

Sabbath School Lesson #7 – Jesus’ teachings & the Great Controversy 6-12 Feb 2016

Christ, in His teachings, teaches us the way by which we can be victorious in the great controversy; He says, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). He adds, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (verse 29).

To rest in Christ and take His yoke requires meekness, of which the example of Moses is before us: “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3). Moses had a difficult task before him. His work was to lead the undisciplined, childish, murmuring host of Israel through the wilderness to the promised land. The care of hundreds of thousands of souls rested upon him day and night. Not for a single moment could he throw off the burden. He felt that the load was too great for him, and then the Lord comforted him with this promise: “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest” (Exodus 33:13). When was Moses to have rest? all the time he was on the way; the Lord’s presence was to be with him all the way, and His presence gives rest. So, all the time Moses had the heavy weight of responsibility on him, he was also resting.

What a blessed assurance! How different from the idea, even among Adventists, too many of whom resting on the way means an occasional stopping and throwing off the load, to rest by the wayside, and afterwards to pick up the burden and go on the weary journey. Resting, Moses “endured as seeing Him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27), knowing the Lord’s presence with him, he rested all the way. That is why he did not wear out under his excessive labours, but at the age of one hundred years had the fire and freshness of youth.

This was “written for our learning” (Romans 15:4). Thus, Christ says: “Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30). Also, “Lo, I am with you alway” (Matthew 28:20). To the extent that we appropriate the mercy of the Lord, and the grace He gives in time of need, “we faint not” (2 Corinthians 4:1), or, literally, ‘do not grow weary.’ “But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

To take His yoke and learn of Jesus the servant of God, we read Isaiah 42:1-9: “Behold My servant, whom I uphold; My elect, in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My Spirit upon Him; He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His law. Thus saith God the LORD, He that created the heavens, and stretched them out; He that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; He that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I the LORD have called Thee in righteousness, and will hold Thine hand, and will keep Thee, and give Thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. I am the LORD: that is My name: and My glory will I not give to another, neither My praise unto graven images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.” Note the use of term “servant” – in nothing is there more comfort for us than in the use of the term “servant” in Isaiah. By this term our relationship to God and Jesus Christ is made very plain.

The term “servant” in the forty-second of Isaiah is undoubtedly to Christ. On this there is no possibility for two opinions. Jesus is pre-eminently the servant of God. In Him the soul of the Father delighteth, for Jesus said, “I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me” (John 6:38); and, “I do always those things that please Him” (John 8:29). He is the only-begotten and well beloved Son of God, yet He is called God’s servant, and this title is given Him as an honour. The servant of God may be a son, and the son can have no higher purpose than faithfully to serve the Father. Note well the fact that Christ is both Servant and Son. If we obey, we are also servants; Nay, God does not wait to see if we are obedient, before He acknowledges us as His servants; as soon as we yield to

Him, we are His; for “Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey?” (Romans 6:16). All men are of right the servants of God, in that they owe Him all their service; but so many utterly refuse the service of God that the term is mostly confined to those who are loyal. In the great controversy, Christ came to set the captives free from sin, Christ says to all prisoners, “Go forth” (Isaiah 49:9); and each soul may say, if he will, “O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid: Thou hast loosed my bonds” (Psalm 116:16). And, this is a true saying, whether we believe it or not: we are the Lord’s servants, even though we stubbornly refuse to serve.

Special comfort and encouragement will be derived from the study of Christ as the servant of God, and the words that are spoken of Him in forty-two of Isaiah, if we recall the words addressed to Israel, in the preceding chapter – in Isaiah 41:8-10, 13 we read some of the same things that are here said of Christ. We are the servants of God equally with Christ, so that the work that is given Him to do is ours also, and all the encouragement that God speaks to Him, He speaks to us also. Thus Christ calls us to join Him in His service: “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11: 29).

“He shall not fail nor be discouraged till He have set judgment in the earth;” He shall not burn dim nor be crushed until His work is accomplished – of course He will not then; this is an instance of the use of the word “until” where it does not mark the limit (see also Genesis 49:10; Psalm 112:8; Galatians 3:19). A discouraged man is a bruised and crushed man. He is one whose light has almost gone out. Hope is expiring in his breast. Such an one Jesus will restore. He will breathe new life into him. He heals the bruised and crushed one. There is no more difficult task in this world than trying to encourage a despondent person. How many there are who think that they have good reason to be discouraged, because they are so sinful, so easily led astray. They have fallen again and again, until they can scarcely be persuaded that there is any hope of their salvation. The servant of the Lord deals with such cases, whispering words of hope and comfort, and does not himself become discouraged. He receives rebuffs, but will not be crushed by them. His light will not burn dim, but he will gather courage from apparent defeat. What a blessed assurance this is to us when we think of it as applied to Christ! He will not be discouraged until He have set judgment in the earth, that is, in the hearts of men – in our hearts. In the great controversy, if almost discouraged over my many failures, I will think, ‘Christ has the task of making me strong and giving me the victory, and He is not discouraged in spite of my many failures. Surely if He is not yet discouraged, I have no cause to be.’ Gathering new courage from the courage of the Lord, we become strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, and the victory is sure. To us all the Lord says, “Be strong, and of good courage” – this was all that He required of Joshua, when He commissioned him to lead Israel into the promised land (see Joshua 1:6, 7, 9).

What work has the Lord given His servant? – “to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.” All this we know Christ did; but is anybody else given such work to do? – most certainly; that is the work of every servant of the Lord, every one whom the Lord chooses. Saul the persecutor was chosen by the Lord to go to the Gentiles, “to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God” (Acts 26:16-18). Do not say, ‘Well, I have not the ability of Paul’ – for that has nothing to do with it. Paul was very weak and feeble in body, and had no ability except what the Lord gave him. If the Lord has not given us the ability of Paul, then He does not expect the same work of us; but one thing is certain, namely, that the Lord has sent every one who has accepted Him, every one whom He has chosen in Christ, and made accepted in the Beloved, to do the very same work to which He sent Jesus and Paul. He has not planned for any idle servants. Do not forget that He says, in the forty-second of Isaiah: “I the LORD have called Thee in righteousness, and will hold Thine hand, and will keep Thee, and give Thee for a covenant of the people, for a light to the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes.” If we are connected with an electric battery, all the power of the battery may be felt by anyone who comes in contact with us; so when we have hold of the hand of the Lord, His power becomes ours. And moreover, even Paul the Apostle said, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the new covenant” (2 Corinthians 3:5-6).