



Lesson 11 – The Heavenly Citizenship

Philippians 3:15–21

The Two Crowns

In a vision given me at Battle Creek, Michigan, October 25, 1861, I was shown this earth, dark and gloomy. Said the angel, "Look carefully!" Then I was shown the people upon the earth. Some were surrounded by angels of God, others were in total darkness, surrounded by evil angels. I saw an arm reached down from heaven, holding a golden scepter. On the top of the scepter was a crown, studded with diamonds. Every diamond emitted light, bright, clear, and beautiful. Inscribed upon the crown were these words: "All who win me are happy, and shall have everlasting life." (*CET* 161.1)

Below this crown was another scepter, and upon this also was placed a crown, in the center of which were jewels, gold, and silver, reflecting some light. The inscription upon the crown was: “Earthly treasure. Riches is power. All who win me have honor and fame.” I saw a vast multitude rushing forward to obtain this crown. They were clamorous. Some in their eagerness seemed bereft of reason. They would thrust one another, crowding back those who were weaker than they, and trampling upon those who in their haste fell. Many eagerly seized hold of the treasures within the crown, and held them fast. The heads of some were as white as silver, and their faces were furrowed with care and anxiety. Their own relatives, bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh, they regarded not; but, as appealing looks were turned to them, they held their treasures more firmly, as though fearful that in an unguarded moment they should lose a little, or be induced to divide with them. Their eager eyes would often fasten upon the earthly crown, and count and recount its treasures. (*CET* 161.2)

Images of want and wretchedness appeared in that multitude, and looked wishfully at the treasures there, and turned hopelessly away as the stronger overpowered and drove back the weaker. Yet they could not give it up thus, but with a multitude of deformed, sickly, and aged, they sought to press their way to the earthly crown. Some died in seeking to reach it. Others fell just in the act of taking hold of it. Many had but just laid hold of it when they fell. Dead bodies strewed the ground, yet on rushed the multitude, trampling over the fallen and dead bodies of their companions. Everyone who reached the crown possessed a share in it, and was loudly applauded by an interested company standing around it. (*CET* 162.1)

A large company of evil angels were very busy. Satan was in the midst of them, and all looked with the most exulting satisfaction upon the company struggling for the crown. He seemed to throw a peculiar charm upon those who eagerly sought it. (*CET* 162.2)

Many who sought this earthly crown were professed Christians. Some of them seemed to have a little light. They would look wishfully upon the heavenly crown, and would often seem charmed with its beauty, yet they had no true sense of its value and glory. While with one hand they were reaching forth languidly for the heavenly, with the other they reached eagerly for the earthly, determined to possess that; and in their earnest pursuit for the earthly, they lost sight of the heavenly. They were left in darkness, yet were anxiously groping about to secure the earthly crown. (*CET* 162.3)

I then saw a company pressing through the crowd with their eyes intently fixed upon the heavenly crown. As they earnestly urged their way through the disorderly crowd, angels attended them, and made room for them to advance. As they neared the heavenly crown, the light emanating from it shone upon them and around them, dispelling their darkness, and growing clearer and brighter, until they seemed to be transformed, and resembled the angels. They cast not one lingering look upon the earthly crown. Those who were in pursuit of the earthly, mocked them, and threw black balls after them. These did them no injury while their eyes were fixed upon the heavenly crown, but those who turned their attention to the black balls were stained with them. (*CET* 163.1)

The Green Cord

Soon after this I had another dream [1842, age 15 approx.] I seemed to be sitting in abject despair, with my face in my hands, reflecting like this: If Jesus were upon earth, I would go to Him, throw myself at His feet, and tell Him all my sufferings. He would not turn away from me, He would have mercy upon me, and I should love and serve Him always. Just then the door opened, and a person of beautiful form and countenance entered. He looked upon me pityingly and said: "Do you wish to see Jesus? He is here and you can see Him if you desire to do so. Take everything you possess and follow me." (*EW* 79.4)

I heard this with unspeakable joy, and gladly gathered up all my little possessions, every treasured trinket, and followed my guide. He led me to a steep and apparently frail stairway. As I commenced to ascend the steps, he cautioned me to keep my eyes fixed upward, lest I should grow dizzy and fall. Many others who were climbing up the steep ascent fell before gaining the top. (*EW* 80.1)

Finally we reached the last step and stood before the door. Here my guide directed me to leave all the things that I had brought with me. I cheerfully laid them down; he then opened the door and bade me enter. In a moment I stood before Jesus. There was no mistaking that beautiful countenance. Such a radiant expression of benevolence and majesty could belong to no other. As His gaze rested upon me, I knew at once that He was acquainted with every circumstance of my life and all my inner thoughts and feelings. (*EW* 80.2)

I tried to shield myself from His gaze, feeling unable to endure His searching eyes, but He drew near with a smile, and, laying His hand upon my head, said: “Fear not.” The sound of His sweet voice thrilled my heart with a happiness it had never before experienced. I was too joyful to utter a word, but, overcome with ineffable happiness, sank prostrate at His feet. While I was lying helpless there, scenes of beauty and glory passed before me, and I seemed to have reached the safety and peace of heaven. At length my strength returned, and I arose. The loving eyes of Jesus were still upon me, and His smile filled my soul with gladness. His presence filled me with holy reverence and an inexpressible love. (*EW* 80.3)

My guide now opened the door, and we both passed out. He bade me take up again all the things I had left without. This done, he handed me a green cord coiled up closely. This he directed me to place next my heart, and when I wished to see Jesus, take from my bosom and stretch it to the utmost. He cautioned me not to let it remain coiled for any length of time, lest it should become knotted and difficult to straighten. I placed the cord near my heart and joyfully descended the narrow stairs, praising the Lord and joyfully telling all whom I met where they could find Jesus. This dream gave me hope. **The green cord represented faith to my mind**, and the beauty and simplicity of trusting in God began to dawn upon my benighted soul. (*EW* 81.1)

Conversation

➤ *anastrepho* — Usually denotes “to behave oneself, to live a certain manner of life” (*Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*) — our lifestyle

For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in
the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I
persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:
(Galatians 1:13)

conversation — the way I lived, my way of life or
manner of acting

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. (1 Timothy 4:12)

Conversation—his way of life or manner of acting

James 3:13; 1 Peter 1:15, 18; Nehemiah 8:10

When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit,
and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you,
that one of you shall betray me. (John 13:21)

Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the
kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3)

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. (1 Timothy 4:12)

Conversation

➤ *politeuma*—To live in accordance with the civic duties of one's governmental or political state, focuses on being a good citizen of the state. It is not a way of life or manner of acting in general.

Only let your **conversation** be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; (Philippians 1:27)

Let ... **conversation be**. A free translation of the whole phrase would be: "Conduct yourselves as citizens of the gospel kingdom of Christ." Paul was himself a Roman citizen. He wrote from Rome. His presence there was the result of his having exercised his rights of citizenship in appealing to Caesar (Acts 25:11, 12). As citizens of the heavenly country, the Philippians were to deport themselves worthily. (*SDA BC*, with edits for space)

Philippians 1:27—let your citizenship be as becometh the gospel of Christ—conduct yourself as a heavenly citizen would worthy of the gospel of Christ. In Acts 23:1 it is translated “I have lived,” or I have been a good citizen in good conscience before God.

And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. (Acts 23:1)

To live in accordance with the civic duties of one's political state

They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

(Matthew 22:21)

Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. (Acts 5:29)

For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from
whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus
Christ: (Philippians 3:20)

- Philippians 3:17—followers of me—1 Thessalonians 1:6
- Verse 18—Enemies of the cross. It may be these persons were not open enemies of the cross, but perhaps they professed to be followers of the Jesus while their lives showed their minds were on earthly things (v. 19).

Many of these professed Christians dress, talk, and act like the world, and the only thing by which they may be known is their profession. Though they profess to be looking for Christ, their conversation is not in heaven, but on worldly things. “What manner of persons” ought those to be “in all holy conversation and godliness,” who profess to be “looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God.” 2 Peter 3:11, 12. (*EW* 108.2)

Many seem to think they have a right to treat their own bodies as they please, but they forget that their bodies are not their own. Their Creator, who formed them, has claims upon them that they cannot rightly throw off. Every needless transgression of the laws which God has established in our being is virtually a violation of the law of God, and is as great a sin in the sight of Heaven as to break the Ten Commandments. Ignorance upon this important subject is sin; the light is now beaming upon us, and we are without excuse if we do not cherish the light and become intelligent in regard to these things, which it is our highest earthly interest to understand. (*CH* 40.1)