

Ellen White's Earnest Appeal

to the General Conference Delegates in
preparation for the 1888 Session in Minneapolis

Healdsburg, California
August 5, 1888



Dear Brethren Who Shall Assemble In General Conference,

We are impressed that this gathering will be the most important meeting you have ever attended. This should be a period of earnestly seeking the Lord, and humbling your hearts before Him. I hope you will regard this as a most precious opportunity to pray and counsel together; and if the injunction of the apostle to esteem others better than ourselves is carefully heeded, then you can in humility of mind, with the spirit of Christ, search the scriptures carefully to see what is truth.

The truth can lose nothing by close investigation. Let the word of God speak for itself, let it be its own interpreter, and the truth will shine like precious gems amid the rubbish.

It has been shown me that there are many of our ministers who take things for granted, and know not for themselves, by close, critical study of the scriptures whether they are believing truth or error. If there was much less preaching by such and far more time spent upon their knees before God, pleading for Him to open their understanding to the truth of His word, that they might have a knowledge for themselves that their feet were standing on solid rock, angels of God would be around about them, to help them in their endeavors.

There is a most wonderful laziness that is indulged in by a large class of our ministers who are willing others should search the scriptures for them; and they take the truth from their lips as a positive fact, but they do not know it to be Bible truth, through their own individual research, and by the deep convictions of the spirit of God upon their hearts and minds.

Let every soul now be divested of envy, of jealousy, of evil surmising, and bring their hearts into close connection with God. If all do this, they will have that love burning upon the altar of their hearts which Christ evidenced for them. All parties will have Christian kindness and Christian tenderness. There will be no strife; for the servants of God must not strive. There will be no party spirit; there will be no selfish ambition.

Our people individually must understand Bible truth more thoroughly, for they certainly will be called before councils; they will be criticized by keen and critical minds. It is one thing to give assent to the truth, and another thing, through close examination as Bible students, to know what is truth.

We have been apprised of our dangers, the trials and temptations just before us; and now is the time to take special pains to prepare ourselves to meet the temptations and the emergencies which are just before us.

If souls neglect to bring the truth into their lives, and be sanctified through the truth, that they may be able to give a reason of the hope that is within them, with meekness and fear, they will be swept away by some of the manifold errors and heresies, and will lose their souls. I beg of you, my brethren, for Christ's sake, to have no selfish ambitions.

As you shall assemble together at this general meetings, I beseech of you to make a personal effort to cleanse soul and spirit from every defiling influence which would separate you from God. Many, many will be lost because they have not studied their Bibles upon their knees, with earnest prayer

to God that the entrance of the word of God might give light to their understanding. All selfish ambition should be laid aside, and you should plead with God for his Spirit to descend upon you as it came upon the disciples who were assembled together upon the day of Pentecost. "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." Let every heart be subdued before God. Let there be a taking hold by living faith for victory over Satan.

If all who claim to believe the Bible did believe it as the oracles of God, as actually a divine communication teaching every soul what to do in order to be saved, what a different effect would follow their labors. It is because so many who handle the word of God in opening the scriptures to others are not diligent students of the scriptures, or doers of the word themselves, that they make so little advancement in growth of grace and in coming to the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. They take largely the interpretation of the scriptures from others' lips, but do not put their minds to the tax of searching the evidences for themselves, to know what is truth.

All misunderstandings and controversies may be happily and successfully adjusted by the living testimonies of the word of God. One of the greatest hindrances to our spiritual success is the great want of love and respect evidenced for one another. We should seek most earnestly, by every word and action, to answer the prayer of Christ, and to encourage that unity which is expressed in the prayer of

Christ, that we may be one as he is one with the Father.

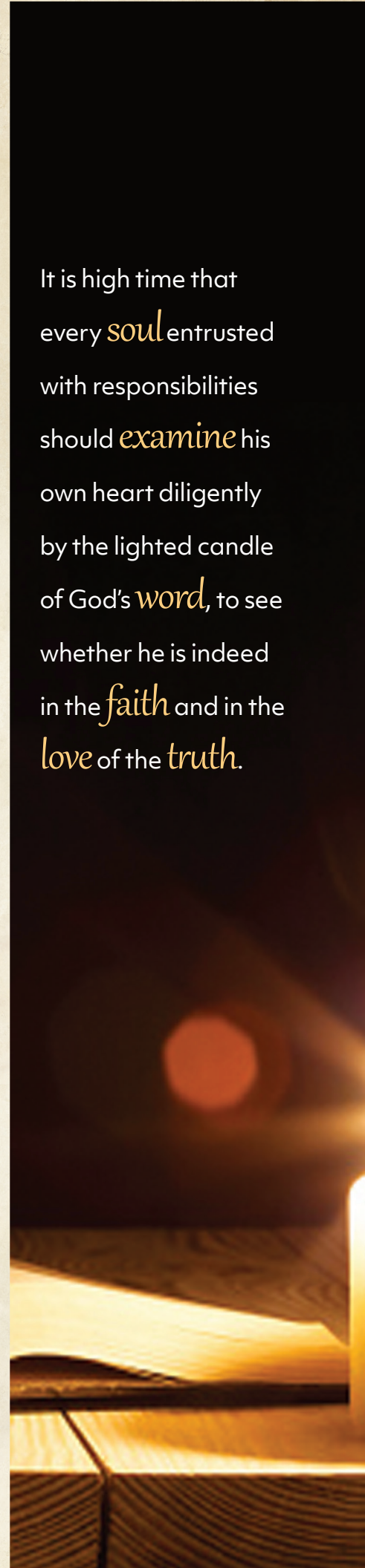
Every feeling of indifference for one another should be strenuously overcome, and everything that would tend to variance with brethren should be put away from us. The love of Jesus Christ existing in the heart will consume these little things, or greater things, which tend to divide hearts. Satan's sees that in unity there is strength; that in variance and disunion there is weakness.


Heaven's enlightenment is what is needed, so that when we look upon the faces of our brethren, we may consider: These are they that have been purchased by the price of the blood of Christ. They are precious in his sight. I must love them as Christ has loved me. These are my fellow-laborers in the harvest field. I must be perfectly united with them; I must speak only words that will tend to encourage and advance them in their forward movement."

My brethren, you are Christ's soldiers, making aggressive warfare against Satan and his host; but it is grievous to the Spirit of God for you to be surmising evil of one another, and letting the imagination of your hearts be controlled by the power of the great accuser, whose business it is to accuse them before God day and night. Satan has his soldiers trained for the special work of breaking up the union which Christ made so great a sacrifice to establish between brethren.

We are to be bound to one another in sacred bonds of holy union. But it is the work of the enemy to create a party spirit, and to have party feelings, and some feel that they are doing the work of God in strengthening prejudices and jealousies among brethren. God would have a sacred order to exist among his co-workers, that they may be bound together by Christ in the Lord God of Israel. We are to be faithful, frank, and true to the interests of each other. We

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are constantly to be listening for orders from our captain, but not be guilty of listening to reports against our brethren, or imagining evil of our brethren.

Our interests must be bound up with our brethren's, and it is decidedly nothing but the work of the devil to create suspicion and jealousies between the two branches of the work in our publishing houses. We are working for the same cause and under the same master. It is one work; for the preparation of the people of God in these last days.

The prosperity and reputation of these institutions are to be zealously guarded, as we would have our own honor and reputation preserved. Everything like evil-speaking, every word that savors of sarcasm, every influence that would demerit our brethren or any branch of the work of God, are all working away from the prayer of Christ. Satan is at work in this matter, that the prayer of Christ may not be answered, and he has helpers in the very men who claim to be doing the work of God.

Everything that is said to create suspicion, or to cast a slur, or to demerit those engaged in these appointed agencies, is working on Satan's side of the question. It brings only weakness to our own souls, and is a great hindrance to the advancement of the work of God.

For years it has been shown me that everything of this character was grievous to the Spirit of God, and was giving the enemies of our faith great advantage to have misconceptions of the truth that God's laborers were seeking to advance. Some who think that they are really doing the Lord's work are traitors in the cause. They are dropping words that if they would consider they would know are the very line upon which Satan is at work to create dissension and to separate hearts. Envy is more common than we imagine, and prejudice is encouraged and becomes strong by indulgence in the hearts of those who should discern its

baleful influence and spurn it from the soul-temple. Jealousy is as cruel as the grave, but Satan makes this a masterly temptation, not only to estrange friends, but brethren.

It is high time that every soul entrusted with responsibilities should examine his own heart diligently by the lighted candle of God's word, to see whether he is indeed in the faith and in the love of the truth. The spirit of love for one another, as Christ has evidenced for us will lead us to closely examine every impulse, every sentiment and feeling indulged, in the light of the holy law of God, that the heart may be opened to conviction whether or not we are keeping the principles of that holy law, or not. It is a positive duty, which God enjoins upon our souls, to bring our will and spirit under the control of the divine influence of the Spirit of God. When we do this, we shall rise above all these cheap and unconsecrated feelings, and every victory that is gained by our brethren we shall be just as glad to see as if it were gained by ourselves.

Brethren, when we are doers of the word and not hearers only, we shall think much less of self, and esteem others better than ourselves. The greatest curse among our ministers today is, seeking for the highest place, full of self-importance and self-esteem, they do not feel their need of the constant grace of Christ to work with all their efforts. Whatever you are in Christlike character, in purity, in persevering energy, in devoted piety, will give you position and will make others appreciate you. We should closely examine the oracles of God. The garments of self-righteousness are to be laid aside. Let the word of God which you take in your hands be studied with simplicity. Cherish for it reverence, and study it with honesty of purpose. We are not to set our stakes, and then interpret everything to reach this set point. Here is where some of our great reformers

have failed, and this is the reason that men who today might be mighty champions for God and the truth, are warring against the truth.

Let every thought, every word, and the deportment savor of that courtesy and Christian politeness toward each other, which the scriptures enjoin. God designs we should be learners, first from the living oracles, and second, from God how to treat our fellowmen. This is God's order.

The word of God is the great detector of error; to it we believe everything must be brought. The Bible must be our standard for every doctrine and practice. We must study it reverentially. We are to receive no one's opinion without comparing the scriptures. Here is divine authority which is supreme in matters of faith.

It is the word of the living God that is to decide all controversies. It is when men mingle their own human smartness with God's words of truth in giving sharp thrusts to those who are in controversy with them, that they show that they have not a sacred reverence for God's inspired word. They mix the human with the divine, the common with the sacred, and they belittle God's word.

We must in searching the Scriptures be filled with wisdom and power that is above the human, which will so soften and subdue our hard hearts that we will search the Scriptures as diligent students, and will receive the ingrafted word, that we may know the truth, that we may teach it to others as it is in Jesus.

The correct interpretation of the Scriptures is not all that God requires. He enjoins upon us that we should not only know the truth, but that we should practice the truth as it is in Jesus. We are to bring into our practice, in our association with our fellowmen, the spirit of him who gave us the truth. We must not only search the truth as for hidden treasures, but it is a positive necessity, if we are laborers together with God, that we comply with the conditions laid down in his word, and bring the spirit of Christ into our hearts, that our understanding may be strengthened, and we become apt teachers to make known to others the truth as it is revealed to us in his word. All frivolity, all jesting and joking, all commonness, and cheapness

of spirit, must be put away by Christ's ambassadors. All pride, all envy, all evil-surmisings and jealousies, must be overcome by the grace of Christ, and sobriety, humility, purity, and godliness must be encouraged and revealed in the life and character. We must eat the flesh and drink the blood of the son of God. This is in doing his word, in weaving into our lives and characters the spirit and works of Christ. Then we are one with Christ as Christ was one with the Father. Looking unto Jesus we see how completely every attribute of God has been portrayed in the perfection of Christ. We are changed by beholding his image. Then we are partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

There is no assurance that our doctrine is right and free from all chaff and error unless we are daily doing the will of God. If we do his will, we shall know of the doctrine. We shall see the truth in its sacred beauty. We shall accept it with reverence and godly fear, and then we can present that which we know is truth to others. There should be no feeling of superiority or self-exaltation in this solemn work.

All who have the truth can afford to be fair in discussion, for truth will bear away the victory. This is the only way the word of God can be investigated with any success. If self is brought in there will not be an investigation of truth in the spirit of Christ. All phariseeism is to be put aside. All assumptions and preconceived opinions are to be thoroughly tested by the standard of truth.

The soul that is in love with God and his work will be as candid as the day. There will be no quibbling, no evading the true bearing of scripture. God's word is our foundation of all doctrine. Some think it is a mark of intelligence and smart in them to get up side issues, and they twist the scriptures in a certain way which covers over the truth (Letter 20, 1888, as published in *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, pp. 38-46).

Ellen G. White

