

Sabbath School Lesson #4 – The Call to Discipleship – 18-24 April 2015

Christ said, “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Luke 9:23). In this week’s Lesson, the word “disciple” means a follower. A Christian is a follower of Christ and therefore His disciple. A call to discipleship is a call to self-denial, self-sacrifice, and if need be, to the laying down of life, for the sake of Christ. Our music, dress, and eating, will reveal if we are Christian disciples.

A call to discipleship is a call to walk as Christ walked. The disciple “whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23), and to whom some of the deepest things of God were revealed, has written by inspiration of the Spirit of God, concerning Christ, “He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked” (1 John 2:6). In like manner the apostle Peter has written, “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps” (1 Peter 2:21). To walk as Christ walked and to follow His steps is to be a Christian in the truest sense of the term. A Christian is one in whom the life and character of Christ are being reproduced. It requires us to live by every inspired Word in matters of practical living.

A call to discipleship is a call to keep the law as Christ kept it. A call to discipleship is a call to become Christians. We know a Christian by his relation to the law. Christians are not under the law. And the reason why they are not is they keep the law, even as Christ kept it. The psalmist wrote, “And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts” (Psalm 119:45). “Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). Now the apostle Paul writes, “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under law, but under grace? God forbid” (Romans 6:14-15). There is no necessity for any misapprehension as to what it is to be under the law, for the apostle Paul says that those who are not under the law do not sin; that sin has no dominion over them. A Christian disciple, therefore, who is not under the law, is a disciple who keeps the law. Christians are under grace, and the grace of God saves from the transgression of the law.

A call to discipleship is a call to have Christ living in us. Christ fulfilled “all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15) in order that we might be freed from all sin. Our God sent His own literal begotten Son “in the likeness of sinful flesh” to condemn sin so “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us” (Romans 8:3-4). “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:10). But the life of Christ does us no good unless it is lived in us. “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2 Corinthians 13:5). If the life of Christ is not “made manifest in our body” (2 Corinthians 4:10), we are not His disciples at all. It is not the mere fact that Jesus kept the law about two thousand years ago that saves us, but it is the fact that He still lives, that His life now is the same as it was then, and that He lives in us, and fulfills the law in us, not outside of us. “By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Romans 5:19). We are not merely accounted righteous, but by Christ’s obedience we are actually made righteous. His obedience is not a substitute for our obedience, but it is actually our righteousness. Christ in us lives His righteous life in us.

For Christ to live in us, we must first be crucified with Christ. “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). Only the cross has the power to save. It is only in death that we become joined to Him (Romans 6:3). The cross makes a new creation, and only then can Christ truly live in us.

When we are crucified we no longer live; we have no life, and no longer sin. But our text says that there is life present, but it is not ours, it is His! Christ lives in us and everything Christ has comes with Him. This is the “mystery” of God – Christ living in us. “Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:26, 27).

A call to discipleship is a call from sin. Christ gives freedom from sin. His life is “the perfect law of liberty” (James 1:25). “Through the law comes knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20), but not freedom from sin. “The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just

and good” (Romans 7:12) because it gives the knowledge of sin by condemning it. It is a signpost, which points out the way, but it does not carry us. It can tell us that we are out of the way, but Jesus Christ alone can make us walk in it, for He is the way. Sin is bondage. Only those who keep [believe] the commandments of God are at liberty (Psalm 119:45); and the commandments can be kept only by faith in Christ (Romans 8:3-4).

A call to discipleship is a call to confess that Christ came in the flesh, and still lives in our flesh. There is altogether too much failure to recognise what true Christianity is. Too many seem to think it is sufficient to acknowledge that Jesus Christ once came in the flesh, was crucified, buried, and raised, forgetting that true Christianity is the present life of Christ in human flesh. “Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God” (1 John 4:2-3). It is not enough to confess that Jesus Christ once came in the flesh; we must confess that He even now is come in the flesh, even in our flesh, and that He is “the same yesterday, and today, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8), and that therefore His life in us must be the same that it was about two thousand years ago in Judea and Galilee.

A call to discipleship is a call to practical Christian living. One call to practical Christian living that “the Lord has given clear light” to His disciples is in calling us to “become health reformers in the truest sense of the term” (PH128 1.2). Sin has increased in the world and so has diseases in both man and animals. As a result of sin, “the whole creation groaneth” (Romans 8:22), “even we ourselves groan within ourselves” (Romans 8:23), and “the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings” (Romans 8:26). If God will have our full attention, we must be in good health, which ultimately is to return to the original plant diet.

Christian discipleship today is a call to return to whole plant diet. “What does meat-eating do? It creates animalism in the human agent, it strengthens the animal propensities, which are already strong enough” (RH January 7, 1902 Par 7). What does animalism do to the mind? “A development of animalism lessens spirituality, rendering the mind incapable of understanding truth” (RH May 27, 1902 Par 4). Lest we forget, Christ said, “if any man will come after Me, let him deny himself” (Luke 9:23); this includes denial of appetite. With the health and spiritual implications of eating animal products today, it is only lack of self-control and hence for being controlled by perverted appetites that a Christian would continue eating animal products. Should such a person nonetheless continue to profess to be a disciple of Christ? “Far better give up the name of Christian than make a profession and at the same time indulge appetites which strengthen unholy passions” (RH May 27, 1902 Par 15).

Christ prayed for His disciples: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). The writings inspired by Christ say: “When the third angel’s message is received in its fullness, health reform will be given its place in the councils of the Conference, in the work of the church, in the home, at the table, and in all the household arrangements” (CH 434.2). “As the storm approaches, a large class who professed faith in the third angel’s message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition” (GC 608.2). The professed Adventists will fall because they are not sealed as in “settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved” (LDE 219.4), because they would not be sanctified by health reform, as they have rendered their “mind incapable of understanding truth” (RH May 27, 1902 Par 4) by which truth they should have been sealed. Like ancient Israel, professed Adventist disciples who disbelieve health reform “will not enter in because of unbelief” (Hebrews 3:19).

A call to discipleship is a call to have the mind of Christ. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 5:2). The practical process of having this mind “which was also in Christ” is to determine to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” knowing that “it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do” (Philippians 2:12-13) – with fear and trembling lest you be controlled by appetite and render your “mind incapable of understanding truth” (RH May 27, 1902 Par 4). As you practice health reform, your mind will increasingly become capable of understanding truth; as you understand the truth, the mind of Christ will “increase” as your carnal mind “decrease” (John 3:30) until you can say: “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2:20) – health reform in the truest sense of the term is key to this process of discipleship in this our day and sealing time.