

Sabbath School Lesson #3 – “Does Job Fear God for Naught?” – 8-14 Oct 2016

Christ would have us learn lessons from Job’s experience. In time of trouble, Job’s wife suggested to Job that he complain, “But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips” (Job 2:10). One lesson to learn from Job’s experience is to be thankful in everything, trusting in unfailing God’s care.

“In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Very often we hear people say, ‘I cannot see very much that I have to be thankful for;’ and doubtless many would thus reply even to the text just quoted. But such seem to misapprehend the scripture. It does not say, ‘Give thanks for everything that meets your desires,’ but, “in *everything* give thanks,” making no exceptions for disagreeable things.

The exhortation is put even more strongly in Ephesians 5:20. “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Not only are we to be thankful *in* everything, but *for* everything. Nothing comes upon any child of God except what He sends or permits. When Satan was given permission to plague Job, the patriarch Job accepted it as from the Lord, and said, when moved to complain: “What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” (Job 2:10). Those afflictions were necessary for Job. They resulted in such a revelation of God to him as he had never before dreamed of. And when He saw God, he saw that He is love. “Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; but the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy” (James 5:11). How many people there are who have been ignorant of the depth of tender love which “a friend *that* sticketh closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24) had for them until trouble revealed it. Blessed be the tribulation that reveals to us the infinite tenderness of the Friend who is above all! We are exhorted, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (James 1:2-4). It appears, therefore, that even temptations are necessary in order that we may have no lack. Shall we not thank the Lord for that which He allows to work to supply all our need?

There is nothing more base than ingratitude. What can be more hateful than to complain when receiving good gifts? Yet who has not at some time in his life complained bitterly over some event for which he was afterwards very thankful? If we had known at the time that which we afterwards knew, we should have been patient. Now God gives us information by which we may avoid such mistakes. He tells us that He allows nothing to come to us except that is for our good. To be unthankful, therefore, is not to recognise God, and is the first step toward heathenism (Romans 1:20-23). Let us then in Christ always be thankful for all things.

How minute is God’s care for all His creatures! Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice, and not one of them is forgotten. Of men, even the very hairs of the head are all numbered (Luke 12:6-7). What force this gives to the assurance which Christ gives to His people that in the time of persecution “there shall not an hair of your head perish” (Luke 21:16-18). He says that some shall be put to death, but that even then not a hair shall perish. Because “neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

Satan accused God of hedging Job and suggested that it is the reason that Job fears God. But putting the accusation of Satan aside, we would note that God surrounds us with His goodness. In Psalms 21:8 we read: “For Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness.” But we first note that this verse should now be rendered, “Thou comest to meet him,” instead of, “Thou preventest him,” which is archaic. The literal meaning of “prevent” is *to go before*, and this is the sense in which it was formerly used; but it has now lost that meaning in our language, and means *to hinder, to stop*, since one who would stop another goes before him to shut off his way. God’s Word, however, has not changed, but means the same that it always meant, and so should be translated by words that convey the original sense. God is before us, and He comes to meet us, bringing the blessings of His goodness.

That is what we are told in the twenty-first psalm; but in the familiar twenty third psalm we read that “goodness and mercy shall follow [literally, ‘run after’] us” all the days of our life. So we cannot turn round without encountering the goodness of the Lord. He comes to meet us with His goodness; if in our stubbornness turn round to avoid Him, lo, we meet His goodness running after us. “Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness!” (Psalms 107:8).

Who is there that does not know that some, at least few, of his friends esteem him more highly than he deserves? Everyone has certainly had credit at some times and in some quarters for possessing abilities that he is conscious of lacking, or of having had a greater part in the accomplishment of some good end than he really had. Yet we tend not to try to correct all these mistaken ideas; we know that it would be impossible to have everybody estimate us exactly at our true value. We are content that our friends should think very well of us, even though we may not be seeking vain glory. Why, then, should we complain when we receive less credit than is our due? Why, when we are under-estimated, and we are charged with mistakes or errors of which we are not guilty, or another is given praise for a good thing which we did, should we be so anxious for ‘justice’ to be done? Why should we in this case be so desirous that everybody should know exactly how things really stand? Why not take the undeserved blame as a necessary offset to that undeserved credit? Thus the balance be preserved. It is also thus Job asked his wife at the suggestion that Job should complain: “What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?”

So true is it that God is “not far from every one of us” (Acts 17:27), “for in Him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28), that it is exceeding strange that more people do not “feel after Him” (Acts 17:27) and find Him. It was a heathen poet that gave expression to the Christian truth, “We are also His offspring” (Acts 17:28); let us then always “feel after Him.”

Another lesson we learn from Job’s experience is his protection against Satan. At the fall of Adam, Satan took over the dominion that was Adam’s. But while Satan has usurped the dominion which God gave to Adam, he does not have unlimited control of this earth. God did not give unlimited and supreme authority over the earth even to man in his uprightness; and so when Satan overcame man, it was not possible for him to get control of the earth to an unlimited degree. This fact Satan acknowledged, when he said to the Lord concerning Job: “Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast Thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?” (Job 1:9-10). As Job feared God, so the angels of God protected Job. “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them” (Psalms 34:7). God protects His children, as shown in the Bible.

And the Lord is not content with sending forth a single angel to protect His servants. For when Elisha and his servant were surrounded by the Syrian army, – horses and chariots, – and the servant was terrified, the prophet assured him, “They that be with us are more than they that be with them” (2 Kings 6:16). Elisha was sure of this, even though he could not see his protectors, but the servant had not so strong faith, and so the Lord mercifully opened his eyes; “and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” With their aid Elisha lead the whole Syrian army where he would.

When Christ was surrounded by the soldiers and the mob, with the traitor Judas at their head, and Peter offered forcible resistance, the Lord bade him put up his sword, and said, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels” (Matthew 26:53). We are assured that “as He is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17). The Father’s love for us is equal to His love for Him (John 17:23). Therefore we know that in any time of need we could pray to the Father, and He would send to our aid “more than twelve legions of angels,” if so many were necessary. There are “ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands” of them (Revelation 5:11), even “an innumerable company of angels” (Hebrews 22:22), and they are all “ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for them who shall be heirs of salvation.” There is no lack of help.

With “legions of angels,” a child of God is safe anywhere. He needs not the protection of earthly powers, for he has power with him infinitely greater than all theirs; he may say: “The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” “Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me in this will I be confident” “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid” (Ps. 27:1,3; Is. 12:2).