Free Will, Love, and Divine Providence

Lesson 8, 1st Quarter February 15-21, 2025.

Sabbath Afternoon, February 15

Memory Text:

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." KJV—John 16:33

"God does not control our minds without our consent; but every man is free to choose what power he will have to rule over him. None have fallen so low, none are so lost, but that they may find deliverance in Christ. The demoniac, in place of prayer, could utter only the words of Satan; yet the Master's compassion appeals even to him. Not by force and in mind, though it fall of utterance in words, will he unbelieved. Those who consent to enter into covenant with God are not left to the power of Satan or to the infirmity of their own nature." MH 33.1.

"The God of providence still walks among us, His his footsteps are not seen, His His positive and direct workings are not recognized or understood. The world in its human wisdom knows not God. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world, is the Word of God, the Word manifested. It is His light that shines through His agencies. Providence and revelation work in divine harmony, revealing God as first, and last, and best in everything." ST September 26, 1900, par. 7

"Through most wonderful workings of divine providence, mountains of difficulty will be removed and cast into the sea. The message that means so much to the dwellers upon the earth will be heard and understood. Men will know what is truth. Onward and still onward the work will advance until the whole earth shall have been warned, and then shall the end come." 9T 96.2

Sunday, February 16

Our Sovereign God

Read Psalm 81:11–14; Isaiah 30:15, 18; Isaiah 66:4; and Luke 13:34. What do these texts say about the question of whether God's will is always being done?

"One who sees beneath the surface, who reads the hearts of all men, says of those who have had great light: "They are not afflicted and astonished because of their moral and spiritual condition." Yes, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that which I delighted not." "God in their midst, they say, shall not be moved; that they should believe a lie." "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." "but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Isaiah 66:3, 4; 2 Thessalonians 2:11, 10, 12. 8T 249.2

"The heavenly Teacher inquired: "What stronger delusion can beguile the mind than the pretense that you are building up a Christian dispensation and that God accepts your works, when in reality you are working out many things according to worldly policy and are sinning against Jehovah? Oh, how many are deceived by the pretense that they are building up a Christian character, when they have once known the truth in the form of godliness for the spirit and power thereof, when they suppose that they are rich and have need of no good and in need of nothing, while in reality they are in need of everything." ST 24.5

"God has not changed toward His faithful servants who are keeping their garments spotless. But many are crying, "Peace and safety," while sudden destruction is coming upon them. Unless there is thorough repentance, unless men humble their hearts by confession and receive the truth as it is in Jesus, they will never enter heaven. When purification shall take place in our ranks, we shall no longer rest at ease, boasting of being rich and increased with goods, in need of nothing. 8T 250.3

"Who can truthfully say "Our gold is tried in the fire; our garments are unspotted by the world"? I saw our instructor pointing to the garments of so-called righteousness. Stripping them off, he laid bare the defilement beneath. Then he said to me: "Can you not see how they have pretentiously covered up their defilement and rottenness of character? How is the faithful city become an harlot? My Father's house is made a house of merchandise, a place where the divine presence and glory have departed! For this cause there is weakness, and strength is lacking." 8T 250.2

Monday, February 17

Pantokrator

Read Revelation 11:17; Jeremiah 32:17–20; Luke 1:37; and Matthew 19:26. Consider also Hebrews 1:3. What do these passages teach about God's power?

"Nebuchadnezzar's armies were about to take the walls of Zion by storm. Thousands were perishing in a short space among the dead of the city. Many thousands more were dying for danger and disease. The fate of Jerusalem was already sealed. The besieging towers of the enemy's forces were already overshadowing the city. "Behold the chariots, the prophet continued, "behold the horses of God." They are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans, that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence: and what Thou hast spoken is come to pass; and, behold, Thou seest it. And Thou hast said unto me, O Lord God, buy thee a field for money, and take witnesses; for the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans." Verses 24, 25. PK 471.1

"The prophet of the prophet was seriously answered. "The word of the Lord unto Jeremiah" is that hour of distress, when the faith of the messenger of truth was being tried as by fire, was "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for Me?" Verses 26, 27. The city was soon to fall into the hand of the Chaldeans; its gates and palaces were to be set on fire and burned; but, notwithstanding, the fact that destruction was imminent and the inhabitants of Jerusalem were to be carried away captive, nevertheless the eternal purpose of Jehovah for Israel was not to fail. The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, "Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in Mine anger, and in Mine fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good: but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul." PK 472.1

"For thus saith the Lord, Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them. And fields shall be bought in this land, whereof you say, It is desolate without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans. Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal them, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the mountains, and in the cities of the valley, and in the cities of the south: for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the Lord." Verses 30-44 "PK 472.2

Tuesday, February 18

To Love God

Read Matthew 22:37 and Deuteronomy 6:4, 5. What do these verses teach about the reality of free will?

"The divine law requires us to love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves. Without the exercise of this principle there can be no obedience to the law. Romans 13:8-10."

"The law demands perfect obedience. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). Not one of those ten precepts can be broken without disloyalty to the King of heaven. The law demands from its requirements, "Do unto others" of transgression, is sin, and every sin exposes the sinner to the wrath of God. Obedience was the only condition upon which ancient Israel could hope to receive the fulfillment of the promises which made them the highly favored people of God, and obedience to that law will bring as great blessings to modern Israel. Obedience now as it would have brought to the Hebrews. 15M 218.2

"Obedience to the law is essential, not only to our salvation, but to our own happiness and the happiness of all with whom we are connected. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165), says the Inspired Word. Yet finite man will present to the people his law, which, if they do, this law of liberty, which the Creator intended to adapt to the wants of man, as a yoke of bondage, a yoke which no man can bear. But it is the sinner who regards the law as a yoke of bondage, and it is the transgressor that can see no beauty in the precepts. For the carnal mind "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). 15M 218.3

Read Hebrews 6:17, 18 and Titus 1:2. What do these texts teach about God?

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? KJV — Numbers 23:19

God's Righteousness, you see, is His integrity, His sure promises, His might to perform. He guarantees His promises they never fail. To have the Righteousness of the Lord, therefore, is to have His integrity and faithfulness, and these we can never have so long as we mistrust His promises, and are unbelieving. Oh, how many are in this condition! Why, there is no room for doubt in the greatest offense one can commit! No one can doubt God and still receive His blessings and promises. To have the Righteousness of the Lord, therefore, is to implicitly trust Him without reservation. And where does he expect us to begin? – He wants us to begin with the thing that troubles us most – the temporal things of tomorrow. He wants us to learn that we cannot serve self and God, too.

Wednesday, February 19

God's Ideal and Remedial Wills

Read Ephesians 1:9–11. What is this text saying about predestination? Are some people predestined to be saved and others to be lost?

"In the council of heaven, provision was made that men, though transgressors, should not perish in their disobedience, but, through faith in Christ as their substitute and surety, might become the elect of God, sanctified through the obedience of children by Jesus Christ to Heavenly Parents. Of this great provision of his will God wills that all men should be saved, for ample provision has been made in the great sacrifice that God has made in the gift of His Son to the world. Men are lost because they refuse to accept the salvation of God through Christ Jesus. The prince of man hinders him from accepting the provisions of salvation. But human merit will not admit a soul into the presence of God. That which will make a man acceptable to God is the imputed grace of Christ through faith in his name. No dependence can be placed in works or in happy flights of feeling as evidence that a man is accepted of God. For the sake of the Beloved, God will accept the penitent. 2T 27.1

"Jesus says, "No man cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out." What the repentant, believing sinner needs is confidence in his guilt and unworthiness, realizing that he is deserving of condemnation, and trusting in the mercy and love of Christ, he will not be turned away. The pardoning love of God is appropriated, and joyful gratitude springs up in his heart for the infinite compassion and love of God. That provision was made for him in the council of heaven before the foundation of the world, that Christ should take upon himself the penalty of man's transgression and impute to him his righteousness, overwhelms him with amazement, and calls forth from his lips words of praise and songs of gratitude." ST January 2, 1893, par. 5

"Christ is sitting for His portrait in every disciple. Every one God has predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. Christ is the Word of God, the Word of life, the Word of light, love, holiness, meekness, mercy, and truth are to be manifested to the world." GA 826.3

The informed, will know that if God wants His faithful ones sick, they will gladly suffer sickness for His sake; that if He wants them well, they will praise His holy name for health and strength to enable them to do something for the feeble, the disabled, the sick, and the suffering; that if He wants them dead, then they cannot but and will gladly die; that if He wants them living, they cannot and will not want to die; that whatever He wants, this is what they want and will gladly take. Their hope will be in Him only.

Thursday, February 20

Christ has Overcome the World

Read John 16:33. What hope, even amid tribulations, does this text offer us?

"Christ did not fail, neither was He discouraged, and His followers are to manifest a faith of the same enduring nature. They are to be as He was, not as weak as He worked, because they depend on Him as the great Master Worker. Courage, energy, and perseverance they must possess. Christ has given them a work to do, and they are to do it. They are to be men who are not relaxed of beginning difficulties, who are called upon to surmount them. They are to despair of nothing, and to hope for everything. With the golden chain of His matchless love Christ has bound them to the throne of God. It is His purpose that the highest influence in the universe, emanating from the source of all power, shall be theirs. They are to have power to resist evil, power that neither earth, nor death, nor hell can master, power that will enable them to overcome as Christ overcame. GA 675.3

"Christ designs that heaven's order, heaven's plan of government, heaven's divine harmony, shall be represented in His church on earth. Thus in His people He is glorified. Through them the Sun of Righteousness will shine in undimmed luster to the world. Christ has given to His church ample facilities, that He may receive a large revenue of glory from His redeemed, purchased possession. He has bestowed upon His people capabilities and blessings that they may represent His own sufficiency. The church, endowed with the righteousness of Christ, is His depository, in which the riches of His mercy, His grace, His love, are to appear in full and final display. Christ looks upon His people in their purity and perfection, as the reward of His humiliation, and the supplement of His joy.—Christ, the great Center, from whom radiates all glory." GC 451.1

When you therefore make the Kingdom of God your chief interest, then you will most surely find yourself in the right place at the right time, doing the right thing and reaping God's richest blessing. You can then rest assured that He will open the way and take you where you need to be even if He has to lift you out of the well, and to tell the tortoises to carry you into Egypt and to put you working in Pollyanna's house. He may even have to take you into prison before He seats you with Pharaoh on the throne. Or He may cause you to run away from Egypt and have you keep sheep around Mt. Horeb. He may bring you against the Red Sea while the Egyptians are pursuing you. He may bring you into the desert where there is neither water nor food. The lion and the bear may come to take your lambs. Goliath is left your people, and the king may cast you in the fiery furnace, or in the lions' den.

Yes, hundreds and thousands of things may happen, but he that trusts in God and does his work well shall find at these so called hindrances or nonsuch wonderful deliverances, and avenues to success, all carrying out God's marvelous plans, and God's way toward your promotion from one great thing to another. When you are in God's care and in His control never say the Devil did this or that regardless what it be, for he can do nothing except he is allowed to do it. Always give God the credit.

Friday, February 21

Further Thought

"Since Jesus came to dwell with us, we know that God is acquainted with our trials, and sympathizes with our griefs. Every son and daughter of Adam may understand that our Creator is not a God afar off, who, in the majesty of His power, sits in the heavens, regardless of what every divine and human being in the Source of our earth, we see "God with us" (Mt. 24.)

"Satan represents God's law of love as a law of selfishness. He declares that it is impossible for us to obey its precepts. The fall of our first parents, with all the woe that has resulted, he charges upon the Creator. Satan represents God as a being of arbitrary power, of cruelty, and selfishness. Jesus was to unveil this deception. As one of us he was to give an example of obedience. For this he took upon himself our nature, and yielded himself to our experiences. "In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren." Hebrews 2:17. If we had to bear anything which Jesus did not bear, he would not be our brother, and we could not regard him as our pattern. Jesus was "in all points tempted like as we are," yet he is spoken of as one who "knew no sin." He endured trial to which we are subject. And he exercised in His own behalf no power that is not freely offered to us. As man, he met temptation, and overcame in the strength given him from God. He says, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." Psalm 40:8. As he went about doing good, and healing all who were afflicted by Satan, he made plain to men the character of God's law and the nature of His service. His life testifies that it is possible for us also to obey the law of God. DA 24.1

"By His humanity, Christ touched humanity; by His divinity, He laid hold upon the throne of God. As the Son of man, He gave an example of obedience, as the Son of God, He gave power to obey. It was Christ who from the bush on Mount Horeb spoke to Moses saying, "I AM THAT I AM: ... Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." Exodus 3:14. "By His humanity, Christ touched humanity; by His divinity, He laid hold upon the throne of God. As the Son of man, He gave an example of obedience, as the Son of God, He gave power to obey. It was Christ who from the bush on Mount Horeb spoke to Moses saying, "I AM THAT I AM: ... Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." Exodus 3:14. "Christ was present with the Israelites in the wilderness, and was the source of their strength and success, all carrying out God's marvelous plans, and God's way toward your promotion from one great thing to another. When you are in God's care and in His control never say the Devil did this or that regardless what it be, for he can do nothing except he is allowed to do it. Always give God the credit.