

Review and Herald, September 28, 1897
Preach the Word.
By Mrs. E. G. White.

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." {RH, September 28, 1897 par. 1}

The word of God is like a treasure-house. It is a light that shineth in darkness. It is better to neglect anything of a temporal nature than to neglect to search the Scriptures. God has appointed that through the study of the Bible, important truth shall be communicated to his human agents. My heart aches as I see that even among those who claim to be looking for Christ's appearing in the clouds of heaven, there are those who permit their minds to be taken up with that which is merely fictitious. The world is full of such books, but God has given us a definite work to do, and we are not to turn to side issues, and employ time and workers in selling books that give no light. Christianity is an intensely practical thing, and those who have put on Christ should walk even as he walked. We should be wholly engaged in the work of God. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?" {RH, September 28, 1897 par. 2}

God does not generally work miracles to advance his truth. If the husbandman neglects to cultivate the soil after sowing his seed, God works no miracle to counteract the sure result of neglect. In the harvest he will find his field barren. God works according to great principles which he has presented to the human family, and it is our part to mature wise plans, and set in operation the means whereby God shall bring about certain results. Those who make no decided effort, but simply wait for the Holy Spirit to compel them to action, will perish in darkness. We would ask those who are waiting for a miracle, What means have been tried which God has placed within your reach? We would ask those who are hoping for some supernatural work to be done, who simply say, "Believe, believe," Have you submitted yourself to the revealed command of God? The Lord has said, "Thou shalt," and, "Thou shalt not." Let all study the parable of the talents, and realize that to every man God has given his work,—to every man he has entrusted his talents, that by exercising his ability, he may increase his efficiency. You are not to sit still, and do nothing in the work of God. There is work, earnest work, to be done for the Master in overcoming evil habits that are condemned in the word of God, and in doing those good things that are there commanded. Individually, you must battle against evil, wrench yourself from all hurtful associations, study God's word, and pray for divine aid to war against the world, the flesh, and the devil. You need daily light from God to fight the good fight of faith. {RH, September 28, 1897 par. 3}

He who does nothing until he feels especially compelled to do something for God, will never do anything. God has given his word, and is this not sufficient? Can you not hear his voice in his word? If you will use God's appointed means, and diligently search the Scriptures, having a determined purpose to obey the truth, you will know the doctrine whether it be of God; but God will never work a miracle to compel you to see his truth. God, in giving his only begotten Son to die on Calvary's cross, has made it possible for all men to be saved. Christ died for a ruined world, and through the merit of Christ, God has elected that man should have a second trial, a second probation, a second test as to whether he will keep the commandments of God, or walk in the path of transgression, as did Adam. Through an infinite sacrifice, God has made it possible that men shall practise holiness in this life. Those who would ascertain their election for the future life, may ascertain it by their attitude of obedience to the commandments of God. Strong emotions, strong impulses, or desires, for heaven, when listening to a description of the charms of a future life, will not prove that you are elected to sit down with Jesus Christ upon his throne. If you would know the mystery of godliness, you should follow that which has been revealed. The conditions of eternal life have been plainly stated. Jesus says: "If ye love me, keep my commandments. . . . He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. . . . If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings:

and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." Here are the conditions upon which every soul may be elected to eternal life. Your obedience to God's commandments will prove that you are predestinated to a glorious inheritance. You are elected to be laborers together with God, to work in harmony with Christ, to wear his yoke, to lift his burden, and to follow in his footsteps. You have been provided with means whereby you may ascertain what to do to make your calling and election sure. Search the Scriptures, and you will find that not a son or daughter of Adam is elected to be saved in disobedience to God's commandments. {RH, September 28, 1897 par. 4}

Should God save men in disobedience, after granting them a second probation, putting them to the test in this life, they would fail to regard his authority in the future life. Those who are disloyal to Christ in this world would be disloyal to him in the world to come, and would create a second rebellion in heaven. Men have the history of Adam's disobedience and fall before them, and because of this they should be warned against venturing to transgress the law of God. Jesus Christ has died in order that all men may have a chance to make their calling and election sure; but the standard of righteousness in this gospel age is no less than it was in the days of Adam, and heaven will be the reward of obedience. {RH, September 28, 1897 par. 5}

The world is making void the law of God, but Christians are elected to faith, loyalty, and sanctification. They are elected to obey the commandments of God, although in so doing they must lift the cross. {RH, September 28, 1897 par. 6}

The Bible, just as it reads, is to be our guide. Nothing is so calculated to enlarge the mind and strengthen the intellect as the study of the Bible. No other study will so elevate the soul and give vigor to the faculties as the study of the living oracles. The minds of thousands of ministers of the gospel are dwarfed because they are permitted to dwell upon commonplace things, and are not exercised in searching for the hidden treasure of the word of God. As the mind is brought to the study of God's word, the understanding will enlarge, and the higher powers will develop for the comprehension of high and ennobling truth. It is according to the character of the matter with which the mind becomes familiar that it is dwarfed or enlarged. If the mind is not raised up to make vigorous and persistent effort in seeking to comprehend truth by comparing scripture with scripture, it will surely become contracted and lose its tone. We should set our minds to the task of searching for truths that do not lie directly upon the surface. {RH, September 28, 1897 par. 7}

Ministers who are teaching Bible truths for this time are bearing to the people a message of a most solemn character, and they need to discipline the mind in order that they may comprehend the grand theme of redemption. They should understand from what man is to be redeemed, and how he is to be brought back to the paradise of God. It was through disobedience that men fell; but will continued disobedience make him acceptable to God? Will continual transgression make him a fit subject of heaven? Let ministers preach the word of God. "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." Ministers are not to preach men's opinions, not to relate anecdotes, get up theatrical performances, not to exhibit self, but as though they were in the presence of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, they are to preach the word. Let them not bring levity into the work of the ministry, but let them preach the word in a manner that will leave a most solemn impression upon those who hear. Let them not present their own ideas and fanciful notions as God's word, but let them present the pure word of God, in all sincerity. {RH, September 28, 1897 par. 8}

Paul mentions some ministers who wrest the Scriptures, but when they shall appear before the Judge of all the earth to answer for their work, they will wish that they had not handled the word of God deceitfully. The Lord's faithful ministers will heed the injunction given to Timothy, "Be instant in season, out of season." "They will seize opportunities in season at their appointments, and out of season when in private places by the wayside, or in families where they shall visit. Through personal labor they will press the truth home upon the conscience with all earnestness, declaring in fervency of spirit that, if heeded, it will work man's salvation, and if neglected, his condemnation. They must not only warn men, but reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. Many, many opportunities are unimproved because ministers consider the occasion as one out of season; but even under forbidding circumstances, the Lord may fasten the word of truth into the conscience of the hearer. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." {RH, September 28, 1897 par. 9}

Satan can furnish men with endless excuses and evasions to cause them to neglect the duty of speaking words of warning to those who are erring, and of presenting the truth as it is in Jesus to souls who are perishing. The minister who loves to sermonize will be in danger of preaching to a great length, as though a multitude of words was all-essential, and thus he will become so weary that he will have neither disposition nor strength to engage in personal effort when he has an opportunity of coming heart to heart with his hearers. The minister should be ready to open the Bible, and according as circumstances shall require, read reproof, rebuke, warning, or comfort to those who listen. He should teach the truth, rightly dividing the word, suiting out portions that will be as meat in due season to those with whom he associates. Too many ministers neglect to deal faithfully with those with whom they come in contact. They leave plain dealing to be done by other ministers: for they do not want to run the risk of losing the friendship of those for whom they labor. If ministers would deal at the right time with those who err, they would prevent an accumulation of wrong, and save souls from death. If the work of reproofing is neglected by one minister, and taken up by another, those who are reproofed, receive the impression that the minister who did not point out their errors was a good minister. But this is not the case; he was merely a preacher, not a worker together with God for the suppression of sin. In the meekness of Jesus, you should do the work which will give full proof of your ministry. You should show a heartfelt sorrow for sin, but manifest no unholy passion in reproofing the error. All your efforts must be made with long-suffering and doctrine; and if you see but meager results of your work, do not be discouraged. This experience will call for the manifestation of long-suffering and patience. Keep working, be discreet, be discerning, understand when to speak and when to keep silence. {RH, September 28, 1897 par. 10}

Paul charged Timothy to "preach the word," but there was yet another part to be done,--"to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." This work cannot be neglected with safety. Ministers must be instant in season and out of season, watching for souls as they that must give an account. They must exercise great carefulness. Watch in all things, watch for the devices of Satan, lest you be beguiled from doing the disagreeable part of the work. Difficulties must not intimidate or discourage you. Having well-balanced minds and established characters, meet the difficulties, and in overcoming them gain a rich experience. Do the work of an evangelist,--water and cultivate the seed already sown. When a new church has been raised up, it should not be left destitute of help. The minister should develop the talent in the church, that meetings may be profitably kept up. Timothy was commanded to go from church to church, as one who should do this kind of work, and build up the churches in the most holy faith. He was to do the work of an evangelist, and this is an even more important work than that of the ministers. He was to preach the word, but he was not to be settled over one church. {RH, September 28, 1897 par. 11}

Be determined that you will not shun the disagreeable part of the work, and by unfaithfulness be a partner to the ruin of some human soul. If we are Christians indeed, we shall have in us the spirit of Him who died for the perishing. We shall love the erring and the sinner too well to flatter him, and thus encourage him in his course of wrongdoing. We must watch for souls as they that must give an account. We must be sure that we display that love that is holy and sanctified, not that favor which savors of sentimentalism. There is an abundance of this counterfeit current in the world; but it is not current with God. We must unfurl the banner which the Eternal has given to us to be displayed in the world. If we are true to God in minor matters, we shall have a holy boldness when we are called upon to make wise decisions, and shall be enabled to have a close walk with God, and be laborers together with God.

{RH, September 28, 1897 par. 12}