendencies and susceptibilities, and reach them through the plainest avenues. Some may be best influenced through veneration and the fear of God; others through the manifestation of his benevolence and wise providence, calling forth their deep gratitude; others may be more deeply impressed by opening before them the wonders and mysteries of the natural world, with all its delicate harmony and beauty, which speak to their souls of Him who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and all the beautiful things therein.

Children who are gifted with the talent or love of music many receive impressions that will be life-long, by the judicious use of those susceptibilities as the medium for religious instruction. They may be taught that if they are not right with God they are like a discord in the divine harmony of creation, like an instrument out of tune, giving forth discordant strains more grievous to God than harsh, inharmonious notes are to their own fine musical ear.

Many may be reached best through sacred pictures, illustrating scenes in the life and mission of Christ. By this means truths may be vividly imprinted upon their minds, never to be effaced. The Roman Catholic church understands this fact, and appeals to the senses of the people through the charm of sculpture and paintings. While we have no sympathy for image worship, which is condemned by the law of God, we hold that it is proper to take advantage of that almost universal love of pictures in the young, to fasten in their minds valuable moral truths, to bind the gospel to their hearts by beautiful imagery illustrating the great moral principles of the Bible. Even so our Saviour illustrated his sacred lessons by the imagery found in God's created works.

It will not do to lay down an iron rule by which every member of the family is forced into the same discipline. It is better to exert a milder sway, and when any special lesson is required, to reach the consciences of the youth through their individual tastes, and marked points of character. While there should be a uniformity in the family discipline, it should be varied to meet the wants of different members of the family. It should be the parents' study not

to arouse the combativeness of their children, not to excite them to anger and rebellion, but to interest them, and inspire them with a desire to attend to the highest intelligence and perfection of character. This can be done in a spirit of Christian sympathy and forbearance, the parents realizing the peculiar dangers of their children, and firmly, yet kindly, restraining their propensities to sin.

The parents, especially the father, should guard against the danger of their children learning to look upon him as a detective, peering into all their actions, watching and criticizing them, ready to seize upon and punish them for every misdemeanor. The father's conduct upon all occasions should be such that the children will understand that his efforts to correct them spring from a heart full of love for them. When this point is gained, a great victory is accomplished. Fathers should have a sense of their children's human want and weakness, and his sympathy and sorrow for the erring ones should be greater than any sorrow they can feel for their own misdeeds. This will be perceived by the corrected child, and will soften the most stubborn heart.

The father, as priest and house-band of the family circle, should stand to them as nearly in the place of Christ as possible—a sufferer for those who sin, one who, though guiltless, endures the pains and penalty of his children's wrongs, and, while he inflicts punishment upon them, suffers more deeply under it than they do.

But if the father exhibits a want of self-control before his children, how can he teach them to govern their wrong propensities? If he displays anger or injustice, or evidence that he is the slave of any evil habit, he loses half his influence over them. Children have keen perceptions, and draw sharp conclusions; precept must be followed by example to have much weight with them. If the father indulges in the use of any hurtful stimulant, or falls into any other degrading habit, how can he maintain his moral dignity before the watchful eyes of his children? If indulgence in the use of tobacco must be made an exception in his case, the sons may feel justified in taking the same license. And they may not only use tobacco because father does, but may gradually glide into the habit of taking intoxicating liquor on the plea that it is no worse to use wine or beer than tobacco. Thus, through the influence of the father's example, the son sets his feet in the path of

the drunkard.

The dangers of youth are many. There are innumerable temptations to gratify appetite in this land of plenty. Young men in our cities are brought face to face with this sort of temptation every day. They fall under deceptive allurements to gratify appetite, without the thought that they are endangering health. The young frequently receive the impression that happiness is to be found in freedom from restraint, and in the enjoyment of forbidden pleasures and self-gratification. This enjoyment is purchased at the expense of the physical, mental, and moral health, and turns to bitterness at last.

How important, then, that fathers look well after the habits of their sons, and their associates. And first of all he should see that no perverted appetite holds him in bondage, lessening his influence with his sons, and sealing his lips on the subject of self-indulgence in regard to hurtful stimulants.

Man can do much more for God and his fellow-man if he is in the vigor of health than if he is suffering from disease and pain. Tobacco-using, liquor-drinking, and wrong habits of diet, induce disease and pain which incapacitate man for the use he might be in the world. Nature, being outraged, makes her voice heard, sometimes in no gentle tones of remonstrance, in fierce pains and extreme debility. For every indulgence of unnatural appetite the physical health suffers, the brain loses its clearness to act and discriminate. The father, above all others, should have a clear, active mind, quick perceptions, calm judgment, physical strength to support him in his arduous duties, and most of all the help of God to order his acts aright. He should therefore be entirely temperate, walking in the fear of God, and the admonition of his law, mindful of all the small courtesies and kindnesses of life, the support and strength of his wife, a perfect pattern for his sons to follow, a counselor and authority for his daughters. He should stand forth in the moral dignity of a man free from the slavery of evil habits and appetites, qualified for the sacred responsibilities of educating his children for the higher life.

January 3, 1878.

NOAH'S TIME AND OURS

THE CHARACTER of the people before the flood as given by the unerring pen of inspiration is explicit. And God

said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man for that he also is flesh. And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." Here the faithful historian with an inspired pen draws the portrait of Noah's day, when we are told that the heart of man was deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

The nature of man unrenewed by grace is not changed in our day from what it was in Noah's time. Christ has said a similar state of things would be prior to his second coming as existed before the flood. In the days of Noah men followed the imagination of their own hearts, and the result was unrestrained crime and wickedness. The same state of things will exist in this age of the world. But will not some of the learned, the honored of the world, accept the message of warning in these last days? Will the world as a majority perish in the general impending ruin? How was it in Noah's day? as it was then Christ has said it should be. Of that vast population there was only eight persons who believed the message of Noah and obeyed God's word. In the world today the majority choose the broad road to death because the way of life is too narrow for them to walk in with their dishonesty, avarice, pride and iniquity. Now, as in the days of Noah, the overwhelming majority are opposed to the saving truth and are fascinated with lying fables.

Many now are convicted, and God's Spirit is striving with them, but they will not heed the invitations of mercy. Men who make high profession of wisdom and of godliness transgress the law of God without compunctions of conscience. One marked feature of Noah's day was the intense worldliness of the inhabitants. They were eating and drinking, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage, not that these things were of themselves sins, but they were, although lawful in themselves, carried to a high degree of intemperance. The appetite was indulged at the expense of health and reason. This constant indulgence of their sinful desires corrupted them and defiled the earth under them. The same evils intensified exist in

would be revealed in outward show, and by one flash of overmastering will would change the current of all minds, force from them an acknowledgment of his superiority, elevate himself, and gratify the ambition of his people. This being the case, when Christ was treated with contempt, there was a powerful temptation before him to reveal his heavenly character, and to compel his persecutors to admit that he was Lord above kings and potentates, priests and temple. But it was his difficult task to maintain the level of humanity.

In the intercessory prayer of Jesus with his Father, he claimed that he had fulfilled the conditions which made it obligatory upon the Father to fulfill his part of the contract made in Heaven, with regard to fallen man. He prayed: "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. [That is, he had wrought out a righteous character on earth as an example for men to follow.] And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." In this prayer he farther goes on to state what is comprehended by the work which he has accomplished, and which has given him all those who believe on his name. He values this recompense so highly that he forgets the anguish it has cost him to redeem fallen man. He declares himself glorified in those who believe on him. The church, in his name, is to carry to glorious perfection the work which he has commenced; and when that church shall be finally ransomed in the Paradise of God, he will look upon the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Through all eternity the ransomed host will be his chief glory.

Jesus, the Majesty of Heaven, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; "wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." This mighty Saviour has promised to come again, and to take his church to the mansions he has prepared for them. While he is in Heaven carrying on the work of intercession and atonement commenced on earth, his life and character are to be exemplified by his church upon earth. He has promised that, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father." And again, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name." "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."

He who considered it not robbery to

be equal with God, once trod the earth, bearing our suffering and sorrowing nature, and tempted in all points like as we are; and now he appears in the presence of God as our great High Priest, ready to accept the repentance, and to answer the prayers of his people, and, through the merits of his own righteousness, to present them to the Father. He raises his wounded hands to God, and claims their blood-bought pardon. I have graven them on the palms of my hands, he pleads. Those memorial wounds of my humiliation and anguish secure to my church the best gifts of Omnipotence.

What a source of joy to the disciples, to know that they had such a Friend in Heaven to plead in their behalf! Through the visible ascension of Christ all their views and contemplation of Heaven are changed. Their minds had formerly dwelt upon it as a region of unlimited space, tenanted by spirits without substance. Now Heaven was connected with the thought of Jesus, whom they had loved and revered above all others, with whom they had conversed and journeyed, whom they had handled, even in his resurrected body, who had spoken hope and comfort to their hearts, and who, while the words were upon his lips, had been taken up before their eyes, the tones of his voice coming back to them as the cloudy chariot of angels received him: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Heaven could no longer appear to them as an indefinite, incomprehensible space, filled with intangible spirits. They now looked upon it as their future home, where mansions were being prepared for them by their loving Redeemer. Prayer was clothed with a new interest, since it was a communion with their Saviour. With new and thrilling emotions and a firm confidence that their prayer would be answered, they gathered in the upper chamber to offer their petitions, and to claim the promise of the Saviour, who had said, "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." They prayed in the name of Jesus.

They had a gospel to preach—Christ in human form, a man of sorrows; Christ in humiliation, taken by wicked hands and crucified; Christ resurrected, and ascended to Heaven, into the presence of God, to be man's Advocate; Christ to come again with power and great glory in the clouds of heaven, and to receive the obedient and loyal to himself.

The apostles went forth with courage

and hope, to do their Master's work with fidelity. They knew that the most acceptable way of waiting for Christ was to work for him. It was theirs to direct others to the coming Lord, and to teach them to wait patiently for his appearing. This work was given to every disciple of Christ.

October 31, 1878.

A LESSON FOR THE TIMES, INTEMPERANCE

MAN CAME from the hand of God complete in every faculty of mind and body; in perfect soundness, therefore in perfect health. It took more than two thousand years of indulgence of appetite and lustful passions to create such a state of things in the human organism as materially lessened his vital force. Through successive generations the tendency was more swiftly downward. Indulgence of appetite and passion combined, led to excess and violence; debauchery and abominations of every kind weakened the energies, and brought upon the race diseases of every type, until the vigor and glory of the first generations passed away, and, in the third generation from Adam, man began to show signs of decay. Successive generations after the flood degenerated more rapidly.

All this woe and suffering may be traced to the indulgence of appetite and passion. Luxurious living and the use of wine corrupt the blood, inflame the passions, and produce diseases of every kind. Parents leave maladies as a legacy to their children. As a rule, every intemperate man who rears children transmits his inclinations and evil tendencies to his offspring; and the evil does not end here; he gives to them disease from his own inflamed and corrupted blood. Licentiousness, disease, and imbecility are transmitted as an inheritance of woe from father to son, and from generation to generation, bringing anguish and suffering into the world, which is no less than a repetition of the fall of man.

The race is groaning under its weight of accumulated woe, because of the sins of former generations. And yet, with scarcely a thought or care, men and women of the present time indulge intemperance by surfeiting and drunkenness, and thereby leave, as a legacy for the next generation, disease, enfeebled intellects, and polluted morals.

The continual transgression of Nature's laws is a continual transgression of the law of God. The present weight of suffering

and anguish which we see everywhere, the present deformity, decrepitude, disease, and imbecility now flooding the world, make it, in comparison to what it might be, and what God designed it should be, a lazar-house; and the present generation are feeble in mental, moral, and physical power. All this misery, accumulated from generation to generation, exists because fallen man persists in breaking the law of God.

The effort made to create a taste for the disgusting, filthy poison, tobacco, leads to the desire for stronger stimulants, as liquor, which is taken, on one plea or another, for some imaginary infirmity, or to prevent some possible disease. Thus an unnatural appetite for hurtful and exciting stimulants is created, which strengthens with one's years. The increase of intemperance in this generation is alarming; beverage-loving, liquor drinking men may be seen everywhere.

Intemperance of any kind is the worst sort of selfishness. Those who truly fear God and keep his commandments look upon these things in the light of reason and religion. How can any man or women keep the law of God, and at the same time indulge intemperate appetite, which benumbs the brain, weakens the intellect, and fills the body with disease? Intemperance inflames the passions, and gives loose rein to lust. Reason and conscience are then blinded by the lower passions.

It is not an easy matter to overcome established habits of appetite for narcotics and stimulants. In the name of Christ alone can this great victory be gained. He overcame in behalf of man in the wilderness of temptation, in the long fast of nearly six weeks. He sympathizes with the weakness of fallen man. His love for him was so great that he made an infinite sacrifice that he might reach him in his degradation, and through his divine power elevate him finally to his throne. But it rests with man whether Christ shall accomplish for him that which he has undertaken and is fully able to do.

It is a sacred duty that we owe to God to keep the spirit pure, as a temple for the Holy Ghost. If the heart and mind are devoted to the service of God; if we obey all his commandments, loving him with all the heart, might, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves, we shall be found loyal and true to the requirements of Heaven.

The apostle says, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye

should obey it in the lusts thereof." He also urges his brethren to earnest diligence and steady perseverance in their efforts for purity and holiness of life, in these words: "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we, an incorruptible."

November 7, 1878.

THE PENTECOST

WHEN JESUS opened the understanding of the disciples to the meaning of the prophecies concerning himself, he assured them that all power was given him in Heaven and on earth, and bade them go preach the gospel to every creature. The disciples, with a sudden revival of their old hope that Jesus would take his place upon the throne of David at Jerusalem, inquired, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" The Saviour threw an uncertainty over their minds in regard to the subject by replying that it was not for them "to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."

The disciples began to hope that the wonderful descent of the Holy Ghost would influence the Jewish people to accept Jesus. The Saviour forbore to farther explain, for he knew that when the Holy Spirit should come upon them in full measure their minds would be illuminated and they would fully understand the work before them, and take it up just where he had left it.

The disciples assembled in the upper chamber, uniting in supplications with the believing women, with Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. These brethren, who had been unbelieving, were now fully established in their faith by the scenes attending the crucifixion, and by the resurrection and ascension of the Lord. The number assembled was about one hundred and twenty. While they were awaiting the descent of the Holy Ghost, they supplied the office left vacant by Judas. Two men were selected, who, in the careful judgment of the believers, were best qualified for the place. But the disciples, distrusting their ability to decide the question farther, referred it to One that knew all hearts. They sought the Lord in prayer to ascertain which of the two men was more suitable for the important position of trust, as an apostle of Christ. The Spirit of God selected Matthias for the office.

Both men who had been selected were considered to be persons of stern integrity, and in every way worthy of the vacant position; but notwithstanding the disciples were intimately acquainted with them, they felt that their own judgment was imperfect, and trusted the selection only to the Lord, whose eyes could read the hidden secrets of the heart. There is a lesson for our time in this occurrence. Many who are apparently well qualified to labor for God, are urged into the ministry, without a proper consideration of their case, and at length become a grievous burden to the church instead of burden-bearers. If the church of the present time would act as cautiously and wisely as did the apostles in filling the vacancy among them, much perplexity and serious injury might be saved the cause of God. The work has often suffered much by putting persons forward to do that which they were not capable of doing.

After filling the vacancy in the apostolic number, the disciples gave their time to meditation and prayer, being often in the temple, testifying of Christ, and praising God. The Pentecost was a feast celebrated seven weeks after the Passover. Upon these occasions the Jews were required to repair to the temple and to present the first-fruits of all the harvest, thus acknowledging their dependence on the great Giver of all good, and their obligation to render back to God, in gifts and offerings to sustain his cause, that which he had entrusted to them. On this day of divine appointment, the Lord graciously poured out his Spirit on the little company of believers, who were the first-fruits of the Christian church.

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." The Holy Ghost assuming the form of tongues of fire divided at the tips, and resting upon those assembled, was an emblem of the gift which was bestowed upon them of speaking with fluency several different languages, with which they had formerly been unacquainted. And the appearance of fire signified the fervent zeal with which they would labor, and the power which would attend their words.

humble in view of their transgression, to manifest it by separating from the congregation, and in the sight of all Israel repair to the tabernacle, and he would plead with God to forgive their transgression, and receive them back again to his favor. Conviction and thorough repentance was required of ancient Israel in order to meet the standard of God. No less does God require of his people in our day. There must be genuine heart work in repentance and humiliation, in order to come under this covenant care, and protecting love of God. Unmistakable evidence is given that God is a jealous God, and that he will require of modern Israel as he did of ancient Israel, that they obey his law. For all who live upon the earth is this sacred history traced by the pen of inspiration.

June 3, 1880.

GOD'S DEALINGS WITH TRANSGRESSORS OF HIS LAW

“AND THE LORD said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swear unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, unto thy seed will I give it. And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite; unto a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiff-necked people; lest I consume thee in the way. And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned; and no man did put on him his ornaments. For the Lord had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiff-necked people. I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee; therefore, now, put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee. And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb.”

And Moses pitched the tabernacle without the camp, and all who desired to seek the Lord were commanded to separate themselves from the congregation by resorting thither.

The tabernacle here mentioned was a temporary tent arranged for the worship of God. The sanctuary, the pattern of which God gave to Moses, had not yet been built.

All who sincerely repented of their sins, made supplication unto God in confessing their sins with great humility. Then

Moses went into the tabernacle. The people watched with the deepest interest to see if God would accept his mediation in their behalf; if he condescended to meet with Moses, then they might hope that they would not be utterly consumed. When the cloudy pillar descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle, then all the people wept for joy, and rose up and worshiped, every man in his tent door. They bowed themselves upon their faces to the earth in humility. As the pillar of cloud, the token of God's presence, continued to rest at the door of the tabernacle, they knew that Moses was pleading in their behalf before God. “And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.”

“And Moses said unto the Lord, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people; and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now, therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight; and consider that this nation is thy people.” Moses was very urgent that the Lord would show him just what course to pursue in the great work before him. He deeply felt his need of divine wisdom in the guidance of Israel, that they might once more be acknowledged of God as his people.

The Lord answered the anxious inquiry of his servant with the assurance, “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” Moses entreated, “If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.” He was not willing to cease pleading with God until he should obtain the assurance that the cloudy pillar, the token of his presence, would still rest upon the tabernacle, and continue to direct their journeyings.

Moses could not endure to have his interest separated from his brethren. His earnest intercession was that the favor of God in his special presence might again be granted sinful but repenting Israel, and that the tabernacle which had been removed from the encampment of Israel because of their idolatry might be again set up in their midst and the Lord manifest his glory to the children of Israel. There Moses showed

his disinterested love for the tribes of Israel, and his genuine zeal for the honor of God. He presses his petition to God, he wants a decisive assurance then and there that the Lord would take back his people to his love, and that the breach that sinful Israel had made might be pardoned. Here Moses shows himself to be indeed a type of Christ. The Lord was in no way displeased with the importunity of Moses. He had a love for the sheep of his care. And the Lord promised that he would fully grant his request.

All truly converted souls will exercise repentance toward God, because they have broken his law. How carefully and tremblingly sinful Israel sought the pardon of God, and to be taken into divine favor. It was not merely form with this people, but earnest pleadings. Were there in our day visible manifestations of God's wrath, and sudden retribution following crime as when the punishment fell so heavily upon Israel there would be less bold presumption and defiance of God's law. Many continue in transgression, flattering their conscience that grace is so free and abundant that they will never be called to an account. But the great God is just as jealous of his law as in the days of Moses; though he bears long with perverse hearts he will surely bring to account all transgressors of his sacred law. God gave the wicked nations a time of probation. He would give them evidences of the power of the true and living God, that they might see and understand the superiority of the God of Heaven to their senseless idols. According to the light given was the condemnation. If they chose their own way before God's ways, and their own wickedness before the righteousness of God, when the decision was fully made then God's time had come to punish them.

In our day ministers and people make void, and pour contempt upon that law which is as sacred as the throne of God. Satan exults that he succeeds to so great a degree with the professedly religious world in making of no account the law of God; that law which is the foundation of God's government in Heaven and in earth. Satan knows that if he could bring about a disregard of this holy law with ministers and teachers, that Christianity will become dwarfed and sickly, true piety paralyzed. Were the churches of today sifted by fiery trials they could not bear the proving test of God. His holy law, of ten precepts, the mirror which discloses the defects in the

characters of all who consult it, would reveal that a great proportion of that which is thought to be genuine religion is very defective, having only a form of godliness, and no divine power to savor of life.

The Lord granted the earnest entreaty of his servant. And in answer to the prayer of Moses, that he might behold the divine glory, he was permitted to witness such a manifestation of God's presence as had never before been granted to man.

Moses was now directed to prepare two tables of stone, and take them with him to the summit of Sinai, where the ten commandments would be written as they had been on the broken tables. No man was to go up with him, nor was any man to be seen throughout the mount.

He obeyed the command, and "the Lord descended in a cloud, and stood with him there." The Deity proclaimed himself, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, of those that love him and keep his commandments, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."

God did not mean in his threatenings that children would be compelled to suffer for their parents' sins, but that the example of the parents would be imitated by their children. If the children of wicked parents should serve God and do righteousness, he would reward their right doing. But the effects of a sinful life by the parents are often inherited by the children. They follow in the footsteps of their parents. Sinful example has its influence from father to son, to the third and fourth generations. If parents indulge in depraved appetites, they will, in almost every case, see the same reproduced in their children. The children will develop characters similar to those of their parents. If parents are continually rebellious, and inclined to make void the law of God by precept and example, their children will generally pursue the same course. The example of God-fearing parents, who respect and honor by their own course of action God's rule of right, will be imitated by their children and their children's children; and thus the influence is seen from generation to generation. The commandments of God are only grievous to those who do not observe them.

As the Lord impressed upon the heart

of Moses a clear sense of the divine goodness, mercy, and compassion, he was filled with deep joy, and reverence for God. "And he made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped" He entreated the Lord to pardon the iniquity of his people, and take them for his inheritance. Then God graciously promised that he would make a covenant before all Israel to do great things for his people; and that he would evidence to all nations his special care and love for them.

June 10, 1880.

THE LAW AND THE SABBATH

THE LORD charged Moses to make no covenant with the people of the land whither they should go, lest they should be ensnared thereby. But they should destroy the altars of the heathen, break their images, and cut down the groves dedicated to their idols. He then commanded, "Thou shalt worship no other God; for the Lord, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God." God claims supreme worship as his due.

God promised Abraham's posterity the land of Canaan; but centuries must pass before they could enter upon their possession, "In the fourth generation, they shall come hither again, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." The Amorites inhabiting the land of Canaan, were gradually bringing upon themselves the righteous judgments of God by their iniquity. When it was fully settled that they would not be brought under the control of God's government, and when they gave themselves up to work iniquity, bringing themselves to the most conspicuous idolatry, yet God spared them, for the full measure of guilt marking them for his vengeance, had not been reached. The iniquity of the Amorites must reach its fullness before God would send forth his mandate to destroy utterly. In the fourth generation God dispossessed them to make room for his people. Here we see the long suffering of God; he allows nations a certain probation, but there is a point where their accumulated guilt will meet its punishment. Those who would make void God's law, advance from one degree of wickedness to another. Children would inherit from their parents the wicked, rebellious spirit against God and his law, and would go to greater extent in wickedness than their fathers before them until the wrath of God breaks forth upon them. The punishment was none the less certain because long delayed. God would

have us take these lessons to heart. He would have us see the principle of divine justice in his dealings, and have us understand that a record is kept of the impieties and law breaking of any people and nation with the unerring accuracy of an infinite God. Although the measure of iniquity is filling up, God still bears, he gives additional opportunities and advantages, calling to repentance and proffering pardon. Yet if they continue to refuse light, and heed not the warnings of God, his divine justice will not always bear; for these are a blot, a stain upon his universe; their iniquity will corrupt all connected with them and become wide-spread.

Special directions were given in regard to the observance of Sabbath: "Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest. In earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest." The Lord knew that Satan was continually at work to lead the Israelites to transgress the divine law, and he condescended to be very definite in his directions to his erring people, that they might not transgress his commandments for want of knowledge. In the busiest season of the year, when their fruits and grains were to be secured, they would be tempted to labor on sacred time. He would have them understand that their blessings would be increased or diminished according to their integrity of soul, or their unfaithfulness in his service.

God is no less particular now in regard to his Sabbath than when he made this requirement of the children of Israel. His eye is upon all his people, and over all the work of their hands. He will not pass by unnoticed those who crowd upon the Sabbath, and employ for their own use the time which belongs to him. Some may think they gain time by this course; but instead of being advantaged by robbing God of that which he has reserved to himself, they will lose. Many do not realize that the judgments which overtake them are from God. Though he may bear long with the transgressor the punishment will surely come at last.

Forty days and nights Moses remained in the mount, and during all this time, as at the first, he was miraculously sustained. And again the Lord "wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments." During that long time spent in communion with God, the face of Moses had reflected the glory of the divine presence; and the brightness did not cease when he descended from the mountain.

associates? Are we willing to sacrifice the approbation of men? The prize of eternal life is of infinite value. Will we put forth efforts and make sacrifices proportionate to the worth of the object to be attained?

January 4, 1883.

THE OLD YEAR AND THE NEW

ALREADY HAS the new year been ushered in; yet before we greet its coming, we pause to ask, What has been the history of the year that with its burden of records has now passed into eternity? The admonition of the apostle comes down the lines to every one of us, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." God forbid that at this important hour we should be so engrossed with other matters as to give no time to serious, candid, critical self-examination! Let things of minor consequence be put in the background, and let us now bring to the front the things which concern our eternal interests.

Christian brethren, as Christ's ambassador I entreat you to inquire into the character of your thoughts, tempers, purposes, words, and works during the past year. What has been the nature of your experience? Compare the records of your religious life with the Bible standard, and pass judgment upon yourselves. Have the fruits of righteousness testified that you are in the faith, or have the fruits that you have borne, witnessed against you? This is a subject worthy of earnest, careful thought. Be thorough and impartial in your examination of the past year's record. Do you see the defects in your character, and are you compelled to admit that you have made no decided advance in overcoming these unholy traits? Remember that if not overcome, these will surely separate you from the presence of a pure, holy, sin-hating God, and close the doors of the heavenly mansions against you.

How many have, in the past year, cherished heart-burnings and bitterness toward their brethren and sisters in the church? How many have thought and spoken unkindly of those who, like themselves, profess to be followers of Jesus? We may think we had an excuse for this; but is there any provocation of sufficient weight to excuse us in harboring unkindness and malice in our hearts? Said Jesus, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and per-

secute you." If we do not in our daily life exemplify these principles, we cannot be accepted before God. We must earnestly seek his grace to kill every fiber of the root of bitterness, and must let the love of Jesus take possession of our souls and reveal itself in our words and works, or we are not of Christ but of the wicked one.

The Church militant is not the church triumphant, and earth is not Heaven. The church is composed of erring, imperfect men and women, who are but learners in the school of Christ, to be trained, disciplined, educated for this life, and for the future, immortal life. No one of us can in our own strength represent the character of Christ; but if Jesus lives in the heart, the spirit dwelling in him will be revealed in us; all our lack will be supplied. Who will seek at the beginning of this new year to obtain a new and genuine experience in the things of God? Make your wrongs right as far as possible. Confess your errors and sins one to another. Let all bitterness and wrath and malice be put away; let patience, long-suffering, kindness, and love become a part of your very being; then whatsoever things are pure and lovely and of good report will mature in your experience. Another year with its spotless record is before us; what shall that record be?

As a people we have not realized the work which should have been done in the last days of the old year, and much of it is left undone. The excitement of the Christmas holiday is now in the past, and what has been the record that has passed up to God? As we have professed to celebrate the birth of our Saviour, have our hearts been filled with gratitude for the infinite gift of God's dear Son? Have our thoughts and affections been such as God can accept? Has Jesus been revered and honored? Has he been made prominent in our thoughts and plans? and have our gifts flowed into his treasury? Is it not true that in many instances Christ and his claims have been forgotten in the feasting and merriments, and that the honor due to him has been given to man? Have not the thoughts, the labor, and the means been diverted from the proper object, and turned into a channel to please, honor, and exalt the human, rather than the divine?

I have felt most keenly our danger as a people on these occasions. I have feared that selfishness would be strengthened, that idolatry would be encouraged, and the love of God be crowded from our hearts; that the record borne to the heavenly

courts would show that Christ was made of less consequence than earthly friends. I have feared that feasts and social gatherings would prove to be a snare of Satan to divert the mind from Christ and his great sacrifice in our behalf; that the very associations which should lead us to contemplate the work of redemption would be lost sight of in the observance of worldly customs, and that there would be less thought of Jesus and the mansions he has gone to prepare for those who love him, than upon common occasions.

I see no objection to placing even in our churches a Christmas or New Year tree bearing fruit in gifts and offerings for the cause of God. We may thus take advantage of the occasion to turn the customary gifts of the season into the right channel. And such a holiday celebration is a useful lesson to our children, teaching them to bestow their gifts in a manner to honor their Redeemer. But when we devote our means and labor to feasting ourselves, we fail to render to God that honor which is his due.

I have resolved from this time to make Christ first and last and best in everything. I will not sanction feasts made to celebrate birthday or marriage anniversaries, but will bend all my energies to lift up Jesus among the people. I will seek to impress upon the minds of my brethren and sisters the great necessity of preparation of heart, by confession and humiliation, to be accepted of God and acknowledged as his dear children. My heart has ached as I have seen men honored, while Jesus was neglected and almost forgotten,—liberal gifts for earthly friends, but poor and meager offerings for him to whom we owe our all.

Christ opened before us the bright path of peace, of joy, of Heaven; and what have we done for him on these occasions when every word and act should express our gratitude for his wondrous love? How stands the record of the past Christmas? Have we given to Jesus all that there is of us? Have we denied self that we might show our affection for our best friend? Have we made a record that we shall not be ashamed to meet in the day of final accounts? If all realized as they should the shortness of time, the backslidings of our people, the perils which beset our pathway, the deceptions of Satan, and his victories over unguarded souls, there would be no feasting, no mirthful gatherings to pay honor to the human; but there would be a great humbling of heart before God, and earnest prayer for

pardoning and sanctifying grace.

Peter, who once denied his Lord, was afterward forgiven by our Saviour, and entrusted with the work of feeding the flock of God. Yet when condemned to death, and about to suffer for Christ's sake, the apostle begged that he might not be crucified in the same position as his Lord and Master, but that he might be nailed to the cross with his head downward. He felt that it was too great an honor for him to be put to death in the same manner as his Saviour whom he had denied. Would it not be well if our consciences were more sensitive? if we could possess more of the same spirit of contrition and humility? At a time when we are professedly celebrating Christ's birth, should we not keep self in the background? Would it not be more appropriate to abase self and to exalt Jesus?

The perfection of our Saviour's character awakens the admiration of angels and of men. Here is an exhaustless theme for thought. The brightest and most exalted of the sons of the morning heralded his glory at creation, and announced his birth with songs of gladness. They veil their faces before him as he sits upon his throne; they cast their crowns at his feet, and sing his triumphs as they behold his resplendent glory. Our souls are cold and dull because we do not dwell upon the matchless charms of our Redeemer. If we occupy our thoughts in contemplating his love and mercy, we shall reflect the same in our life and character; for by beholding, we become changed. Oh, the mysteries of redemption! Only by exalting Jesus and abasing self can we celebrate aright the birth of the Son of God.

As we stand on the threshold of a new year, there is need of an impartial examination of our hearts to dispel the pleasing illusions of self-love. Our condition is helpless and hopeless unless infinite mercy is granted us daily, and pardon is written against our names in the heavenly records. Those only who see and feel their spiritual necessities will go to Jesus for that help which they so much need, and which he only can give. He alone can cleanse us from all sin. He alone can place upon us the robe of righteousness.

What fruit have we borne during the year that is now past? What has been our influence upon others? Whom have we gathered to the fold of Christ? The eyes of the world are upon us. Are we living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men? Do we follow the example of Jesus

in self-denial, in meekness, in humility, in forbearance, in cross-bearing, in devotion? Will the world be compelled to acknowledge us to be the servants of Christ? What is our past record? What will be our future record? If we cannot without pain trace the workings of our own hearts and review the record of our lives, how can we stand before the Judge of all the earth, who is infinitely pure and holy, and who will determine our cases by the unerring standard of his perfect law?

Shall we not in this new year seek to correct the errors of the past? It behooves us individually to cultivate the grace of Christ, to be meek and lowly of heart, to be firm, unwavering, steadfast in the truth; for thus only can we advance in holiness, and be made fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. Let us begin the year with an entire renunciation of self; let us pray for clear discernment, that we may understand our Saviour's claims upon us, and that we may always and everywhere be witnesses for Christ.

Our time and talents belong to God, to be used for his honor and glory. It should be our earnest, anxious effort to let the light shine through our life and character to illumine the pathway Heavenward, that souls may be attracted from the broad road to the narrow way of holiness. Oh, that the followers of Christ had less desire to devote labor, time, and money, to feasts and celebrations in honor of earthly friends, and a greater desire to honor Jesus! I entreat you to bring to him your gifts and offerings, and withhold not yourselves. Strong men are needed in the church, successful workers in the Lord's vineyard, men and women who will labor that the church may be transformed to the image of Christ, rather than conformed to the customs and practices of the world. We have everything to gain or to lose. Let us see that we are on the side of Christ—the gaining side; that we are making sure work for Heaven.

“Take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand”

“Strong in the strength which God supplies

Through his eternal Son.”

January 11, 1883.

TESTS OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

“HE THAT SAITH he abideth in Him, ought himself so to walk,

even as He walked.” “And if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Conformity to Jesus will not be unobserved by the world. It is a subject of notice and comment. Yet the Christian may not be conscious of the great change; for the more closely he resembles Christ in character, the more humble will be his opinion of himself. Those who have the deepest experience in the things of God, are the farthest removed from pride or self-exaltation. They have the humblest thoughts of self, and the most exalted conceptions of the glory and excellence of Christ. They feel that the lowest place in his service is too honorable for them.

Moses did not know that his face shone with a brightness painful and terrifying to those who had not, like himself, communed with God. Paul had a very humble opinion of his own advancement in the Christian life. He says, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.” He speaks of himself as the “chief of sinners.” Yet Paul had been highly honored of the Lord. He had been taken, in holy vision, to the third heaven, and had there received revelations of divine glory which he could not be permitted to make known.

John the Baptist was pronounced by our Saviour the greatest of prophets. Yet what a contrast between the language of this man of God and that of many who profess to be ministers of the cross. When asked if he was the Christ, John declares himself unworthy even to unloose his Master's sandals. When his disciples came with the complaint that the attention of the people was turned to the new Teacher, John reminded them that he himself had claimed to be only the forerunner of the Promised One. To Christ, as the bridegroom, belongs the first place in the affections of his people. “The friend of the bridegroom, that standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy, therefore, is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all.” “He that hath received His testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true.”

It is such workers that are needed in the cause of God today. The self-sufficient, the envious and jealous, the critical and fault-finding, can well be spared from his sacred work. God is not straitened for men or means. He calls for workers who are true and faithful, pure and holy; for those who have felt their need of the atoning blood of Christ and the sanctifying grace