

Expressions of Faith in Spite of Physical Trials From the Diary of Ellen G White

Too often we are tempted to think that Mrs. White walked so closely with God that she was not challenged with thoughts of discouragement and despondency. As you reflect on these diary entries it becomes very clear that she had the same human tendencies and struggles as you and I. But, she always found relief by focusing on Christ and His many blessings. {Manuscript 1405, Excerpts From Diary, July 6-31, 1892}

Preston, Melbourne, Australia, July 6, 1892. I am so thankful that I can tell the Lord all my *fears and perplexities*. I feel that I am under the shield of His wings. {19MR 287.1¹}

O precious Savior, I long for Thy salvation! "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee" (Ps. 42:1). *I long for a clearer view of Jesus. I love to think of His spotless life, to meditate upon His lessons. How many times I repeat the words, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).* {19MR 287.2}

Much of the time my body is full of pain, but I will not by complaining become unworthy of the name "Christian." I am assured that this lesson of suffering will be to the glory of God, and [a] means of warning others to avoid continuous labor under circumstances so unfavorable to health of the body. {19MR 287.3}

Preston, Melbourne, July 7, 1892. *The Lord strengthens me by His grace to write important letters. The brethren frequently come to me for counsel. I feel a strong assurance that this tedious affliction is for the glory of the Lord. I will not murmur, for when I wake in the night it seems that Jesus is looking upon me. The fifty-first chapter of Isaiah is exceedingly precious to me. He bears all our burdens. I read this chapter with assurance and hope.* {19MR 287.4} [For months while writing the Desire of Ages, Ellen White suffered keenly from inflammatory rheumatism. In her painful affliction she turned repeatedly to the Lord for consolation and eventual healing and restoration.]

Preston, Melbourne, July 9, 1892. Last night I was not able to sleep after twelve o'clock. It was my thoughts more than pain of body that troubled me. There are some trials that it is not best to dwell upon, because there seems no clear way out of them. I try to cast my burden upon the Lord, but I do not always leave it there. I take it up again when I should leave it with the Saviour. I feel deeply grieved that all connected with me in my work are not in a favorable state of mind to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. I cannot keep in my employ some of those now connected with me unless the Lord converts them, leading them to see that their hearts must be brought into harmony with His will. When self is not sanctified, it becomes a ruling power for evil. {19MR 288.2}

Preston, Melbourne, July 10, 1892. *I awoke Emily at five o'clock to build my fire and help me to dress. I thank the Lord that I had a better night's rest than usual. My wakeful hours I employ in prayer and meditation. The question forces itself upon me, Why do I not receive the blessing of restoration to health? Shall I interpret these long months of sickness as evidence of the displeasure of God because I came to Australia? I answer decidedly, No, I dare not do this.* {19MR 288.3}

At times before leaving America, I thought that the Lord did not require me to go to a country so far away, at my age and when I was prostrated by overwork. But I followed the voice of the [General]

Conference, as I have ever tried to do at times when I had no clear light myself. I came to Australia. and found the believers here in a condition where they must have help. For weeks after reaching here I labored as earnestly as I have ever labored in my life. Words were given me to speak in regard to the necessity of personal piety. {19MR 288.4}

There is need of a decided change in the administration of the Echo office. The lack of proper planning has kept this institution bound down and limited in its influence, when the Lord has a large work that must be done. {19MR 289.1}

During the conference the Lord wrought for us, but at its close I became aware that I had overdone. We moved into a retired cottage five miles out of North Fitzroy, and ever since I have been an almost helpless invalid. {19MR 289.2}

I think of this (she had overdone it at some meetings and was now "almost a helpless invalid"), and the mist and fog gathers about me. But the Lord speaks to me saying, "Come up higher. Breathe the pure atmosphere of faith." As I look to Jesus, the darkness flees away, and I am happy in Christ. How exceedingly precious is the promise, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee" (Isa. 60:l). {19MR 289.3}(NOTE: when Satan is tempting me to discourage me with work of people issues, I need to listen to the voice of Jesus saying, "Come up higher." My thought must be that of Nehemiah, "I am doing an important work. How can I leave it and come down to you."

I am in Australia, and I believe that I am just where the Lord wants me to be. Because suffering is my portion, I have no thought of beating a retreat. The blessed assurance is given me that Jesus is mine and that I am His child. The darkness is dispelled by the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. {19MR 289.4}

When I pray earnestly for restoration, and it seems that the Lord does not answer, my spirit almost faints within me. Then it is that the dear Savior makes me mindful of His presence. He says to me, "Cannot you trust Him who has purchased you with His own blood? I have graven thee on the palms of My hands." Then my soul is nourished with the divine Presence. I am lifted out of myself, as it were, into the presence of God. -290- {19MR 289.5}

Today I rode to the Echo office and back. I have not been able to do this for weeks. I praise the Lord with heart and soul and voice that I am growing stronger. I long to bear my testimony to the people in the Colonies. {19MR 290.1}

Preston, Melbourne, July 11, 1892. I did not sleep very well last night. I was urged to ride out in the afternoon, because the sun shone so beautifully. I did so, but it was too much of a tax on my strength. {19MR 290.2}

I am weighed down by the thought of the work to be done in these Colonies. We have so few workers, and these do not always try in the best way to seek and save the lost sheep. Some seem to think that to preach is the sum and substance of their work. But there is much more than preaching to do. Personal work must on no account be neglected. *The faithful minister will watch for souls with the deep interest that a shepherd [has who] guards his sheep. He will do personal work for those to whom he preaches, talking and praying with them. Such effort will bear fruit to God's glory. {19MR 290.3}*

Preston, Melbourne, July 12, 1892. *This afternoon I wrote a number of pages on the life of Christ. I long for a large portion of the Spirit of God, that I may write the things which the people need. There is a great work to be done in this country.* Some who are laboring for the people do not know what true conversion means. Some seem to think that if they can do a certain work, they are converted. But they are not submissive to the Spirit of the Lord. {19MR 290.4}

Preston, Melbourne, July 13, 1892. Last night I rested better. May Walling, my adopted daughter, kept up a good fire all day, and I felt no chill. In the morning I wrote on the life of Christ, and in the afternoon I rode out. *I am sure that my work is not yet done. I feel great comfort in the thought that the Lord has a watchcare over me.* I must assure all that the truth lived and practiced will have a convincing power over all who come under its influence. {19MR 290.5}

Preston, Melbourne, July 14, 1892. I was very nervous last night. The chills that I had on Monday and Tuesday resulted in very lame, painful shoulders and hips. I have done much earnest praying to the Lord for the presence of His Spirit. We must learn to live by faith. Then my dark and painful hours will be the brightest. Faith is not sight. It is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. I have no hope except in Christ. Salvation is of grace through faith it is the gift of God. {19MR 291.1}

My heart longs after the Lord. I want to be led by His counsel every hour. I dare not trust my own Judgment. I praise my Redeemer for His sustaining grace. I praise Him because He has not allowed the enemy to touch my head. My entire body--bone, muscle, and nerves--has been afflicted. but my head has been clear, my memory good. I have suffered much pain in my arms and across my shoulders, making it impossible for me to dress or undress myself. For months I was unable to get on or off the bed without assistance. But my health is certainly improving. After arranging my position so as not to bring any strain on arms or shoulders, I go to work at my writing, asking the Lord to bless that which I write. I know that He helps me. During each month of my sickness, I have written nearly two hundred pages of letter paper. {19MR 291.2}

I am now writing on the life of Christ. I know that the enemy will make every possible effort to hinder me, but I shall cling to Jesus, for He is my dependence. {19MR 291.3}

During my wakeful hours I have sought the Lord most earnestly, asking Him to join my weakness to His strength, my ignorance to His wisdom, my unworthiness to His merit, my frailty to His enduring might, my poverty to His boundless wealth. *When the affliction under which I have been suffering for several months came upon me, I was surprised that it was not removed at once in answer to prayer. But the promise, "My grace is sufficient," has been fulfilled in my case. There can be no doubt on my part. My hours of pain have been hours of prayer; for I have known to whom to take my sorrows. I have the privilege of reinforcing my feeble strength by laying hold upon infinite power. By day and night I stand on the solid rock of God's promises.* {19MR 291.4}

My heart goes out to Jesus in loving trust. He knows what is best for me. My nights would be lonely did I not claim the promise, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me" (Ps. 50:15). {19MR 292.1}

Preston, Melbourne, July 15, 1892. The Lord has brought me through another night. I did not sleep well. The weather this winter has not been unpleasant, but the air is very penetrating, and I cannot manage to keep comfortably warm in these high rooms, with only a grate fire. I have had two severe

chills, and this has greatly increased the lameness in my shoulders and hips. But notwithstanding this, I was able to spend most of yesterday writing on the life of Christ. I praise the Lord because I feel a nearness to my Saviour. My faith feeds on the rich promises of God, which are full of comfort and hope.

"Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the billows near me roll, while the tempest still is high.
Hide me, O my Savior, hide! Till the storm of life is past.
Safe into the haven guide, Oh, receive my soul at last.
Other refuge have I none; hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, Oh, leave me not alone! Still support and comfort me,
All my trust on Thee is stayed, all my help from Thee I bring.
Cover my defenseless head with the shadow of Thy wing." {19MR 292.2}

My whole being longs after the Lord. I am not content to be satisfied with occasional flashes of light. I must have more. "If any man thirst," Christ said, "let him come unto Me, and drink" [John 7:37]. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). {19MR 292.3} (Note: the Bible states that the "living water" is the Holy Spirit.)

Preston, Melbourne, July 16, 1892. Another night has passed. I slept and rested more than I thought I should when I went to bed. The weather has been cold and boisterous, and the chills that I have had for two days have made me suffer much pain. I cannot move without pain, but I am not cast down. I am of good courage in the Lord. God is pleased when we keep our faces turned toward the Sun of Righteousness. On this Sabbath day I wish to bear the testimony that the Lord is good, and that His mercy endureth forever. When we are in trouble and pressed down with anxieties, the Lord is near, and He bids us cast all our care upon Him, because He cares for us. {19MR 293.1} [Note: a common theme in these quotations is the fact that it was through great pain and adversity that Mrs. White was drawn more and more to Christ and His call for her life. All that she endured led her closer and closer to the heart of God. Adversity is a dear friend!]

During my sickness I have experienced the love of God in large measure. He comes to all His children in their affliction. In time of danger He is their refuge. In sorrow He offers them joy and consolation. Shall we turn from the Redeemer, the fountain of living water, to hew out for ourselves broken cisterns, which can hold no water? When danger approaches, shall we seek for help from those as weak as ourselves, or shall we flee to Him who is mighty to save? His arms are open wide, and He utters the gracious invitation, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). {19MR 293.2}

The Saviour is our Comforter. This I have proved Him to be. I do not understand why I am so afflicted. At first I tried to reason out why I did not have strength to bear my testimony to the people in this country. But I try no longer. I have given my way and my will into the hands of God; for He knows what is best for me. It is not the manifestation of His great and awful majesty and unparalleled power that will leave us without excuse if we refuse Him our love and obedience. It is the love, the compassion, the patience, the longsuffering that He has shown which will witness against those who do not offer Him the willing service of their lives. {19MR 293.3}

Those who turn to God with heart and soul and mind will find in Him peaceful security. {19MR 294.1}
[Note: the peaceful security is dependent upon a deep and earnest turning to God each day.]

Preston, Melbourne, July 17, 1892. I thank the Lord that the long, painful night has passed. Today I am suffering more than usual. I am almost helpless with weakness and pain, yet I am trusting in my Helper. He never fails me. He makes me feel young in heart, cheerful in spirit, and thankful, so thankful, for His grace. I have much pain, but I have peace and comfort also. {19MR 294.2}

Preston, Melbourne, July 18, 1892. I had a very trying night. I was very weary, but was unable to rest because my body was full of pain. I longed for the morning, so that I might sit up. In these trying times I look to Jesus, for I know that He is touched with the feeling of my infirmities. In His humanity He was made perfect through suffering. He knows just what we need, just what we can bear, and He will give us grace to endure every trial and test that He brings upon us. {19MR 294.3}

My constant prayer is for a greater nearness to God. I long for deeper spirituality, for more vigor in the Christian life. I want to be lifted above all earthliness into a purer, holier atmosphere. I find that self must be kept in subjection. My words must be well chosen, my spirit constantly guarded, lest the heart shall not be pure and holy. Satan is ever trying to lead our thoughts in a wrong direction, and I must guard every avenue of the soul, lest he gain the victory over me. {19MR 294.4}

I praise God this morning for the peace of Christ. I prize every token of favor from heaven. I long to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ. {19MR 294.5}

Preston, Melbourne, July 19, 1892. I slept little during the night, but though I suffer much pain I am not discouraged. How weak is humanity! How little we can do by depending on self. But when enlightened by the Spirit of God, the believer beholds the perfection of Jesus, and, beholding this perfection, he rejoices with joy unspeakable. In self he sees sin and helplessness; in the Redeemer, sinlessness and infinite power. The sacrifice that Christ made in order that He might impart to us His righteousness--this is a theme upon which we may dwell with deeper and still deeper enthusiasm. Self is nothing; Jesus is everything to me. My prayer is, "Be Thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort." {19MR 295.1}

Preston, Melbourne, July 20, 1892. *During the past night I slept but little, but I am not going to look on the dark side. I turn my face to the Sun of Righteousness, and dwell with pleasure upon the Saviour's willingness to pardon my sins and sanctify my soul. It is by beholding that we may reflect Christ's image.* The transforming power of grace can make me a partaker of the divine nature. On Christ the glory of God has shone, and by looking upon Christ, contemplating His self-sacrifice, remembering that in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, the believer is drawn closer and closer to the Source of power. *His love in our hearts leads us to seek for lost sheep. By working to win souls to Christ, believers give evidence of their love for Him. The path that He trod is the one in which His children will choose to follow.* {19MR 295.2}

Preston, Melbourne, July 21, 1892. The mail from America came last evening, and Willie and I had a feast indeed in reading our letters. During the past night I slept but little. My heart longs for more of the presence of Jesus. My constant prayer is that I may be uplifted into a purer, holier atmosphere. I am pleading with God to remove my suffering. *And although I continue to suffer, I am comforted by the thought that Jesus knows, and that He will help me. I shall see light in His light. My right arm is free from pain, and for this blessing I thank the Lord. The dear Saviour will not leave nor forsake us. I will praise Him because in all our afflictions He encourages and enables me to rejoice in His great mercies.* {19MR 295.3}

Preston, Melbourne, July 22, 1892. My nights are filled with pain and restlessness, but I will not complain. I will not let unbelief take possession of my heart. I will talk faith; I will praise God for His wonderful goodness to the children of men. {19MR 296.1}

Preston, Melbourne, July 23, 1892. The nights are long and painful, but Jesus is my Comforter and my Hope. Today I have been able to sit up very little. I receive no encouragement from my neighbors, who are unbelievers. They say that I will certainly be a cripple for life; but I know that they do not know. They do not realize that the truth obeyed binds our hearts up with God. We have a Saviour who can heal. David was one who made the Most High his habitation. And although David was rebuked and punished by God for his departing from righteousness, yet the Lord, seeing him penitent and humble, forgave his sins and took him into covenant relation with Himself. {19MR 296.2}

Preston, Melbourne, July 24, 1892. I passed a very restless night, and feel somewhat depressed. But I will not yield to despondency. I will not look on the dark side. {19MR 296.3}

Preston, Melbourne, July 25, 1892. Last night I spent many wakeful hours in prayer. I am resolved to cast myself, body, soul, and spirit, upon the Lord. *I cannot take drugs. They do me no good, but harm. I long for the blessing of the Lord. My heart goes out after God. I tremble at His word. I am encouraged as I look to Jesus and recount His loving kindnesses: "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry came before Him, even into His ears." "He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me, because He delighted in me" (Ps. 18:6, 19). "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications" (Ps. 116:1). This has been my experience day and night during my sickness.* {19MR 297.1}

Preston, Melbourne, July 26, 1892. *I thank the Lord that I am His child, that I can cry, Abba Father. Although I am in pain day and night, yet the grace of Christ sustains me. If I had not hope in Jesus, how lonely I should be! I have a Saviour who is the light of life. How precious to me is the sight that I catch of Jesus during my long, wakeful hours. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). {19MR 297.2} How essential that we have the enlightenment of the Spirit of God; for thus only can we see the glory of Christ, and by beholding become changed from character to character in and through faith in Christ. We turn from the picture of our shortcomings to behold the atonement made for us, and we rejoice as we know that we may be clothed with Christ's righteousness. In Him all fullness dwells. He has grace and pardon for every soul. As by faith we look to Jesus, our faith pierces the shadow, and we adore God for His wondrous love in giving Jesus the Comforter. {19MR 297.3}*

Preston, Melbourne, July 27, 1892. *I desire that Jesus shall be in my thoughts continually. I pray most earnestly that my will may be completely submerged in the will of God. I pray for the restoring power of Jesus, that I may bear a message to the people of this country. I long to present the simplicity of true godliness, to show that before we enter the kingdom of heaven we must become as little children. We must be as trustful as a child, believing every word that God speaks to us. I am sorry to see that many who are preaching the Word of God have not themselves been refreshed by drinking of the pure water of life. Jesus is not in them a well of water springing up into everlasting life. They are losing much that they might have, and are failing to answer the prayer of Christ, because they do not sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of Him. {19MR 298.1}*

Preston, Melbourne, July 28, 1892. Last night I obtained some rest, for which I thank my heavenly Father. I am cheered and blessed as I contemplate the life and mission of Christ on this earth. He was in a world which He had created, but He was unrecognized and unhonored by the many. "Foxes have holes," He said, "and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head" [Matt. 8:20]. He came to show man the way to the haven of eternal rest. {19MR 298.2}

The sinner may become a child of God, an heir of heaven. He may rise from the dust, and stand forth arrayed in garments of light. *Transformed by beholding Jesus, he becomes a partaker of the divine nature. At every step of advance, he sees new beauties in Christ, and becomes more like Him in character. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). Amen and amen.* {19MR 298.3}

Preston, Melbourne, July 29, 1892. I praise the Lord that in my affliction I may have the light and love of Jesus. His presence is everything to me--comfort, hope, and soothing balm. Sometimes perplexing thoughts crowd upon mind, but I will not cherish these thoughts. Jesus will take my troubles if I bring them to Him and ask Him to carry them for me. It is not always easy to have trusting faith. We must behold Jesus by faith as an ever-present help in time of need. We must drink deep of the water of salvation if we would be spiritually refreshed. The Lord is good and merciful. He is my Saviour, my joy and my crown of rejoicing. I will magnify His name. {19MR 299.1}

Preston, Melbourne, July 30, 1892. I praise the Lord this morning for His goodness and mercy. In the night season He reveals Himself to me as full of tender compassion. He encourages me with His sympathy to trust in His love. I know that He does all things well, and that I must be patient and wait for His salvation. The Lord is good. His praise shall be in my heart and on my lips. {19MR 299.2}

Preston, Melbourne, July 31, 1892. Another month has nearly gone. It has passed quickly, although I have suffered so very much pain. {19MR 299.3}

The spiritual darkness that covers the earth is the result of a separation from God. Christ is the light and life of the world. {Manuscript 34, 1892}

References

The Complete Published Ellen G White Writings, online through whiteestate.org

Bible passages, online through biblegateway.com

ⁱ Ellen G White, Manuscript Release Volume 19