Ellen G. White

The New Year

RH December 16, 1884 White The New Year - Confession ---

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Another year has almost passed into eternity; 1884 is almost dead; 1885 will soon be here. Let us review the record of the year that so soon will be past. What advancement have we made in Christian experience? Our work—have we so done it that it will bear the inspection of the Master, who has given to every man work according to his several ability? Will it be consumed as hay, wood, and stubble, unworthy of preservation? or will it stand the trial by fire? {RH December 16, 1884, par. 1}

The **need of fidelity is overlooked by many. There is a great deal to be done in this world—not in our way, but in God’s way**—for the benefit of those for whom Christ has died; but if this is done negligently or imperfectly, “Wanting” will be written against our names in the book of heavenly records. **God is not pleased with any work unless it is done in the very best way possible. Every provision has been made that we may attain a height of stature in Christ Jesus that will meet the divine standard**. God is not pleased with his representatives if they are content to be dwarfs when they might grow up to the full stature of men and women in Christ. He wants you to have height and breadth in Christian experience. He wants you to have great thoughts, noble aspirations, clear perceptions of truth, and lofty purposes of action. Every passing year should increase the soul’s yearning for purity and perfection of Christian character. And if this knowledge increases day by day, month by month, year by year, it will not be work consumed as hay, wood, and stubble; but it will be laying on the foundation-stone, gold, silver, and precious stones,—works that are not perishable, but which will stand the fires of the last day. Is our earthly, temporal work done with a thoroughness, a fidelity, that will bear scrutiny? Are there those whom we have wronged who will testify against us in the day of God? If so, the record has passed up to heaven, and we shall meet it again. **We are to work for the great Task-master’s eye, whether our pains taking efforts are seen and appreciated by men or not. No man, woman, nor child can acceptably serve God with neglectful, haphazard, sham work**, whether it be secular or religious service. The true Christian will have an eye single to the glory of God in all things, encouraging his purposes and strengthening his principles with this thought, “I do this for Christ.” {RH December 16, 1884, par. 2}

If all who profess to be servants of Christ are faithful in that which is least, they will be faithful in much. If there are debts yet unpaid, make special efforts to pay them. If you have run up accounts at the provision store or with the dry goods merchant, settle them if you possibly can. If you cannot, go to those to whom you are indebted, and frankly tell them the impossibility of meeting these demands; renew your note, and assure them you will cancel the debt as soon as you can. Then deny yourselves of everything you can do without, and be very economical in your expenditures, until your promises are fulfilled. **Do not indulge yourselves in the use of other men’s money for the sake of gratifying appetite or a love of display**. You may thus remove a stumbling-block whereby many were hindered from believing the truth; and your good will not be evil spoken of. Will not our brethren make diligent efforts to correct this slack, hap-hazard way of doing business? The old year is fast passing; it is nearly gone. Make the most of the few days remaining. {RH December 16, 1884, par. 3}

**The Chinese New Year commences in February, and lasts one week. They have a custom of settling all quarrels between themselves and all outstanding debts; and if there are any who are unable to pay their debts, they are forgiven them. Thus the new year is commenced with all difficulties and accounts settled. This is a heathen custom that the Christian world would do well to imitate.** God’s law requires all this of us, and more,—we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. That is, we are to deal with our neighbors in everything just as we would wish them to deal with us. If we wish them to act fairly and justly toward us, then we should act fairly and justly toward them. We are simply to do as we would be done by. {RH December 16, 1884, par. 4}

In every matter of deal between men, the conduct of each is a fair transcript of his character. If a man is upright in the sight of God, his dealings will be upright in the sight of his fellow-men. His integrity is not a matter of doubt; it shines forth as purest gold refined by fire. Has he money for which he has no immediate use? He does not take advantage of the necessities of his poorer brother to require more than a fair compensation. He will not require exorbitant interest because he can take advantage of the situation. A truly honest man will never take advantage of the distress of another to add to his own store; for in the end it would be a great loss. As far as principle is concerned, it would be just as criminal in the sight of God as for him to enter his neighbor’s house and steal so much gold or silver. The customs and maxims of the world are not to be our criterion, unless by the word of God we can prove them to be right. “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.” It is not the greatness or insignificance of an action that makes it honest or dishonest. God requires that in all our transactions we pursue the straight line of duty. {RH December 16, 1884, par. 5}

If we have but little time, let us improve that little earnestly. The Bible assures us that we are in the great day of atonement. The typical day of atonement was a day when all Israel afflicted their souls before God, confessed their sins, and came before the Lord with contrition of soul, remorse for their sins, genuine repentance, and living faith in the atoning sacrifice. {RH December 16, 1884, par. 6}

**If there have been difficulties brethren and sisters,—if envy, malice, bitterness, evil surmisings, have existed, confess these sins, not in a general way, but go to your brethren and sisters personally. Be definite. If you have committed one wrong and they twenty, confess that one as though you were the chief offender. Take them by the hand, let your heart soften under the influence of the Spirit of God, and say, “Will you forgive me? I have not felt right toward you. I want to make right every wrong, that naught may stand registered against me in the books of heaven. I must have a clean record.”** Who, think you, would withstand such a movement as this? There is too much coldness and indifference—too much of the “I don’t care” spirit—exercised among the professed followers of Christ. All should feel a care for one another, jealously guarding each other’s interests. “Love one another.” Then we should stand a strong wall against Satan’s devices. Amid opposition and persecution we would not join the vindictive ones, not unite with the followers of the great rebel, whose special work is to accuse the brethren, to defame and cast stain upon their characters. {RH December 16, 1884, par. 7}

**Let the remnant of this year be improved in destroying every fiber of the root of bitterness, burying them in the grave with the old year.** Begin the new year with more tender regard, with deeper love, for every member of the Lord’s family. Press together. “United, we stand; divided, we fall.” Take a higher, nobler stand than you ever have before. {RH December 16, 1884, par. 8}

Many appear to be steadfast in the truth, firm, decided on every point of our faith; yet there is a great lack in them,—the tenderness and love which marked the character of the great Pattern. **If a brother errs from the truth, if he falls into temptation, they make no effort to restore him in meekness, considering themselves lest they also be tempted. They seem to regard it as their special work to climb upon the judgment seat and condemn and disfellowship.**They do not obey God’s word, which says, “Ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.” **The spirit of this passage is altogether too rare in our churches. It is the lack of it that shuts out the Spirit of God from the heart, from the home, from the church.**Shall we not henceforth practice the Bible plan of restoring erring ones in the spirit of meekness? Shall we not have the spirit of Jesus, and work as he worked? {RH December 16, 1884, par. 9}

**Keep back that disposition to crowd out a brother, even if you think him unworthy, even if he has hindered your work by manifesting a spirit of independence and willfulness.**Remember that he is God’s property. **Err always on the side of mercy and tenderness. Treat with respect and deference even your most bitter enemies, who would injure you if they could. Let not a word escape your lips that would give them opportunity to justify their course in the least degree.** Give no occasion to any man to blaspheme the name of God or speak disrespectfully of our faith for anything you have done. We need to be wise as the serpent, and harmless as the dove. {RH December 16, 1884, par. 10}

**The old year is in its death struggle; let all wrath, malice, and bitterness die with it. Through hearty confession, let your sins go beforehand to judgment. Devote the remaining moments of the swift passing year to humiliation of self rather than trying to humiliate your brethren.**With the new year, commence the work of lifting them up,—commence it even in the waning moments of the old year. Go to work anew, brethren and sisters,—go to work earnestly, unselfishly, lovingly, striving to lift up the hands that hang down, to strengthen the feeble knees, remove the heavy burdens from every soul. Let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke. Bring to your homes the poor that are cast out. “Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and the Lord shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day: and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.” {RH December 16, 1884, par. 11}

**Brethren in every church, will you follow the conditions God has specified, and prove the Lord, and see if he will fulfill his promises? I believe he will.**I have not the shadow of a doubt of it. He will do just as he has said he would, and the exceedingly broad promises of rich blessings will be realized if we but comply with the conditions. **Your heads may be hard and sound, but let not this hardness steal into your hearts. If you will fall on the Rock and be broken, then your self-righteousness will no longer exist. There will be instead soft, impressible hearts, kind, tender, true hearts, like that of Jesus, who was ever touched with human woe.**You will weep with those who weep, and mourn with those who mourn. Try it, brethren; God’s way is always best. You have tried your own way very perseveringly, and it does not work for the prosperity, union, and up-building of the church. Therefore let us no longer think our own plan the right one, climbing upon the judgment seat; but let us in the spirit of God bear the testimony he has given us to bear, receiving the melting love of God in our hearts while we speak plain truths to tear away the vail of deception from the eyes of those in error, giving instead the earnest, sincere, genuine love of Jesus. {RH December 16, 1884, par. 12}

**This work of confession must be done sooner or later. Shall it not be done in the dying hours of the old year? Shall we not put away our sins by confession, and let them go beforehand to judgment?**Shall we not strive now as we never have before, that we may commence the new year with a clean record? **Shall we not individually take hold of this long neglected work, humbling our souls before God, that “pardon”—blessed pardon—may be written opposite our names?** Shall we not be truly Christians—Christ-like? {RH December 16, 1884, par. 13}

**Try it in every church. Have special meetings when you can,—meetings of humiliation, of afflicting the soul,—meetings where the rubbish shall be cleared away from the door of the heart, that the blessed Saviour may enter.**What a wonderful time the dying of the old year and the birth of the new might be! If we individually try to do what we can on our part, God is faithful that hath promised, and he will fulfill on his part abundantly more than you can ask or even think. Let no more moments be wasted. Let us now arise, and make earnest efforts to cherish the subduing love of Jesus. We need to be melted over, that the dross may be removed. We need to learn in Christ’s school meekness and lowliness of heart, drawing closer and closer to Jesus. {RH December 16, 1884, par. 14}

The prevalent evils in our homes are fault-finding and censure, placing the worst construction upon words and motives. This is discouraging to the children, frequently causing them to give up their efforts to do right. If words of commendation were spoken, when they could be justly, it would show them that their efforts were appreciated, and teach them justice. If mistakes and defects are continually pointed out, often impatiently, and sometimes in the white heat of anger; if no kindly notice is taken of any improvement or progress, the children become disheartened. They feel that they are treated mercilessly, that they are left to struggle along without appreciation or encouragement. Shall not this state of things be changed? It must if parents want their children to enjoy religion. {RH December 16, 1884, par. 15}

**The same difficulties exist in the church. Many have fainted and become discouraged in the great struggle of life whom one word of kindly cheer and courage would have strengthened to overcome. Never, never become heartless, cold, unsympathizing, and censorious. Never lose an opportunity to say words that encourage and inspire hope.**We cannot tell how far-reaching may be our tender words of kindness, our Christ-like efforts to lighten some burden. My brethren and sisters, come to your high calling. {RH December 16, 1884, par. 16}

Jesus, precious Jesus! How dear the name! how soul-inspiring! Jesus never suppressed one syllable of the truth; but he uttered it always in love. He exercised the greatest tact and thoughtful, kind attention in his intercourse with the people. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He spoke the truth always, but in love. **When he denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity, it was not in tones of thunder; but tears were in his voice as he uttered his scathing rebukes.** He wept over Jerusalem, the city he loved, who refused to receive him, the way, the truth, and the life. They had rejected him, the Saviour; but he regarded them with pitying tenderness, and sorrow so deep that it broke his heart. His life was one of self-denial and thoughtful care for others. **He never made truth cruel, but manifested a wonderful tenderness for humanity. Every soul was precious in his eyes.** He always bore himself with divine dignity; yet he bowed with the tenderest compassion and regard to every member of the family of God. **He saw in all, fallen souls whom it was his mission to save.**{RH December 16, 1884, par. 17}

**Oh, how many fail in acting out their own peculiar temperament! They arouse in others a spirit of antagonism, and the worst feelings of opposition and enmity. Why should any one show disrespect to one who differs with him in doctrine? Agree with every one on every subject you can**. Admit it when he is right; for the acknowledgment will greatly help to draw him nearer to you. He will then have no occasion to think you consider your own opinions infallible, or that you look upon him with contempt. {RH December 16, 1884, par. 18}

As workers for Christ, we want sanctified tact. Study to be skillful when there are no rules to meet the case. Win hearts, not repulse them. In this kind of work more than in any other that can be undertaken, you need wisdom from above. Many souls have been turned in the wrong direction, and thus lost to the cause of God, by want of skill and wisdom in the worker. Tact, wisdom, and good judgment in the laborer in the cause of God increase his usefulness one hundred fold. If he can only speak the right words, and manifest the right spirit at the right time, it will exert a melting power on the heart of the needy one. To be workers for the Master, we must be educated in the school of Christ. All harshness, all denunciation and criticism, must be put away. As brethren let us love one another, then we shall not scatter abroad but gather with Christ. {RH December 16, 1884, par. 19}

The evil tendencies of mankind are hard to overcome. The battles are tedious. Every soul in the strife knows how severe, how bitter, are these contests. Everything about growth in grace is difficult, because the standard and maxims of the world are constantly interposed between the soul and God’s holy standard. The Lord would have us elevated, ennobled, purified, by carrying out the principles underlying his great moral standard, which will test every character in the great day of final reckoning. But God does not require us to impose upon ourselves taxing exactions which torture the bodies he has made for a wise use. We are to glorify him in the use of our every capacity. Self-imposed cruelty to the flesh is not an offering acceptable to God; it is a sacrifice not required. But to cherish kindness and love for one another is wholly acceptable to him,—a sweet savor. The glorious gifts God has bestowed upon us are to be used in his service, not abused as though self-torture would pay a ransom for our souls. The living sacrifice of the living affections—a working of the works of righteousness—will meet the mind of God. We may bring—he requires us to bring—our natural endowments and our acquired, educated powers to his feet. He will accept them at our hands, and return them to us sanctified, to be used in blessing others. {RH December 16, 1884, par. 20}

The precious hours are passing. My soul is drawn out in deep, earnest, anxious interest in your behalf. As an embassador of Christ, I implore you to commence your work intelligently. **Pick up the raveling ends, and bind them off for time and for eternity. It is not too late yet for wrongs to be righted; and while Jesus, our Mediator, is pleading in our behalf, let us do our part of the work.**Love God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself. Let us confess and forsake our sins that we may find pardon. Let those who have robbed God in tithes and offerings now come before him and make restitution. The question is asked, “Will a man rob God? as though it was not a possible thing for one to do so great a crime; but if God has ever spoken through me, there has been grievous robbery from him in tithes and offerings. {RH December 16, 1884, par. 21}

**Brethren, 1884 is almost gone. Improve its few remaining moments in making restitution for wrongs.**Make thorough work for eternity. Every act, every word, must stand the test of the Judgment. Set your hearts in order. Set your house in order. Make thorough work while Jesus is ministering in the sanctuary. Let not these appeals be given in vain. God’s treasury has been robbed of thousands of dollars, and this neglect stands registered against you in the books of heaven. {RH December 16, 1884, par. 22}

**Let there be meetings in every church; and let ample opportunity be given to all to humble themselves before God, and confess their sins, that they may receive the peace of pardon. When we will bring our hearts into unity with Christ, and our lives into harmony with his work, the Spirit that descended on the day of Pentecost will fall on us. We shall be strong in Christ’s strength, and be filled with the fullness of God.** Then the new year will be welcomed by us all as the commencement of a year a higher, better principles. We shall give ourselves to Christ, making an unreserved consecration of all our property, all our capacities, to his service. We shall make good our profession of faith; we shall serve God by serving those who need our help. Then we shall let our light shine forth in good works. God help you to commence the new year with a clean, unspotted record. May you live pure, holy lives, that, whether young or old, they may be beautiful and happy, because Christ is reflected in your characters. {RH December 16, 1884, par. 23}