

Lesson 58 - The Character of Being Gracious

1. Whose gracious character ought we to copy? **Exodus 33:19, Exodus 34:6, Psalms 86:15, 1 Peter 2:3**

EGW: This is the bread which came down from heaven, even the Word of God. And this Word, received and appropriated by the living agents, will produce that faith which works by love, and purifies the soul. It will cut away the hereditary tendencies to evil, and the wrong traits of character that have been strengthened by cultivation. However dearly we may prize these, it is better to separate them from our life practise now than to have their predominating power defiling and corrupting the whole man. And not only this, they destroy our influence for good, and, instead of being a savor of life unto life, we become a savor of death unto death. {ST, May 20, 1897 par. 12}

"Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Judas might have been all this. Blessed as he was with abundant opportunities of eating of the bread of life, he might have formed a firm, Christlike character. {ST, May 20, 1897 par. 13}

2. What was specifically gracious about Jesus, according to the verse, that we ought to copy? **Luke 4:22**

EGW: The act of Christ in breathing upon his disciples the Holy Ghost, and in imparting his peace to them, was as a few drops before the plentiful shower to be given on the day of Pentecost. Jesus impressed this fact upon his disciples, that as they should proceed in the work intrusted to them, they would the more fully comprehend the nature of that work, and the manner in which the kingdom of Christ was to be set up on earth. They were appointed to be witnesses for the Saviour; they were to testify what they had seen and heard of his resurrection; they were to repeat the gracious words which proceeded from his lips. They were acquainted with his holy character; he was as an angel standing in the sun, yet casting no shadow. It was the sacred work of the apostles to present the spotless character of Christ to men, as the standard for their lives. The disciples had been so intimately associated with this Pattern of holiness that they were in some degree assimilated to him in character, and were specially fitted to make known to the world his precepts and example. {3SP 243.1}

3. What does a gracious person retain? **Proverbs 11:16**

EGW: A gracious woman retaineth honour. Proverbs 11:16. {LHU 268.1}

You may never be called to do a work which will bring you before the public. But all the work we do that is necessary to be done, be it washing dishes, setting tables, waiting upon the sick, cooking, or washing, is of moral importance; and until you can cheerfully and happily take up these duties you are not fitted for greater and higher duties. The humble tasks before us are to be taken up by someone; and those who do them should feel that they are doing a necessary and honorable work, and that in their mission, humble though it may be, they are doing the work of God just as surely as was Gabriel when sent to the prophets. All are working in their order in their respective spheres. Woman in her home, doing the simple duties of life that must be done, can and should exhibit faithfulness, obedience, and love as sincere as angels in their sphere. Conformity to the will of God makes any work honorable that must be done.... {LHU 268.2}

4. What are gracious from a wise man? **Ecclesiastes 10:12**

EGW: As soon as the seeker for truth opens the Bible to read the utterances of God with reverence, possessing an earnest desire to know "what saith the Lord," light and grace will be given him, and he will see wondrous things out of God's law. He will not regard the law of Jehovah as a yoke of bondage, but as the gracious commands of one who is all-wise and full of compassion. He will make haste to fulfill his requirements. Great truths which have been neglected and unappreciated for ages, will be revealed by the Spirit of God, and new meaning will flash out of familiar texts. Every page will be illuminated by the Spirit of truth. The Bible is not sealed but unsealed. The most precious truths are revealed, the living oracles are heard by wondering ears, and the consciences of men are aroused into action. {SSW, January 1, 1889 par. 4}

5. What did Jacob give to his brother Esau, who reluctantly received it, in which Jacob was trying to copy God's gracious act? **Genesis 33:8-11 [Answer in verse 8.]**

EGW: Esau was marching against Jacob with an army, for the purpose of killing his brother. But while Jacob was wrestling with the angel that night, another angel was sent to move upon the heart of Esau in his sleeping hours. In his dream he saw Jacob an exile from his father's house for twenty years, because he was afraid of his life. And he marked his sorrow to find his mother dead. He saw in his dream Jacob's humility, and angels of God around about him. He dreamed that when they met he had no mind to harm him. When Esau awoke, he related his dream to his four hundred men, and told them that they must not injure Jacob, for the God of his father was with him. And when they should meet Jacob, not one of them should do him harm. "And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men." "And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept." Jacob entreated Esau to accept a peace-offering, which Esau declined, but Jacob urged him: "Take, I pray thee, my

blessing that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took it." {1SP 120.3}

Jacob and Esau represent two classes: Jacob, the righteous; and Esau, the wicked. Jacob's distress when he learned that Esau was marching against him with four hundred men, represents the trouble of the righteous as the decree goes forth to put them to death, just before the coming of the Lord. As the wicked gather about them, they will be filled with anguish; for, like Jacob, they can see no escape for their lives. The angel placed himself before Jacob, and he took hold of the angel, and held him, and wrestled with him all night. So also will the righteous, in their time of trouble and anguish, wrestle in prayer with God, as Jacob wrestled with the angel. Jacob in his distress prayed all night for deliverance from the hand of Esau. The righteous in their mental anguish will cry to God day and night for deliverance from the hand of the wicked who surround them. {1SP 121.1}

6. Who did God not appear to be gracious towards because of sin? **2 Samuel 12:22-24**

EGW: (no comment)

7. Sometimes God is gracious towards an evil person for the sake of what purpose? **2 Kings 13:1-2, 2 Kings 13:22-23** [Hint: It is what was made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.]

EGW: With what confidence had Moses assured the Israelites of the merciful attributes of Jehovah! Often during the wilderness sojourn he had pleaded with God in behalf of erring Israel; and the Lord had spared them. As in the days following the death of Elisha, when Hazael, king of Syria, was oppressing Israel, so in their earlier history, "the Lord was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence." 2 Kings 13:23. {RH, March 18, 1915 par. 6}

8. What is the condition of us for God to be gracious? **2 Chronicles 30:9**

EGW: (no comment)

9. What key word shows that God is not just gracious but a condition exists for Him to be gracious? **Nehemiah 9:17**

EGW: Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not. Nehemiah 9:17. {AG 139.1}

Justice demands that sin be not merely pardoned, but the death penalty must be executed. God, in the gift of His only-begotten Son, met both these requirements. By dying in man's stead, Christ exhausted the penalty and provided a pardon. {AG 139.2}

God requires that we confess our sins, and humble our hearts before Him; but at the same time we should have confidence in Him as a tender Father, who will not forsake those who put their trust in Him. . . . God does not give us up because of our sins. We may make mistakes, and grieve His Spirit; but when we repent, and come to Him with contrite hearts, He will not turn us away. There are hindrances to be removed. Wrong feelings have been cherished, and there have been pride, self-sufficiency, impatience, and murmurings. All these separate us from God. Sins must be confessed; there must be a deeper work of grace in the heart. . . . {AG 139.3}

10. What is connected with being gracious? **Nehemiah 9:31**

EGW: God is love, God is life. It is the prerogative of God to redeem, reconstruct, and restore. Before the foundation of the world the Son of God was given to die, and redemption is the mystery that was "kept in silence from times eternal." Yet sin is unexplainable, and no reason can be found for its existence. No soul knows what God is, until he sees himself a sinner in the light from the cross of Calvary; but when in his great need, he cries out for a sin-pardoning Saviour, God is revealed to him as gracious and merciful, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. The work of Christ is to redeem, to restore, to seek, and to save that which was lost. If we are connected with Christ, we also are partakers of the divine nature, and are to be laborers together with God. We are to bind up the bruised and wounded soul, and if a brother or a sister has erred, we are not to join with the enemy in destroying and ruining, but to work with Christ to restore such a one in the spirit of meekness. {RH, February 26, 1895 par. 1}

11. When it appears that God has forgotten to be gracious because of our iniquities, what should our attitude towards Him be? **Psalms 77:9, 13**

EGW: How near we seemed to God, as in the clear moonlight we bowed upon some lonely mountainside to ask for needed blessings at his hand! What faith and confidence were ours! God's purposes of love and mercy seemed more fully revealed, and we felt the assurance that our sins and errors were pardoned. Upon such occasions I have seen my husband's countenance lighted up with a radiance that seemed reflected from the throne of God, as in changed voice he praised the Lord for the rich blessings of his grace. Amid earth's gloom and darkness, we could still discern on every hand gleams of brightness from the Fount of light. Through the works of creation we communed

with Him who inhabiteth eternity. As we looked upon the towering rocks, the lofty mountains, we exclaimed, Who is so great a God as our God? {RH, November 1, 1881 par. 5}

12. When we sin, God being gracious and not immediately wiping us out, what is He slow at that reveals an act of Him being gracious? **Psalms 103:8, Psalms 145:8, Joel 2:13**

EGW: Christ presented to men that which was entirely contrary to the representations of the enemy in regard to the character of God, and sought to impress upon men the love of the Father, who "so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. He urged upon men the necessity of prayer, repentance, confession, and the abandonment of sin. He taught them honesty, forbearance, mercy, and compassion, enjoining upon them to love not only those who loved them, but those who hated them and treated them despitefully. In all this He was revealing to them the character of the Father, who is long-suffering, merciful, and gracious, slow to anger, and full of goodness and truth. {CT 29.3}

13. What was Jonah's attitude towards God's slowness to anger? **Jonah 4:2**

EGW: But Jonah revealed that he valued the souls in that wretched city less than he valued his reputation. He feared lest he should be regarded as a false prophet. The compassion shown by God toward the repentant people "displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." "Was not this my saying," he inquired of the Lord, "when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil." {RH, October 18, 1906 par. 8}

14. What is another act of God that reveals His graciousness that we ought to copy? **Psalms 111:4**

EGW: The apostasy of Israel was an evil more dreadful than all the multiplied horrors of famine. God was seeking to free the people from their delusion, and lead them to understand their accountability to the One to whom they owed their life and all things. He was trying to help them to recover their lost faith, and he must needs bring upon them great affliction. "The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy." "Though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." {RH, August 21, 1913 par. 11}

15. Who is God gracious towards? **Psalms 112:4**

EGW: God declares, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." Isaiah 44:3; Psalm 112:4. To those who are seeking for light, and who accept it with gladness, the bright rays from the throne of God will shine. {DA 47.2}

16. Though we deserve death because of our sinning (Romans 6:23), what can we request from our gracious God? **Psalms 116:4-5**

EGW: Some who profess to love Christ, cherish cruel thoughts against others; and these thoughts, with their baleful influence, flow to the world in their words. All such are more closely allied to the great deceiver than to him who said, "Blessed are the peacemakers." Satan rules the tongues of all who give themselves into his keeping, filling the heart with envy and jealousy, and prompting the false whisper which so often causes untold misery. Those who lend themselves to his service do a work which makes him rejoice; but the angels of God weep as they see the evil that is wrought. Could those who thus give themselves up to mischief-making see how well pleasing their course of action is to the adversary of souls, they would say with the psalmist: "Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue. What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper." {RH, February 16, 1897 par. 4}

17. Not only in lying but in all of our transgressions, what should be requested to have graciously written on our hearts? **Psalms 119:29, Hebrews 10:16**

EGW: But notice here that obedience is not a mere outward compliance, but the service of love. The law of God is an expression of His very nature; it is an embodiment of the great principle of love, and hence is the foundation of His government in heaven and earth. If our hearts are renewed in the likeness of God, if the divine love is implanted in the soul, will not the law of God be carried out in the life? When the principle of love is implanted in the heart, when man is renewed after the image of Him that created him, the new-covenant promise is fulfilled, "I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them." Hebrews 10:16. And if the law is written in the heart, will it not shape the life? Obedience--the service and allegiance of love--is the true sign of discipleship. Thus the Scripture says, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." 1 John 5:3; 2:4. Instead of releasing man from obedience, it is faith, and faith only, that makes us partakers of the grace of Christ, which enables us to render obedience. {SC 60.2}

18. When will God be very gracious upon us? **Isaiah 30:19**

EGW: Those only who read the Scriptures as the voice of God speaking to them, are true learners. They tremble at the voice of God, for to them it is a living reality. They open their understanding to divine instruction and pray for grace, that they may obtain a preparation for service. As the heavenly torch is placed in his hand, the seeker for truth sees his own frailty, his infirmity, the hopelessness of looking to himself for righteousness. He sees that there is in him nothing that can recommend him to God. He prays for the Holy Spirit, the representative of Christ, to be his constant guide, to lead him into all truth. He repeats the promise, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things." John 14:26. {CT 450.1}

19. When we do not receive God's gracious response immediately, what are we still to do? **Isaiah 33:2**

EGW: O Lord, be gracious to us; we have waited for You. Be their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble. Isaiah 33:2, NKJV. {BLJ 329.1}

Jacob's history is also an assurance that [in the final time of trouble] God will not cast off those who have been deceived and tempted and betrayed into sin, but who have returned unto Him with true repentance. While Satan seeks to destroy this class, God will send His angels to comfort and protect them in the time of peril. {BLJ 329.2}

The assaults of Satan are fierce and determined, his delusions are terrible; but the Lord's eye is upon His people, and His ear listens to their cries. Their affliction is great, the flames of the furnace seem about to consume them; but the Refiner will bring them forth as gold tried in the fire. God's love for His children during the period of their severest trial is as strong and tender as in the days of their sunniest prosperity; but it is needful for them to be placed in the furnace of fire; their earthliness must be consumed, that the image of Christ may be perfectly reflected. {BLJ 329.3}

The season of distress and anguish before us will require a faith that can endure weariness, delay, and hunger—a faith that will not faint though severely tried. The period of probation is granted to all to prepare for that time. Jacob prevailed because he was persevering and determined. His victory is an evidence of the power of importunate prayer. All who will lay hold of God's promises, as he did, and be as earnest and persevering as he was, will succeed as he succeeded. Those who are unwilling to deny self, to agonize before God, to pray long and earnestly for His blessing, will not obtain it. {BLJ 329.4}

Wrestling with God—how few know what it is! How few have ever had their souls drawn out after God with intensity of desire until every power is on the stretch. When waves of despair which no language can express sweep over the suppliant, how few cling with unyielding faith to the promises of God. {BLJ 329.5}

Those who exercise but little faith now are in the greatest danger of falling under the power of satanic delusions and the decree to compel the conscience. And even if they endure the test they will be plunged into deeper distress and anguish in the time of trouble, because they have never made it a habit to trust in God. The lessons of faith which they have neglected they will be forced to learn under a terrible pressure of discouragement.—The Great Controversy, pp. 621, 622. {BLJ 329.6}

20. What needs to be taken away before God can graciously receive us? **Hosea 14:2**

EGW: Our chief adversary is the devil. He is represented as going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. When he finds men and women who have become self-exalted, as he himself became in heaven, and full of jealousy, and ambitious for power and prominence, he knows just how to lead them by his temptations so that they will prostitute their powers to his use, and become his agents in ruining their fellow-men. He is ready to work through his human agents in such a way as to conceal himself from view, in order that he may set in operation a train of circumstances that will lead men away from God, lead them away from the association and companionship of those who are connected with Christ, and influence them to do the work of annoying, distressing, and discouraging those who love Jesus. The spell of temptation holds these souls like a bewitching charm. "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." Yielding to the voice of the tempter, the tempted one surrenders virtue and principle, and in place of turning at once to God with contrition and repentance, he severs the last link whereby God's power can work for him, and hell triumphs because he has become the prey of the enemy. When the adversary thus bewitches the soul and entraps the unwary feet, he then represents God as inexorable and unforgiving, declaring that it will be of no use to make a confession of sin now, for God will not pardon. Let not the tempted soul listen to the voice of the accuser and destroyer, and take the way of the hopeless apostate, and plunge into midnight darkness. Remember the promise of God. He says, "Return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." The Lord answers, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him." Break with the enemy, and seek the presence of Jesus; with tears of confession and with penitential grief urge once more your suit at the throne of grace. The Lord will hear, the Lord will answer; return ere it be too late. {RH, December 11, 1894 par. 10}

21. What three things ought we have in our lives to receive of God's graciousness? **Amos 5:15**

EGW: Through Amos the message of the Lord to Israel was: "Seek ye me, and ye shall live: but seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to naught. Seek the Lord, and ye shall live. . . . Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark

with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The Lord is his name." Amos 5:4-8. {RH, February 5, 1914 par. 10}

"Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph." Verses 14, 15. {RH, February 5, 1914 par. 11}

But by far the greater number of those who heard these invitations, refused to profit by them. So contrary to the evil desires of the impenitent were the words of one of God's messengers, that the idolatrous priest at Bethel sent to the ruler in Israel, saying, "Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words." Amos 7:10. And through Hosea the Lord declared: "When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria." Hosea 7:1. "The pride of Israel testifieth to his face: and they do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek him for all this." Verse 10. {RH, February 5, 1914 par. 12}

From generation to generation the Lord bore with his wayward children, until he could do no more for them. "O Ephraim," he cried, "what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." Hosea 6:4. {RH, February 5, 1914 par. 13}

The evils that had overspread the land and permeated all classes of society, had become incurable, and upon Israel was pronounced the dread sentence, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." Hosea 4:17. "The days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come; Israel shall know it." Hosea 9:7. "They shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney." Hosea 13:3. {RH, February 5, 1914 par. 14}