**Lesson 2 Sabbath, January 14, 2023**

**The Powerful Word of God**

***MEMORY TEXT: “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10).***

“Temptations often appear irresistible because, through neglect of prayer and the study of the Bible, the tempted one cannot readily remember God’s promises and meet Satan with the Scripture weapons.”—*The Great Controversy,* p. 600.

**Suggested Reading: Fundamentals of Christian Education, pp. 123-128. (At the bottom of this page)**

***Sunday January 8***

**1. SOLDIERS OF THE CROSS**

**a. Of what must we constantly be aware in our sojourn on earth? 1 Peter 5:8. How does Paul therefore compare the life of a Christian? 2 Timothy 2:3.**

**1 Peter 5:8**  Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

**2 Timothy 2:3** Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

“Nothing can be more helpless, nothing can be more dependent, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly upon the merits of the blood of a crucified and risen Saviour. The Christian life is a life of warfare, of continual conflict. It is a battle and a march. But every act of obedience to Christ, every act of self-denial for His sake, every trial well endured, every victory gained over temptation, is a step in the march to the glory of final victory.”—*That I May Know Him,* p. 253.

**b. How only can we be victorious at the end? Ephesians 6:11–17.**

**Ephesians 6:11-17** Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. **12**For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. **13**Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. **14**Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; **15**And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

**16**Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. **17**And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

“Those who will put on the whole armor of God and devote some time every day to meditation and prayer and to the study of the Scriptures will be connected with heaven and will have a saving, transforming influence upon those around them. Great thoughts, noble aspirations, clear perceptions of truth and duty to God, will be theirs. . . . This class will have a sanctified boldness to come into the presence of the Infinite One. They will feel that heaven’s light and glories are for them, and they will become refined, elevated, ennobled by this intimate acquaintance with God. Such is the privilege of true Christians.”—*Testimonies for the Church,* vol. 5, pp. 112, 113.

***Monday January 9***

**2. POWER IN THE WORD**

**a. How penetrating is the Word when truly received into the soul? Hebrews 4:12.**

**Hebrews 4:12**For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

“The words of inspiration, pondered in the heart, will be as streams flowing from the river of the water of life. Our Saviour prayed that the minds of the disciples might be opened to understand the Scriptures. And whenever we study the Bible with a prayerful heart, the Holy Spirit is near to open to us the meaning of the words we read.”—*Our High Calling,* p. 205.

“Practical truth must be brought into the life, and the Word, like a sharp, two-edged sword, must cut away the surplus of self that there is in our characters.

“The Word makes the proud humble, the perverse meek and contrite, the disobedient obedient. The sinful habits natural to man are interwoven with the daily practice. But the Word cuts away the fleshly lusts. It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the mind. It divides the joints and marrow, cutting away the lusts of the flesh, making men willing to suffer for their Lord.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary [E. G. White Comments],* vol. 7, p. 928.

**b. In the beginning, how quickly did the Word create the heaven and the earth? Genesis 1:1; Psalm 33:6, 9.**

**Genesis 1:1**  In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

**Psalm 33:6, 9**By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. **9**For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.

**c. From what material did God create the worlds using His word? Hebrews 11:3. After creating the worlds, did God leave the creation to fend for itself? Hebrews 1:3.**

**Hebrews 11:3** Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

**Hebrews 1:3** Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high:

“The same creative energy that brought the world into existence is still exerted in upholding the universe and continuing the operations of nature. The hand of God guides the planets in their orderly march through the heavens. It is not because of inherent power that year by year the earth continues her motion round the sun and produces her bounties. The word of God controls the elements. He covers the heavens with clouds and prepares rain for the earth. He makes the valleys fruitful and ‘grass to grow upon the mountains;’ Psalm 147:8. It is through His power that vegetation flourishes, that the leaves appear and the flowers bloom.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students,* pp. 185, 186.

***Tuesday January 10***

**3. RECOGNIZING SIN**

**a. What was David’s desire after he had committed the sin against God and against Bathsheba? Psalm 51:1–4.**

**Psalm 51:1-4**Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. **2**Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. **3**For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. **4**Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

**b. In reading David’s expressions of repentance preserved in the divine record, which were his deepest concerns—the consequences he would face—or restoring his relationship with God? Psalm 51:5–10.**

**Psalm 51:5-10** Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. **6**Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. **7**Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. **8**Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. **9**Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. **10**Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

“For a whole year after his fall David lived in apparent security; there was no outward evidence of God’s displeasure. But the divine sentence was hanging over him. Swiftly and surely a day of judgment and retribution was approaching, which no repentance could avert, agony and shame that would darken his whole earthly life. Those who, by pointing to the example of David, try to lessen the guilt of their own sins, should learn from the Bible record that the way of transgression is hard. Though like David they should turn from their evil course, the results of sin, even in this life, will be found bitter and hard to bear.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets,* pp. 723, 724.

“David’s repentance was sincere and deep. There was no effort to palliate his crime. No desire to escape the judgments threatened, inspired his prayer. But he saw the enormity of his transgression against God; he saw the defilement of his soul; he loathed his sin. It was not for pardon only that he prayed, but for purity of heart. David did not in despair give over the struggle. In the promises of God to repentant sinners he saw the evidence of his pardon and acceptance.”—*Ibid.,* p.725.

“David was pardoned of his transgression because he humbled his heart before God in repentance and contrition of soul, and believed that God’s promise to forgive would be fulfilled. He confessed his sin, repented, and was reconverted. In the rapture of the assurance of forgiveness, he exclaimed, ‘Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.’ Psalm 32:1, 2. The blessing comes because of pardon; pardon comes through faith that the sin, confessed and repented of, is borne by the great Sin Bearer. Thus from Christ cometh all our blessings. His death is an atoning sacrifice for our sins. He is the great Medium through whom we receive the mercy and favor of God.”—*Our High Calling,* p. 83.

***Wednesday January 11***

**4. POWER TO CHANGE A HUMAN HEART**

**a. What gives hope of the possibility to transform the filthy, sinful life into one of purity? Job 14:4; Jeremiah 13:23; Ezekiel 36:26, 27.**

**Job 14:4**  Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.

**Jeremiah 13:23** Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.

**Ezekiel 36:26-27**A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. **27**And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

“It is true that there may be an outward correctness of deportment without the renewing power of Christ. The love of influence and the desire for the esteem of others may produce a well-ordered life. Self-respect may lead us to avoid the appearance of evil. A selfish heart may perform generous actions. By what means, then, shall we determine whose side we are on?”—*Steps to Christ,* p. 58.

“God has provided abundant means for successful warfare against the evil that is in the world. The Bible is the armory where we may equip for the struggle.”—*The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 502.

**b. What is the only way for the corrupt human heart to be changed into one that delights in righteousness? John 3:3.**

**John 3:3**Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

“The things they once hated they now love, and the things they once loved they hate. The proud and self-assertive become meek and lowly in heart. The vain and supercilious become serious and unobtrusive. The drunken become sober, and the profligate pure.”—*Steps to Christ,* p. 58.

**c. What are the evidences of that change? Galatians 5:22, 23.**

**Galatians 5:22-23**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, **23**Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

“The old nature, born of blood and the will of the flesh, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The old ways, the hereditary tendencies, the former habits, must be given up; for grace is not inherited. The new birth consists in having new motives, new tastes, new tendencies. Those who are begotten unto a new life by the Holy Spirit, have become partakers of the divine nature, and in all their habits and practices they will give evidence of their relationship to Christ. When men who claim to be Christians retain all their natural defects of character and disposition, in what does their position differ from that of the worldling? They do not appreciate the truth as a sanctifier, a refiner. They have not been born again.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary [E. G. White Comments],* vol. 6, p. 1101.

***Thursday January 12***

**5. BORN BY THE WORD OF GOD**

**a. What has power to make such a radical change in the heart of a corrupt, wicked individual? Romans 1:16; John 1:1; 15:3; 1 Peter 1:23.**

**Romans 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

**John 1:1**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

**John 15:3**Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

**1 Peter 1:23**Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

“The Bible is the most wonderful of all histories, for it is the production of God, not of the finite mind. It carries us back through the centuries to the beginning of all things, presenting the history of times and scenes which would otherwise never have been known. It reveals the glory of God in the working of His providence to save a fallen world. It presents in the simplest language the mighty power of the gospel, which, received, would cut the chains that bind men to Satan’s chariot.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education,* p. 377.

**b. What does the Word activate in us, and why is that so necessary for a victorious life? Romans 10:17; 1 John 5:4. How do we maintain that same type of victory for the rest of our lives? Colossians 2:6.**

**Romans 10:17**  So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

**1 John 5:4** For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

**Colossians 2:6** As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

“As faith thus receives and assimilates the principles of truth, they become a part of the being and the motive power of the life. The word of God, received into the soul, molds the thoughts, and enters into the development of character.

“By looking constantly to Jesus with the eye of faith, we shall be strengthened. God will make the most precious revelations to His hungering, thirsting people. They will find that Christ is a personal Saviour. As they feed upon His word, they find that it is spirit and life. The word destroys the natural, earthly nature, and imparts a new life in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit comes to the soul as a Comforter. By the transforming agency of His grace, the image of God is reproduced in the disciple; he becomes a new creature. Love takes the place of hatred, and the heart receives the divine similitude.”—*The Desire of Ages,* p. 391.

***Friday January 13***

**PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS**

**1. How serious is the Christian’s warfare with evil?**

**2. What important place does the Word have in this warfare?**

**3. How is it possible to understand the depth of the destructive nature of sin?**

**4. How does the transformation of the soul take place?**

**5. How do we maintain our relationship with Christ?**

**Suggested Reading: Fundamentals of Christian Education, pp. 123-128.**

“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, throughly furnished unto all good works.” The word of God is like a treasure house, containing everything that is essential to perfect the man of God. We do not appreciate the Bible as we should. We do not have a proper estimate of the richness of its stores, nor do we realize the great necessity of searching the Scriptures for ourselves. Men neglect the study of the word of God in order to pursue some worldly interest, or to engage in the pleasures of the time. Some trivial affair is made an excuse for ignorance of the Scriptures given by inspiration of God. But anything of an earthly character might better be put off, than this all-important study, that is to make us wise unto eternal life. **(FE 123.1)**

My heart aches as I see men—even those who profess to be looking for Christ’s coming—devoting their time and talents to circulating books that contain nothing concerning the special truths for our time,—books of narrative, books of biography, books of men’s theories and speculations. The world is full of such books; they can be had anywhere; but can the followers of Christ engage in so common a work when there is crying need for God’s truth on every hand? It is not our mission to circulate such works. There are thousands of others to do this, who have as yet no knowledge of anything better. We have a definite mission, and we ought not to turn from it to side issues, employing men and means to bring to the attention of the people books that have no bearing upon the present truth. **(FE 123.2)**

Do you pray for the advancement of the truth? Then work for it, and show that your prayers rise from sincere and earnest hearts. God does not work miracles where He has provided means by which the work may be accomplished. Use your time and talents in His service, and He will not fail to work with your efforts. If the farmer fails to plow and sow, God does not work a miracle to undo the results of his neglect. Harvest time finds his fields barren—there are no sheaves to be reaped, no grain to be garnered. God provided the seed and the soil, the sun and the rain; and if the agriculturist had employed the means that were at his hand, he would have received according to his sowing and his labor. **(FE 123.3)**

There are great laws that govern the world of nature, and spiritual things are controlled by principles equally certain; the means for an end must be employed, if the desired results are to be obtained. Those who make no decided efforts themselves, are not working in harmony with the laws of God. They are not using the provisions of the heavenly Father, and they can expect nothing but meager returns. The Holy Spirit will not compel men to take a certain course of action. We are free moral agents; and when sufficient evidence has been given us as to our duty, it is left with us to decide our course. **(FE 124.1)**

You who are waiting in idle expectation that God will perform some wonderful miracle to enlighten the world in regard to the truth, I want to ask you if you have employed the means God has provided for the advancement of His cause? You who pray for light and truth from heaven, have you studied the Scriptures? Have you desired “the sincere milk of the word,” that you may grow thereby? Have you submitted yourselves to the revealed command? “Thou shalt,” and “thou shalt not,” are definite requirements, and there is no place for idleness in the Christian life. You who mourn your spiritual dearth, do you seek to know and to do the will of God? Are you striving to enter in at the strait gate? There is work, earnest work, to be done for the Master. The evils condemned in God’s word, must be overcome. You must individually battle against the world, the flesh and the devil. The word of God is called “the sword of the Spirit,” and you should become skillful in its use, if you would cut your way through the hosts of opposition and darkness. **(FE 124.2)**

Wrench yourself away from hurtful associations. Count the cost of following Jesus, and make it, with a determined purpose to cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. Eternal life is worth your all, and Jesus has said, “Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple.” He who does nothing, but waits to be compelled by some supernatural agency, will wait on in lethargy and darkness. God has given His word. God speaks in unmistakable language to your soul. Is not the word of His mouth sufficient to show you your duty, and to urge its fulfillment? **(FE 125.1)**

Those who humbly and prayerfully search the Scriptures, to know and to do God’s will, will not be in doubt of their obligations to God. For “if any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.” If you would know the mystery of godliness, you must follow the plain word of truth,—feeling or no feeling, emotion or no emotion. Obedience must be rendered from a sense of principle, and the right must be pursued under all circumstances. This is the character that is elected of God unto salvation. The test of a genuine Christian is given in the word of God. Says Jesus, “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.” **(FE 125.2)**

Here are the conditions upon which every soul will be elected to eternal life. Your obedience to God’s commandments will prove your right to an inheritance with the saints in light. God has elected a certain excellence of character; and every one who, through the grace of Christ, shall reach the standard of His requirement, will have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of glory. All who would reach this standard of character, will have to employ the means that God has provided to this end. If you would inherit the rest that remaineth for the children of God, you must become a co-laborer with God. You are elected to wear the yoke of Christ,—to bear His burden, to lift His cross. You are to be diligent “to make your calling and election sure.” Search the Scriptures, and you will see that not a son or a daughter of Adam is elected to be saved in disobedience to God’s law. The world makes void the law of God; but Christians are chosen to sanctification through obedience to the truth. They are elected to bear the cross, if they would wear the crown. **(FE 125.3)**

The Bible is the only rule of faith and doctrine. And there is nothing more calculated to energize the mind, and strengthen the intellect, than the study of the word of God. No other book is so potent to elevate the thoughts, to give vigor to the faculties, as the broad, ennobling truths of the Bible. If God’s word were studied as it should be, men would have a breadth of mind, a nobility of character, and a stability of purpose, that is rarely seen in these times. Thousands of men who minister in the pulpit are lacking in essential qualities of mind and character, because they do not apply themselves to the study of the Scriptures. They are content with a superficial knowledge of the truths that are full of rich depths of meaning; and they prefer to go on, losing much in every way, rather than to search diligently for the hidden treasure. **(FE 126.1)**

The search for truth will reward the seeker at every turn, and each discovery will open up richer fields for his investigation. Men are changed in accordance with what they contemplate. If commonplace thoughts and affairs take up the attention, the man will be commonplace. If he is too negligent to obtain anything but a superficial understanding of God’s truth, he will not receive the rich blessings that God would be pleased to bestow upon him. It is a law of the mind, that it will narrow or expand to the dimensions of the things with which it becomes familiar. The mental powers will surely become contracted, and will lose their ability to grasp the deep meanings of the word of God, unless they are put vigorously and persistently to the task of searching for truth. The mind will enlarge, if it is employed in tracing out the relation of the subjects of the Bible, comparing scripture with scripture, and spiritual things with spiritual. Go below the surface; the richest treasures of thought are waiting for the skilful and diligent student. **(FE 126.2)**

Those who are teaching the most solemn message ever given to the world, should discipline the mind to comprehend its significance. The theme of redemption will bear the most concentrated study, and its depth will never be fully explored. You need not fear that you will exhaust this wonderful theme. Drink deep of the well of salvation. Go to the fountain for yourself, that you may be filled with refreshment, that Jesus may be in you a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life. Only Bible truth and Bible religion will stand the test of the judgment. We are not to pervert the word of God to suit our convenience, and worldly interests, but to honestly inquire, “What wilt Thou have me to do?” “Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price.” And what a price! Not “with corruptible things, as silver and gold, ... but with the precious blood of Christ.” When man was lost, the Son of God said, I will redeem him, I will become his surety and substitute. He laid aside His royal robes, clothed His divinity with humanity, stepped down from the royal throne, that He might reach the very depth of human woe and temptation, lift up our fallen natures, and make it possible for us to be overcomers, the sons of God, the heirs of the eternal kingdom. Shall we then allow any consideration of earth to turn us away from the path of truth? Shall we not challenge every doctrine and theory, and put it to the test of God’s word? **(FE 127.1)**

We should not allow any argument of man’s to turn us away from a thorough investigation of Bible truth. The opinions and customs of men are not to be received as of divine authority. God has revealed in His word what is the whole duty of man, and we are not to be swayed from the great standard of righteousness. He sent His only-begotten Son to be our example, and bade us to hear and follow Him. We must not be influenced from the truth as it is in Jesus, because great and professedly good men urge their ideas above the plain statements of the word of God. **(FE 128.1)**

The work of Christ is to draw men from the false and spurious to the true and genuine. “He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” There is no danger of going into error while we follow in the footsteps of “the Light of the world.” We are to work the works of Christ. We must engage heart and soul in His service; we must search the word of life, and present it to others. We must educate the people to realize the importance of its teaching, and the danger of deviating from its plain commands. **(FE 128.2)**

The Jews were led into error and ruin, and to the rejection of the Lord of glory, because they knew not the Scriptures, nor the power of God. A great work is before us,—to lead men to take God’s word as the rule of their lives, to make no compromise with tradition and custom, but to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord.—The Review and Herald, July 17, 1888. **(FE 128.3)**