

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Second Quarter 2017: “Feed My Sheep”: 1 and 2 Peter

Lesson 11 “False Teachers”

Read for this week’s study

2 Peter 2:1-22; John 8:34-36; Matthew 12:43-45; Jude 4-19; Genesis 18:16-33.

Memory Text

“They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption; for people are slaves to whatever masters them” (2 Peter 2:19, NRSV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. False Prophets and Teachers
- III. Freedom in Christ?
- IV. A Dog Returns to Its Vomit
- V. Peter and Jude
- VI. More Old Testament Lessons
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. According to 2 Peter 2:19, people are slaves to whatever masters them. What are some of the things that tend to master us today? Read 2 Peter 2:1. Peter warns about false teachers that would introduce “destructive heresies.” What do we do with warnings like this in a Post-modern world? The lesson implies that the church today faces “threats from within.” What kinds of threats does the Christian Church face? What about the Seventh-day Adventist Church? How can we protect ourselves against any and all attempts to bring false doctrine into the church? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Read 2 Peter 2:1-3, 10-22. What is Peter warning about here? If you went to church and heard a pastor going on like Peter does here, what would you think? What sort of things should we be looking for? If most of the heresies mentioned in these passages were in the future, why is Peter bringing these things up when he does? What is the link between error and sensuality (2:2)? What is the link between error and greed (2:3)? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read 2 Peter 2:18-19. How do false teachers appeal to the “lustful desires of the flesh?” Is there a kind of freedom that leads to bondage? Read John 8:34-36. How

do Christ's words here help us understand what Peter is saying in the previous passage? What do you understand freedom in Christ to be? What has Christ freed you from? (Monday's lesson)

4. Read 2 Peter 2:17-22 and Matthew 12:43-45. What are the dangers when a convert to Christianity returns to his or her former lifestyle? Why is it that "falling back" after conversion leads to a more dangerous situation than the original life of sin? What are ways that we as a church family can better nurture and disciple all our members, especially newer ones? (Tuesday's lesson)
5. Read 2 Peter 2:1 - 3:7 and Jude 4-19. What examples of God's earlier judgments do Peter and Jude bring into their letters and what is their purpose in doing so? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read 2 Peter 2:6-16. What other examples from the Old Testament does Peter use to buttress his warning about what wickedness will lead to? (Thursday's lesson)
7. How important is it that we all agree exactly on what we should believe? When does it become dangerous to think ideas that are different from the rest of our fellow believers? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Paul warns of God's professed messengers engaged in this work of deception. Look at the next passage, in 2 Corinthians 11:13:

God's messengers [he raises a question]? They are counterfeits of the real thing, dishonest practitioners masquerading as the messengers of Christ. Nor do their tactics surprise me when I consider how Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light [he still pretends to be Lucifer, you know, the bearer of light and truth]. It is only to be expected that his angels will have the appearance of ministers of righteousness. (*Phillips*)

This reminds us of perhaps the most serious words Christ ever spoke. And he spoke them to a group of very devout Sabbath keeping, tithe paying, Bible teachers in his day. Who, Bible students that they were, had just denounced Jesus' picture of his Father as Satanic. Think of it! Sabbath keepers, tithe payers, Bible teachers telling Christ he had a devil. And he turned to them and uttered those extraordinary words in John 8:44, 45. And you can be sure there were tears in his voice when he said something like this:

The father whose sons you are [you Bible teachers] is the devil, and you are bent on carrying out the wishes of your father. He proved himself a murderer at the very beginning, and did not loyally stand by the truth; in fact, there is no spark of truth in him. Whenever he gives utterance to his falsehood, then he gives expression to his real

character; for he is a liar and the father of lies. I, on the contrary, speak the truth, and therefore you do not believe me.

This is from a very wonderful Roman Catholic translation, by the way, by Kleist and Lilly. You notice that Paul even mentions forged letters being circulated, pretending to be from him and causing early Christians much distress. Look at 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3: “We ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us. . . . Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way.” (NIV)

And from then on he signed his epistles with greater care. John also warns of false teachers who arise, claiming to have the Holy Spirit, and yet it is a fraud. First John 4:1, 2: “My dear friends, do not believe all who claim to have the Spirit, but test them to find out if the spirit they have comes from God. For many false prophets have gone out everywhere.” (GNB)

Paul surely agrees that we should test everything before believing. That familiar text in 1 Thessalonians 5:21: “Test everything. Hold on to the good.” (NIV) God is not afraid to be tested. That’s what is so believable about God. The reason he is not afraid to be examined is that the truth and evidence are on his side. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #7, “The Question Of Authority” recorded February, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/7MMCAG>*

Long ago Moses had warned the children of Israel not to be misled by the working of miracles. “A prophet or an interpreter of dreams may promise a miracle or a wonder, in order to lead you to worship and serve gods that you have not worshiped before. Even if what he promises comes true, do not pay any attention to him.” (Deuteronomy 13:1-3, GNB)

In the Old Testament, the story is told of a prophet from Judah who was sent by God to deliver a message to King Jeroboam. Upon completion of his mission, he was to refuse any offer of hospitality and return home by another way.

This “man of God” was a faithful servant of the Lord and accustomed to obeying without question the voice of authority. “God said it! I believe it! That settles it!” was his humble but vulnerable way of determining truth.

The prophet delivered his message. And when the king invited him to stay and eat, there was no hesitation in the reply. “ ‘Even if you gave me half of your wealth, I would not go with you or eat or drink anything with you. The Lord has commanded me not to eat or drink a thing, and not to return home the same way I came.’ ” (1 Kings 13:8, 9, GNB)

The sons of an old prophet, who lived nearby, told their father about the messenger from Judah and what he had said to the king.

“Which way did he go?” the old man asked.

They showed him the road. “Saddle my donkey,” he ordered his sons, then set out to follow the obedient younger man. He found him sitting under an oak tree on the way.

“Are you the prophet from Judah?” the old man asked.

“I am.”

“Then come home and have a meal with me.”

“I can’t. God has strictly forbidden me to stop and eat with anyone on this trip. And when God says what to do, that settles it for me.”

“No problem,” said the older man. “ ‘I, too, am a prophet just like you, and at the Lord’s command an angel told me to take you home with me and offer you my hospitality.’ But the old prophet was lying.” (1 Kings 13:18, GNB)

“You mean God has changed his mind? Well, as I always say, ‘If God said it, I believe it.’ ” Thoroughly deceived, the trusting man from Judah went home with the older prophet.

The story has a sad ending and one might fairly ask, “Why is this story included in the Bible at all?” The younger prophet had no reason to suspect that the old man was lying. It would have been rude to suggest it. But he also had no reason to accept without question the contradiction of God’s previous command. If only he had politely reserved his right to further investigate. {Maxwell, Graham. *Servants or Friends*, 63-66. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.} <http://www.pineknoll.org/graham/sof/chapter5.html>

What kind of friendship is it that demands obedience? How do you fit “Keep my commandments,” with “You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free”? Sometimes this is explained to mean that we are free so long as we do exactly what we are told. Have you parents ever tried that with your children?

“Now children, we want freedom in our home. We can have freedom so long as you do exactly what you are told. Do I make myself clear?” If your children are afraid of you enough, they will say, “You have made yourself clear.” But inside they may have serious reservations. It seems such a contradiction. Of course, everything depends upon how we understand what it is that God has asked us to do, and how we understand the reason why he even had to ask us in the first place.

I believe, as I am sure many of you do, that all of God’s laws, particularly the Ten Commandments, were given for our best good. They were given especially to preserve freedom—not to infringe upon it. But law, the use of law, has been seriously misunderstood throughout the great controversy.

The most notable example of misunderstanding occurred about 1400 years after Sinai, when the Son of God came himself to live among a people who had been especially entrusted with this revelation of God's will that is formulated in the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments.

Of all people, they should have understood it was an emergency measure—with Moses there to explain that there was no need to be afraid. But when Jesus came, he found a group of people who were totally preoccupied with God's laws and with obedience to their every detail. He never had to tell them not to make a graven image. They had learned their lesson in the discipline of Babylonian captivity, and they never sank into ordinary idolatry again. He never had to tell them which day was the Sabbath. They regarded it as their highest duty to obey all ten of the Ten Commandments. He never had to urge them to pay tithe. Matthew records they used to tithe even the tiniest things: the seeds of the mint, anise, and cumin. Nor did Jesus have to tell them they should obey the laws of hygiene. He commented on the fact that they would even strain gnats out of their goat's milk lest they should eat a forbidden insect. Nor did he ever have to tell them to search the Scriptures. He said they did it all the time—though they did it for the wrong reason. (John 5:39) Nor did he ever have to tell them to be careful in their association with unbelievers. In fact, when they came in from the market place, they used to wash themselves in certain special, ceremonial ways, lest they be contaminated by association with the Gentiles. You see, they all could say like the rich young ruler, "All these things we have obeyed from our youth up."

You would think that in the face of such rigorous obedience and willingness to do precisely what they were told—you would think Jesus would be pleased, and they would recognize and welcome him when he came. But all heaven watched the incredible scene of those who claimed to love God's law, denouncing the Lawgiver as a lawbreaker. It must have puzzled the angels a great deal. So Jesus ventured to suggest that while they were working so hard to obey, that actually they were obeying for the wrong reason. Because they were obeying for the wrong reason, they really were not obeying at all. You can imagine how offensive this was to them. In fact, he went further and suggested that if only they knew the God who had given the law, they would keep the law for an entirely different reason: a reason that would make it possible for them to be obedient and free at the same time. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #12, "God's Law is No Threat to Our Freedom" recorded April, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/caga>*

You remember Jesus' words in John 8:32: "You will know the truth [and with Jesus, it is always the truth about his Father], you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (Williams). You see if God were the kind of person Satan has made him out to be, there would be no freedom. There would only be the bondage of fear. But Paul had learned the truth and now he

took it everywhere he could. He took it to the Galatians. And when he took the truth, he took freedom to them. He noticed they loved it at first. Then they turned away from it. "Oh," he says, "stand fast in this freedom." Look at Galatians 5:1: "This is the freedom with which Christ has made us free. So keep on standing in it, and stop letting your necks be fastened in the yoke of slavery again" (Williams).

Now there had been a day when Paul himself was satisfied with the obedience that resulted from law and fear. He thought it was the right thing to do. That was what the sovereign God preferred. But now Paul knows the good news. He knows the truth, and he realizes that God does not want the obedience that springs from law and fear. He wants the obedience of faith; the obedience that comes from free people who agree with God that this is the right thing to do. They agree so fully, they don't even need to be told to do so. They do what is right because they agree it is right. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #16, "God's Last Pleading With His Children" recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*
<http://pkp.cc/16MMCAG>

Some people grow up in slavery to the idea that they will never amount to anything. Since childhood they have been given the impression of not being very special. But then they learn the truth about themselves, the amazing capacity of human beings to change and grow. And this truth awakens a new sense of freedom that gives them confidence and energy to accomplish something after all.

Some people are even in bondage to the notion that they are not free to think for themselves, especially in matters of religion. All too frequently one meets a religious person who seems afraid to hear a new theological idea. He feels it would be dangerous to change anything learned earlier from those in authority.

Such people are not yet free. And above all else God wants us to be free in our thinking about religion, our thinking about Him.

This was a matter of great concern to one Christian writer for whom I have particular respect. Years ago Ellen White advised that young people "should search the Scriptures for themselves. They are not to feel that it is sufficient for those older in experience to find out the truth; that the younger ones can accept it from them as authority....

"We must study the truth for ourselves. No man should be relied upon to think for us. No matter who he is, or in what position he may be placed, we are not to look upon any man as a criterion for us. We are to counsel together, and to be subject one to another; but at the same time we are to exercise the ability God has given us, in order to learn what is truth."

Those are daring words! And surprisingly they come from a most disciplined and cooperative Christian person. But this understanding of personal freedom was based upon the recognition that in the beginning, when man was created in the image of God, he was “endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator-individuality, power to think and to do.”

Man’s capacity for free, creative, responsible thought and action is the image of God within him. {Maxwell, A. Graham. *I Want to be Free*, 6-7. Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1970}

“Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” Before that, Paul says, “Leave room for the wrath of God. Don’t avenge yourself. Let him do it.” And God says, “Look, let me take vengeance on my children because I love them all. Now, if I take vengeance on this enemy of yours, it might win him. Would you mind?” And you say, “Wait a minute. I’m not going to let you take vengeance, if vengeance means you are going to win my enemy.” You see the beauty of that is God says, “Let me discipline my own children. I might win some of them.” Well I wonder how many of us really want God to do the avenging? Because there’s the hazard that I might turn up in the kingdom and meet my worst enemy because God has won him through the discipline.

Lou: That means that the word “vengeance” here, is God using it in a quite different way than we might be capable of doing on our own.

Graham: “Let me give your enemy what I think he needs.”

Lou: And that wins them.

Graham: That’s the hazard . . .

Lou: And you might be neighbors.

Graham: Letting God take vengeance is very hazardous. He might win your enemy. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #8 with Lou Venden, “The Most Costly and Convincing Evidence” recorded March, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/8MMCAG>

If he won the victory on Calvary, why not terminate right afterward? Look what has happened these last two thousand years and happening in the news this week. Everything God does speaks eloquently to his purposes, and so we ask the question: “How does this?” There are things yet to be demonstrated—not about God and his government. Satan has never been given an entirely free hand to run things his way. And we are going to see this. When the seven angels pour out the seven vials of God’s wrath, we understand from Romans, and Hosea, and

the cross, that God's wrath is his giving people up, handing them over. The Spirit ceases to restrain. The four angels no longer hold the four winds of the final events. And Satan will have a free hand. And the universe and his own followers will see how he will run things, when he can run it his own way. And all hell will break loose at that time.

Lou: So it really is a matter, again, of demonstration.

Graham: I think it demonstrates something else also. I wouldn't blame the angels for wondering if we rebels could really be convinced of the truth the way they are. They are all ready to see the seven last plagues and not interpret them as vengeance. They are also prepared to see the wicked consumed and not be made afraid of God. They wonder if we are. And so they wonder, would it be possible for a group of us really pygmy rebels that we are, this far from the Garden of Eden, would it be possible for the truth to heal us to the point that like Job, we could pass through that awful time of trouble and not be led away from God or be led to think of him as vengeful during the seven last plagues—and so be ready to see the final destruction without being afraid? One generation will be alive to see the Lord come. And that generation can really speak eloquently of God's power to heal, the power of the truth to restore the damage done. This last generation has a great privilege of bringing honor to God. He says, *"I can heal with the truth.* I can actually restore those people, and they can believe me just the way you angels do." That would be a high privilege. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #17 with Lou Venden, "Satan's Final Effort to Deceive" recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/17MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

With the earliest history of man, Satan began his efforts to deceive our race. He who had incited rebellion in heaven desired to bring the inhabitants of the earth to unite with him in his warfare against the government of God. Adam and Eve had been perfectly happy in obedience to the law of God, and this fact was a constant testimony against the claim which Satan had urged in heaven, that God's law was oppressive and opposed to the good of His creatures. And furthermore, Satan's envy was excited as he looked upon the beautiful home prepared for the sinless pair. He determined to cause their fall, that, having separated them from God and brought them under his own power, he might gain possession of the earth and here establish his kingdom in opposition to the Most High. {GC 531.1}

Had Satan revealed himself in his real character, he would have been repulsed at once, for Adam and Eve had been warned against this dangerous foe; but he worked in the dark, concealing his purpose, that he might more effectually accomplish his object. Employing as his

medium the serpent, then a creature of fascinating appearance, he addressed himself to Eve: "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Genesis 3:1. Had Eve refrained from entering into argument with the tempter, she would have been safe; but she ventured to parley with him and fell a victim to his wiles. It is thus that many are still overcome. They doubt and argue concerning the requirements of God; and instead of obeying the divine commands, they accept human theories, which but disguise the devices of Satan. {GC 531.2}

Eve really believed the words of Satan, but her belief did not save her from the penalty of sin. She disbelieved the words of God, and this was what led to her fall. In the judgment men will not be condemned because they conscientiously believed a lie, but because they did not believe the truth, because they neglected the opportunity of learning what is truth. Notwithstanding the sophistry of Satan to the contrary, it is always disastrous to disobey God. We must set our hearts to know what is truth. All the lessons which God has caused to be placed on record in His word are for our warning and instruction. They are given to save us from deception. Their neglect will result in ruin to ourselves. Whatever contradicts God's word, we may be sure proceeds from Satan. {PP 55.2}

As we near the end of time, falsehood will be so mingled with truth, that only those who have the guidance of the Holy Spirit will be able to distinguish truth from error. We need to make every effort to keep the way of the Lord. We must in no case turn from His guidance to put our trust in man. The Lord's angels are appointed to keep strict watch over those who put their faith in the Lord, and these angels are to be our special help in every time of need. Every day we are to come to the Lord with full assurance of faith, and to look to Him for wisdom. . . . Those who are guided by the Word of the Lord will discern with certainty between falsehood and truth, between sin and righteousness (MS 43, 1907). {7BC 907.1}

Satan, and those whom he had deceived, and who fought with him, were cast out of heaven, but the warfare has been continued on the earth. In every age Satan has worked through men who have departed from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and teaching deceptive doctrines and principles of satanic origin. Christ taught His disciples how to meet the deceptive work of Satan and his followers. Under a variety of symbols the Saviour presented the work of extending His kingdom of truth and righteousness throughout the world. It is by teaching the truth that we are to defeat the purposes of Satan. Christ illustrated this work in the parable of the sower. . . . {UL 77.4}

The teaching of this parable is illustrated in God's own dealing with men and angels. Satan is a deceiver. When he sinned in heaven, even the loyal angels did not fully discern his character. This was why God did not at once destroy him. Had He done so, the holy angels would not have perceived the justice and love of God. A doubt of God's goodness would have been as evil seed that would yield the bitter fruit of sin and woe. Therefore the author of evil was spared, fully to develop his character. {UL 77.5}

Through long ages God has borne the anguish of beholding the work of evil. He has given the infinite Gift of Calvary, rather than let any be deceived by the misrepresentations of the wicked one, for the tares could not be plucked up without danger of uprooting the precious grain. And shall we not be as forbearing toward our fellow men as the Lord of heaven is toward Satan? {UL 77.6}

Not condemnation and judgment of others, but humility and distrust of self, is the teaching of Christ's parable.—Letter 86, March 4, 1907, "To Our Churches in the Large Cities." {UL 77.7}

There is one safeguard against Satan's deceptions and snares, that is the truth as it is in Jesus. The truth planted in the heart, nourished by watchfulness and prayer, nourished by the grace of Christ, will give us discernment. The truth must abide in the heart, be felt in its power in spite of all the alluring enchantments of Satan, and your experience and mine must be that the truth can purify, guide, and bless the soul. . . . {TMK 301.4}

Even the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart is to be tested by the Word of God. The Spirit which inspired the Scriptures, always leads to the Scriptures.—*General Conference Daily Bulletin*, April 13, 1891. {1SM 43.2}

Satan has ability to suggest doubts and devise objections to the pointed testimony that God sends, and many think it a virtue and mark of intelligence in them to be unbelieving and questioning, and quibbling. Those who desire to doubt will have plenty of room. God does not propose to remove all occasion for unbelief. He gives evidence, which must be carefully investigated with a humble mind and teachable spirit. All should decide from the weight of evidence. {RH, September 16, 1873 par. 10}

It is not the plan of God to compel men to yield their wicked unbelief. Before them are light and darkness, truth and error. It is for them to decide which to accept. The human mind is endowed with power to discriminate between right and wrong. God designs that men shall not decide from impulse, but from weight of evidence, carefully comparing scripture with scripture (*Redemption: or the Miracles of Christ*, pp. 112, 113). {1BC 1120.5}

There is in the Saviour's words another lesson, a lesson of wonderful forbearance and tender love. As the tares have their roots closely intertwined with those of the good grain, so false brethren in the church may be closely linked with true disciples. The real character of these pretended believers is not fully manifested. Were they to be separated from the church, others might be caused to stumble, who but for this would have remained steadfast. {COL 72.1}

The Lord desires you to understand the position you occupy as sons and daughters of the Most High, children of the heavenly King. {SD 330.5}

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." The sense of unworthiness will lead the heart to hunger and thirst for righteousness, and this desire will not be

disappointed. Those who make room in their hearts for Jesus will realize His love. All who long to bear the likeness of the character of God shall be satisfied. The Holy Spirit never leaves unassisted the soul who is looking unto Jesus. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto him. If the eye is kept fixed on Christ, the work of the Spirit ceases not until the soul is conformed to His image. The pure element of love will expand the soul, giving it a capacity for higher attainments, for increased knowledge of heavenly things, so that it will not rest short of the fullness. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." {DA 302.1}

By beholding we are to become changed; and as we meditate upon the perfections of the divine Model, we shall desire to become wholly transformed, and renewed in the image of His purity. It is by faith in the Son of God that transformation takes place in the character, and the child of wrath becomes the child of God. He passes from death unto life; he becomes spiritual and discerns spiritual things. The wisdom of God enlightens his mind, and he beholds wondrous things out of His law. As a man is converted by the truth, the work of transformation of character goes on. He has an increased measure of understanding. In becoming a man of obedience to God, he has the mind of Christ, and the will of God becomes his will. {1SM 338.1}

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death. {1SM 235.2}

But when men pass the limits of divine forbearance, that restraint is removed. God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejectors of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown. {GC 36.1}

No soul is ever finally deserted of God, given up to his own ways, so long as there is any hope of his salvation. "Man turns from God, not God from him." Our heavenly Father follows us with appeals and warnings and assurances of compassion, until further opportunities and privileges would be wholly in vain. The responsibility rests with the sinner. By resisting the Spirit of God today, he prepares the way for a second resistance of light when it comes with mightier power. Thus he passes on from one stage of resistance to another, until at last the light will fail to impress, and he will cease to respond in any measure to the Spirit of God. {MB 93.1}

We want all to understand how the soul is destroyed. It is not that God sends out a decree that man shall not be saved. He does not throw a darkness before the eyes which cannot be penetrated. But man at first resists a motion of the Spirit of God, and, having once resisted, it is less difficult to do so the second time, less the third, and far less the fourth. {5T 120.2}

Christ is ready to set us free from sin, but He does not force the will; and if by persistent transgression the will itself is wholly bent on evil, and we do not desire to be set free, if we will not accept His grace, what more can He do? We have destroyed ourselves by our determined rejection of His love. {SC 34.2}

Our God should be regarded as a tender, merciful father. The service of God should not be looked upon as a heart-saddening, distressing exercise. It should be a pleasure to worship the Lord and to take part in His work. As the people of God meditate upon the plan of salvation their hearts will be melted in love and gratitude. . . . {TMK 263.2}

God would not have His children, for whom so great a salvation has been provided, act as though He were a hard, exacting taskmaster. He is their best friend, and when they worship Him, He expects to be with them to bless and comfort them and fill their hearts with joy and love. The Lord desires His children to take comfort in His service, and to find more pleasure than hardship in His work. The Lord desires that those who come to worship Him shall carry away with them precious thoughts of His care and love that they may be cheered in all the employments of daily life, that they may have grace to deal honestly and faithfully in all things. . . . {TMK 263.3}

We dishonor God when we think of Him only as a judge ready to pass sentence upon us, and forget that He is a loving Father. The whole spiritual life is molded by our conceptions of God, and if we cherish erroneous views of His character, our souls will sustain injury. We should see in God one who yearns toward the children of men, longing to do them good. . . . All through the Scriptures, God is represented as one who calls, woos by His tender love, the hearts of His erring children. No earthly parent could be as patient with the faults and mistakes of their children as is God with those He seeks to save. No one could plead more tenderly with the transgressor. No human lips ever poured out more tender entreaty to the wanderer than does He. O shall we not love God, and show our love by humble obedience? Let us have a care for our thoughts, our experiences, our attitude toward God, for all His promises are but the breathings of unutterable love. {TMK 263.4}