

Chap. 7 - Sabbath Afternoon Talk

Sermon by Ellen G. White

Minneapolis, Minnesota, October 13, 1888

Text: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."
1 John 3:1.

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How can we understand God? How are we to know our Father? We are to call Him by the endearing name of Father. And how are we to know Him and the power of His love? It is through diligent search of the Scriptures. We cannot appreciate God unless we take into our souls the great plan of redemption. We want to know all about these grand problems of the soul, of the redemption of the fallen race. It is a wonderful thing that after man had violated the law of God and separated himself from God, was divorced, as it were, from God--that after all this there was a plan made whereby man should not perish, but that he should have everlasting life.

After the transgression of Adam in Eden it was Christ whom God gave to us, not that we might be saved in our sins, but that we might be saved from our sins, that we should return to our loyalty to God and become obedient children. As we yield our minds, our souls, our bodies, and our all to the controlling Spirit of God, it is then that the Spirit of truth is with us and we can become intelligent in regard to this great plan of redemption.

It is true that God gave His only-begotten Son to die for us, to suffer the penalty of the [broken] law of God. We are to consider this and dwell upon it. And when our minds are constantly dwelling upon the matchless love of God to the fallen race, we begin to know God, to become acquainted with Him, to have a knowledge of God, and of how Jesus Christ, when He came to our world, laid aside His royal robes and His kingly crown and clothed His divinity with humanity. For our sakes He became poor that we through His poverty might be made rich. The Father sent His Son here, and right here on this little atom of a world were enacted the grandest scenes that were ever known to humanity.

All the universe of heaven was looking on with intense interest. Why? The great battle was to be fought between the power of darkness and the Prince of light. Satan's work was to magnify his power constantly. Where was his power? He claimed to be the prince of the world and he exercised his power over the inhabitants of the world. Satan's power was exercised in such a masterly manner that they would not acknowledge God. Satan wanted that the children of men should get such an idea of his wonderful work that they would talk of his masterly power. In doing this he was all the time placing God in a false light.

He was presenting Him as a God of injustice, and not a God of mercy. He was constantly stirring up their minds so that they would have an incorrect view of God.

How was God to be rightly represented to the world? How was it to be known that He was a God of love, full of mercy, kindness, and pity? How was the world to know this? God sent His Son, and He was to represent to the world the character of God.

Satan has come right in and placed himself between God and man. It is his work to divert the human mind, and he throws his dark shadow right athwart our pathways, so that we cannot discern between God and the moral darkness and corruption and the mass of iniquity that is in our world. Then what are we going to do about the matter? Shall we let that darkness remain?--No. There is a power here for us that will bring in the light of heaven to our dark world. Christ has been in heaven and He will bring the light of heaven, drive back the darkness, and let the sunlight of His glory in. Then we shall see, amid the corruption and pollution and defilement, the light of heaven.

We must not give up at the defilement that is in the human race and ever keep that before the mind's eye. We must not look at that. What then are we to do? What is our work?--To behold "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." Do not let the blighting influences that are flooding the world be the picture that is before the mind, but hold up the purity and love of God. Do not hang in memory's hall pictures of all the corruption and iniquity that you can bundle together. No, do not do it. It discourages the mind. A discouraged man is good for nothing. Just get the mind off these dark pictures by talking of God's love, and you may hang memory's halls with the brightest pictures that you can imagine.

We want to keep the perfect Pattern before us. God was so good as to send a representation of Himself in His Son Jesus Christ, and we want to get the mind and heart to unfold and reach upward. Just as soon as Adam and Eve fell, their countenances fell at the sight of their miserableness. We may see our wretchedness, and we should pray that God will reveal our own hearts to us; but we should pray also that He will reveal Himself to us as a sin-pardoning Redeemer. Let yours be the prayer, Reveal Thyself to me, that in Thy matchless grace I may lay hold on the golden link, Christ, which has been let down from heaven to earth, that I may grasp it and be drawn upward.

Brethren, you have all seen on the bosom of the lake the beautiful white lily. How anxious we have been, how we have wished and worked, that we might get that blossom. No matter how much scum and debris and filth there is around it, yet that does not destroy our desire for the lily. We wonder how the lily can be so beautiful and white where there is so much filth. Well, there is a stem that strikes down to the golden sands beneath and gathers nothing but the purest substance that feeds the lily until it develops into the pure and spotless flower as we see it.

Should not this teach us a lesson? It ought to. It shows that although there is iniquity all around us we should not approach it. Do not talk of the iniquity and wickedness that are in the world, but elevate your minds and talk of your Saviour. When you see iniquity

all around you it makes you all the more glad that He is your Saviour, and we are His children. Then, shall we look at the iniquity around us and dwell upon the dark side? You cannot cure it; then talk of something that is higher, better, and more noble. Talk of those things that will leave a good impression on the mind, and will lift every soul up out of this iniquity into the light beyond.

Now, we may go into a cellar and stay there and look around into its dark corners, and we can talk of the darkness and say, "Oh, it is so dark here," and keep talking about it. But will it make it any lighter? Oh no! What are you going to do? Come out of it; come out of the dark into the upper chamber where the light of God's countenance shines brightly.

You know our bodies are made up of the food assimilated. Now, it is the same with our minds. If we have a mind to dwell on the disagreeable things of life, it will not give us any hope, but we want to dwell on the cheery scenes of heaven. Says Paul, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

While we were in Switzerland I had many letters from a sister whom I dearly love and highly esteem. In every one of these letters were the most gloomy pictures. She seemed to be dwelling on everything objectionable. Soon after I received these letters I prayed the Lord that He would give her help to turn her mind from the channel that it was running in. That night I had a dream presented to me three times. I was walking in a beautiful garden, and Sister Martha ----- was by my side. As soon as she came into the garden I said, "Martha, do you not see this beautiful garden? See, here are the lilies, the roses, and the pinks." "Yes," she said, as she looked up and smiled. Soon I looked to see where she was. I was looking at the lilies, the roses, and the pinks, and did not see her. She was in another part of the garden, and was grasping a thistle. Then she was pricking her hands on the brambles. She said they hurt her hands, and she asked, "Why do they keep all these thistles and these briars in the garden? Why do they let them stay here?"

Then there appeared before us a tall, dignified man who said, "Gather the roses, the lilies, and the pinks; discard the brambles and touch them not." Then I awoke, and when I went to sleep I dreamed the very same thing again. Three times I had the same dream, and I arose--because I could not sleep--and wrote to Sister Martha the dream I had had.

Now, said I, God does not want you to gather up everything objectionable; He wants you to look at His wonderful works and at His purity. He wants you to take a view of His matchless love and His power, to look up through the beauties of nature to nature's God. Said I, This [dream] represents your case exactly. You are dwelling on the dark side. You are talking of those things that give no light and bring no joy into your life. But you must turn your mind from these things to God. There are enough roses, pinks, and lilies in the garden of God's love so that you need not look at the briars, the thistles, and the brambles. Now, I did not see these things, because I was delighting myself with the flowers and all the beauties of the garden.

Now, that is what we want to do, brethren. We want to have our minds on the encouraging things. We want to have our minds on the new country to which we are to be introduced. Our citizenship is not of this world, but it is above, and we want to consider what characters we should possess in order to become inhabitants of that better world and associates of the saints of God in heaven.

Sister Martha took it, and her soul was lifted above discouragement. Now, I do not want Satan to succeed in throwing his dark shadow across your pathway. I want you to get away from that shadow. The Man of Calvary will throw the light of His love across your pathway and dispel the darkness. He is able to do it and will do it, for He is Lord of all. Somebody has thrown His light around you; it is Jesus Christ.

I remember when my sister Sarah, now sleeping in the grave, who attended me in my first travels, was in discouragement. She said, "I had a strange dream last night. I dreamed somebody opened the door and I was afraid of him; and as I continued to look at him he increased in size and filled the whole space from the floor to the ceiling, and I continued to grow more and more afraid. Then I thought that I had Jesus, and I said, 'I have Jesus; I am not afraid of you.' Then he began to shrink and shrink until you could scarcely see him, and he went out of the door."

It taught her a lesson. She said, "Ellen, we talk a great deal more of the power of the devil than we have any right to. It pleases him, and his satanic majesty is honored; he exults over it, and we give him honor in doing this; but," she said, "I am going to talk of Jesus, of His love, and tell of His power." And so she brought her soul right out of darkness and discouragement into light, and she bore a living testimony for God and heaven.

Now, I think our testimony would be a great deal better if we talked more of Jesus and His love and did not pay so much honor to the devil. Why should we not do it? Why not let the light of Jesus shine in our hearts?

I remember that when I was in Oakland there was a sister who was in great trouble. She said, "My mother troubles me. My father is a good man; but my mother has her eyes fixed on so many young couples where the husband is disloyal that she seems to think her husband and everyone else is disloyal. I do not know what she will do or drive him to. She thinks he is unfaithful, and she talks of it and dwells upon it till she brings all her misery on the rest of us, as though she were imposed upon, when there is no need of it at all."

Is not this the case with many of us? Do we not dwell on trifles and talk of them till our thoughts are changed to the same similitude? We can drive even our children to do wrong things by accusing them of wrongs of which they are not guilty. While we are to rebuke and exhort in all love, should we not also exalt Jesus and talk of His love?

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." It is one of Satan's devices that we should be picking up all these disagreeable things and that our minds should not be dwelling on God and His love. That is what Satan wants, that we should keep our minds occupied with these things of a

revolting character that cannot bring peace, joy, and harmony into the life--nothing but discouragement--and that we should not represent Jesus Christ.

Now, Christ left us His work when He went away, and He said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." We are not left alone in the hands of the devil. Do you think our heavenly Father would leave us alone to carry on the work of redemption and bringing up the fallen race, that He would leave us in a world flooded with evil with no help, no support, after He had endured the agonies of the cross? Do you think He will leave us now?--No! Says the Saviour, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." And again, "If I go away I will come again." "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it." This is on the condition that we keep His commandments. Is not this a blessed promise? Why do we not talk of it more and praise God for it? Here are the precious promises of the Word of God to us, and why do we not take them?

Now I want to read to you something about this love of God, and what we ought to do in order that we shall bring joy into our own hearts. Paul says, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Not in order that we might have a taste, but that we might be filled. "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness."

If we have a sense of the goodness of God in sending His Son to die for sinful man, and if we keep that interwoven into our experience and riveted in the mind, we shall have such love for those for whom Christ died that there will be no [desire for] supremacy. It is Satan that brings in these differences. While we are worshiping God there will be no hatred, no envy, no evil surmising. Brethren, we have no time for these. We cannot think of them. There is something else before us. It is the eternal weight of glory, the plan of salvation. We ought to understand it from beginning to the close, that we may present it justly to the world.

What is our work here? We are to take hold of the work just where Christ left it. What was His work? To reveal the Father to us. What is our work? To reveal Christ to the world. How can we do this? By talking of the devil? Oh no, we have a better work to do. We want to talk of the crucified and risen Saviour. Oh, what a terrible thing it would be for any of us to profess to be followers of Jesus Christ and then make a botch of it, and He find us with characters all stained with defilement. What a fearful responsibility rests upon us! How is Christ to be revealed to the world, unless it is through those who take hold on His merits, who believe in Jesus Christ, to the saving of their souls? He cleanseth me. He cleanseth me from the defilement of sin. And here let the sound be heard of what Christ has done for me. There is liberty for the sons of God. There is a wide place for my feet to stand on, and we may have the fullness of the love of God in our hearts.

I thank God that Christ has died for me and that I have been brought through a terrible ordeal of sickness and suffering of mind. It seemed as though the enemy cast a cloud of

darkness between me and my Saviour, and for twelve days it seemed that I could think of nothing but my sufferings. When I came to Oakland my heart was so weak and feeble that it seemed that a stone was lying on it. Not a particle of joy was there in it; not an emotion of gladness could I realize. But was I to think that heaven was closed to me? No! I must take the Bible, and I took the Bible and walked right out by faith, and the darkness separated from me.

When I awake in the night I begin to pray. Some three weeks ago I awoke and said, "O God, have mercy on me." I had no more than spoken when a voice by me seemed to say, "I am right by you, I have not left you." This was everything to me, and it may be just the same to you. Jesus says, I am right by you, dwelling with you, you are not alone at all. That was just the joy I experienced, and it was worth more than mountains of gold to me. I have learned to trust my Saviour, and I want to tell you that I have a Saviour, and He lives; and because He lives I shall live also.

Our lives are hid with Christ in God, and when He who is our Life shall appear, we shall appear with Him in glory. You do not need to be discouraged. Christ came to save His people from their sins. The devil will come to you and tell you that you are a sinner and cannot be saved. But Christ says He came to save sinners, and there you can meet the devil every time. Christ can pardon your sins. He says, "Come now, and let us reason together . . . : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Oh, I want you to take the rich promises of God and hang memory's halls with them. What more could you want than that promise? We have the assurance that a mother can forget her nursing child but He will not forget us. Oh, I want the promises of God to be the living pictures on memory's walls, that you can look at them. Then your heart can be filled with His grace and you may exalt Jesus and crown Him Lord of all. That is your privilege.

Now I want to read Colossians 1:12: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." There is something to be patient and long-suffering over-- "who hath delivered us from the power of darkness." Yes, we should talk of deliverance, not of bondage; we should be joyful and not cast down. "And hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Why can we not act as subjects of His kingdom? May the love of Christ burn on the altar of our hearts, and may you love Christ as your Saviour, and your brethren as yourself.

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin." Now we want to act like individuals who are redeemed by the blood of Christ; we are to rejoice in the blood of Christ and in the forgiveness of sins. That is what we are to do, and may God help us to get our minds off the dark pictures, and think on those things that will give us light.

Now I want to read another scripture: "Be careful for nothing." What does that mean? Why, don't cross a bridge before you get to it. Don't make a time of trouble before it comes.

You will get to it soon enough, brethren. We are to think of today, and if we do well the duties of today, we will be ready for the duties of tomorrow. "But in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Thanksgiving is to be brought in. "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Then we are not given over into the hands of the devil; we have a loving heavenly Father, and He has given His Son to bear our iniquity.

Now what is next? "Finally, brethren." Now, this is to each of you. It comes along down the line to our times. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things." Shall we do it? Shall we turn over a page in our religious experience and train and educate the mind so that it will not take these things that are disagreeable and think on them? Shall we think on these things that give us no power, or shall we let our minds dwell on those things that will give us a better feeling toward our brethren and elevate our souls to God? Now, there are many things that we need to bring into our lives and characters. May God help us that we may take these things to our hearts and think of them, that our minds may be elevated above earthly things.

We have seen of the grace of God since we met you last. Since last spring I have visited Lemoore, Fresno, and Selma. I was at the Selma camp meeting. During my stay there I was introduced to a tall man-- over six feet tall--and well proportioned. When he took my hand he seemed much affected and said, "I am so glad to meet you; I am thankful that I can speak with you." After going into the tent a brother came in and said, "That man has a history." Then he went on and told how a year before he had been converted; how he had once kept the Sabbath but had gone back, and how he claimed that he never had been converted. Then after he gave up the truth he went back into the company of hard cases, and Satan took complete possession of him. Two or three were linked with him in his wickedness--men who would not want it to be known that they were in such business. They stole and did wickedness in every way.

He was not a licentious man; he had a wife and he respected her. She was a Sabbathkeeper, and he would not allow a word to be said against her. This was the position he took; he loved her, but not enough to stop his evil course. He did not care for the spoil of his robberies, but did it for the enjoyment he found in it. Well, Elder [E.P.] Daniels was holding meetings, and he was speaking on confession. What was said seemed to take hold of this man's mind, and he could not resist. He seemed to turn white, and then left the tent. He could not stand it. He went out and then he came back again. This he did three times; he looked as if he were going to faint away.

After the meeting had closed he said, "I must talk to you, sir." He told Elder Daniels his condition and said, "Is there any hope for me? I am a lost man; I am undone; I am a sinner. Will you pray for me? I dare not leave this place to go home for fear the Lord will cut me down in my sins." He said he could not stay in the tent, and went out again and

again, but did not dare remain outside for fear the power of the devil should fasten on him and that would be the last of him.

"They prayed for him, and the man was converted right there. The defiant look was gone; his countenance was changed. "Now," said he, "I have a work to do. I stole thirty-one sheep from that man in Selma, and I must go and confess to him." Elder Daniels was afraid to have it known for fear they would shut him up. He said he would rather go to prison and stay there than to think that Christ had not forgiven his sin. So he started, with a young man who before this was engaged with him in thefts, to go and see the man. He met the man on the road and stopped him. The man commenced to shake like an aspen leaf. He was an infidel. Well, he got on his knees before them in the road and begged to be forgiven. The man asked, "Where did you get this? What has brought you into this state? I did not know that there was any such religion as this." They told him that they had been down to the camp meeting, and heard it preached there. "Well," said he, "I will go over to that meeting."

They confessed to having burned houses and barns. And they went to the grand jury and confessed to having stolen here and there. Mind, they confessed to the authorities. They said, "We deliver ourselves up. Do with us as you see fit." So the case was considered in court, and they had a council over the matter. One suggested that they better put those men through. The judge looked at him and said, "What, put him through? Put a man through that God is putting through? Would you take hold of a man that God is taking hold of? Whom God's forgiving power has taken hold of? Would you do that? No, I would rather have my right arm cut off to the shoulder." Something got hold of those men so that they all wept as children.

The report of that experience went everywhere. People thought that there was a power in this truth that was in nothing else--a power that shows that Jesus lives. We have seen the power of His grace manifested in many cases in a remarkable manner.

Now, whenever we can see anything encouraging, put it in the paper, and talk about it. Why talk of Satan's great power and his wonderful works, and say nothing of the majesty and goodness and mercy of our God which falls to the ground unnoticed? Pick these up, brethren, with consecrated hands, pick them up. Hold them high before the world. Talk of the love of God and dwell upon it; thank Him for it. Open the doors of your hearts and show forth your gratitude and love. Clear away this rubbish which Satan has piled before the door of your heart and let Jesus come in and occupy. Talk of His goodness and power.

You know how it was with Moses. He felt that he must have an answer to his prayer. He realized the responsibility of leading the people out of Egypt, but he did not go and pick up everything objectionable and dwell on it. He knew they were a stiff-necked people, and he said, "Lord, I must have Thy presence"; and the Lord said, "My presence shall go with thee." You remember Moses went into the wilderness and stayed forty years, during which time he put away self, and that made room so that he could have the presence of God with him.

He thought if he could have the presence of God's glory it would help him to carry on this great work. He says, "Shew me thy glory." Now that was a man of faith, and God did not rebuke him. God did not call it presumption, but He took that man of faith and put him into the cleft of the rock and put His hand over the rock and showed him all the glory that he could endure. He made His goodness to pass before him, and showed him His goodness, His mercy, and His love. If we want God's glory to pass before us, if we want to have memory's halls hung with the promises of love and mercy, we want to talk of His glory and tell of His power. And if we have dark and miserable days we can commit these promises to memory and take our minds off discouragement. It would please the devil to think he has bothered us; but we want to talk of Jesus and His love and His power, because we have nothing better to talk of.

Now, brethren and sisters, let us hope in God. Let gratitude enter into our hearts, and while we may have to bear plain testimony to separate from sin and iniquity, we do not want to be hammering upon that string forever. We want to lift up these souls that are cast down; we want them to catch that love of God and know that He will put His everlasting arms beneath them. Brethren and sisters, we want to look up; not down, but upward, upward, lifting the soul higher and still higher. I want these blessings and I will not rest satisfied until I am filled with all the fullness of God. Nothing can be greater than that, can it?

We want to be in that position where we shall perfect a Christian character and represent Jesus Christ to the world. Christ was sent as our pattern and shall we not show that we have all His love and kindness and all His charms? And the love of Jesus Christ will take possession of our characters and our lives, and our conversation will be holy, and we will dwell on heavenly things.

I believe that Jesus is interested in all this assembly. He is here today. He says, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." He is with you and that to bless. We want the blessing, and why should we not have it? We are to meet the moral darkness that is in the world, and we must meet it as Christ did. We must reveal Christ to all who are around us. When we do this work we are abiding in Christ and Christ is abiding in us, not only when we speak of Him, but He is with us all the time to help us on every point, to press back the power of moral darkness.

"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." He is not your enemy, He is your best Friend, and He wishes us to show to the world that we have a God. He wants us to show that we have Jesus with us, and He is stronger than the strong man armed. Therefore, let us elevate our minds and our conversation and seek for heaven and heavenly things. God help us when we are in this position, that we shall not be seeking after earthly things, but that we shall be charmed with the things of heaven. We want to "behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be:

but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

I look over this congregation, and you look like discouraged men, like men who have been fighting with the powers of darkness; but courage, brethren! There is hope! "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

Oh, I love Him. I love Him, for He is my love. I see in Him matchless charms, and oh, how I want that we shall enter in through the gates into the city. Then shall every crown be taken off from every head and cast at the feet of Jesus our blessed Redeemer. He has purchased it for me; He has purchased it for you, and we shall acknowledged Him Lord of all. And we shall cast all our honor at His feet and crown Him Lord of all. We shall shout, "Glory to God in the highest." I wish we would learn to praise Him more. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth" God. I wish you would talk of it. I wish you would educate your hearts and lips to praise Him, to talk of His power and glory. I wish you would tell of His power. When you do it you are elevating your Saviour, and when you lift that standard up against your enemy he will flee from you. God help us to praise Him more and to be found faultless.--Manuscript 7, 1888.