

Sabbath School Lesson #8 – Cross Cultural Missions – 15-21 Aug 2015

Christ is not discouraged in doing cross cultural missions. “Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles” (Matthew 12:18). When you read verses 17-21, you notice Matthew is quoting from Isaiah 42:1-6. Christ “shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth,” because Christ is given also “for a light of the Gentiles” (Isaiah 42:4, 6). The cross-cultural mission of Christ is to “shew judgment to the Gentiles,” which is to show righteousness to the Gentiles. This righteousness can be set in the earth only by putting it into the hearts of men. We must learn the secret of missions.

Christ’s work is to take poor, weak, sinful men, and make righteous beings of them – to clothe them with the righteousness of God. Very poor material He has to work with, and no one knows this better than He. But Christ “shall not fail nor be discouraged” (Isaiah 42:4) in this work. He knows how difficult the task is; and knowing man’s sinfulness and hardness of heart, He is not discouraged. Then what occasion is there for being discouraged? If He is not discouraged with His task, need we be? Shall we not gather courage from His courage? We may be of good courage, for He has “overcome the world” (John 16:33), and in Him we shall do valiantly. The best thing we can do to foster effective cross-cultural missions is to experience corporate repentance. Indeed, this was the secret of Jesus’ soul-winning power.

In John 4:5-42 is the Samaritan woman’s story. Jesus, wearied with His journey from Jerusalem, was sitting at noon by the well of Jacob, near the city of Sychar in Samaria, while His disciples were in the city in search of food. As He sat there, a five-times divorcee with a heart like stone comes casually, flippantly, to Jacob’s ancient well. Casting only a side-glance at the Jewish Stranger, she makes sure she would not notice Him. But He notices her. Wearied and thirsty as Jesus is from His long journey, He does not sit in silence; He is ready to win a soul. He knows precisely the right way (often to us unknown) to arouse this worldly person whose prejudice has already closed all doors (she thinks). And look what happens: in the space of a few minutes the Samaritan woman is in tears, her cold heart melted, ready to receive joyous Good News and start a genuine new life as a missionary.

How can Jesus have such phenomenal, insightful power to win sin-alienated hearts? We can wrongly answer, ‘He was divine, and had something we do not have!’ But Christ tells us, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father” (John 14:12). We have come to the time when those “greater works” must be done. Jesus wants a soul-winning mission explosion that will outdo what hitherto we have dreamed of, if we learn the secret of mission. What was His secret? He had experienced corporate repentance.

Without approving of the Samaritan woman’s sins, Jesus understands the inner pain of her beaten-down heart and thus has found an avenue of entrance, touching a chord of music that has been silent even through five failed marriages. But was it really mysterious, what Jesus knew? Or can we learn from Him? Yes! If we will humble our proud hearts, to follow Jesus! Shortly before Jesus met the woman at the well at Sychar, John the Baptist had baptized Him. But that meant a prerequisite of repentance, for the only people that John could baptize were those who had repented. But Jesus never had sinned! Then how could He let Himself be baptized? To be baptized without repenting would be hypocrisy, for John’s mission was only “the baptism of repentance” (Acts 19:4). John knew this; that is why John first refused Him the rite of baptism until Jesus convinced him (Matthew 3:14-15).

But here is the wonder: the sinless Son of God lets Himself be lowered into the water the same as any common sinner, making a public confession of repentance. By the way: it is childish to think the reason was He merely wanted to show us the physical method – John could do that; or make a ‘bank deposit’ of ‘merit’ to be transferred to some disadvantaged people like the thief on the cross. Jesus actually did experience repentance. He had to, or John could not have baptized Him; but it was not for His own sins, but for ours. Therefore it had to be corporate repentance. Totally sinless, He was made “to be sin for us, who knew no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Christ did not bear our sins as a man carries a bag on his back. In His own ‘body’ in His soul, in His nervous system, in His conscience, Christ did bore the

crushing weight of our guilt. So close did He come to us that He felt as if our sins were His own. His agony in Gethsemane and on Calvary was real. Of repentance and baptism, "After Christ had taken the necessary steps in repentance, conversion, and faith in behalf of the human race, He went to John to be baptized of him in Jordan" {GCB, 4 April 1901, Par 15}.

Christ identified with the human race so closely that He felt as if our sins were His own. His baptism shows that He knows how "every repenting sinner" {DA 598.2} feels. In our self-righteousness we cannot feel such sympathy with "every repenting sinner." Only a Perfect Person can experience a perfect and complete repentance such as that. We can become partakers of the divine nature. Jesus in His ministry had extraordinary power to win human hearts. Why? In His pre-baptism "repentance, conversion, and faith in behalf of the human race" {GCB, 4 April 1901, Par 15}, He learned "what was in man," hence "needed not that any should testify of man" (John 2:25). Thus He learned to speak as "never man spake like this man" (John 7:46). Only through these experiences could Jesus break the spell of the world's enchantment and say to whom He would, "Follow Me" (Matthew 19:21). "He passed by no human being as worthless," inspiring with hope the "roughest and most unpromising" {MH 25.5}. "To such a one, discouraged, sick, tempted, fallen, Jesus would speak words of tenderest pity, words that were needed and could be understood" {MH 26.1}. We can begin to see that we ourselves can never know such drawing power with people until we partake of the kind of repentance that Christ experienced in our behalf. Jesus' perfect compassion for every human soul stemmed from His perfect repentance in his/her behalf. He becomes the second Adam, partaking of the body, becoming one with us, accepting us without shame, for "wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren" (Hebrews 2:17).

In most cases, our individual repentance is egocentric and not Christocentric. In most cases, individual repentance is based on fear and a desire for personal security in God's kingdom. That of course is the usual appeal in modern missionary work. Such individual repentance is a vain hope for finishing the work in this generation. We have long embraced egocentric repentance. Corporate repentance is genuinely Christocentric. It is not based on fear or concern for reward or security. By sensing a concern for the guilt of the sins of the world, corporate repentance makes an offering to God that is acceptable because it is not selfish. It is a genuine abhorrence for sin and a genuine concern for His vindication. And as long as we are concerned for our own security, the power for effective cross-cultural mission will remain absent. Such a concern is *eros* dominated, and does not provide the constraint that will move human beings to the kind of consecration needed to finish the work. As long as self remains our centre, we will continue to be lukewarm. We may with egocentric motive go into the cities, do a wonderful work, but Christ not being the centre, storm and tempest would sweep away such structure. Only a Christ-centred motive can possibly deliver us.

Corporate repentance is *agape* related. It provides the love which will love others as Christ has loved us. Just as Christ identified Himself with every sinner on earth, taking the steps the sinner must take including repentance "in behalf of the human race" {GCB, 4 April 1901, Par 15}, so in corporate repentance we identify ourselves with every sinner on earth. In corporate repentance, you sense how another's sin would have been yours but for the grace of God. This sense is lost in most individual repentances. "God knows every thought, every purpose, every plan, every motive. The books of heaven record the sins that would have been committed had there been opportunity" {ST July 31, 1901 Par 3}. Trust not yourself, for "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). If you had an opportunity, circumstance, background, and provocation that your brother had, would you not have sinned? Corporate repentance includes repenting of sins you would have committed had you been sufficiently tempted. It crucially includes repentance for the sin of rejecting and crucifying Christ, for which we are told, "the whole world stands charged today" with that sin "unless we individually repent toward God" for that sin {TM 38.1}. Having repented, as a Christ-centred missionary, you will continue to mourn for the sins others are committing. "The class who do not feel grieved over their own spiritual declension, nor mourn over the sins of others, will be left without the seal of God" {RH, 11 January 1887, Par 11}. If you want to be compassionate to souls in cross-cultural missions, learn of Jesus who felt the burden for others, even for the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.