

Sabbath School Lesson #6 – The Curse Causeless? – 29 Oct-4 Nov 2016

Christ would have us understand that no suffering befalls us that He does not permit. As mortals, we may not always know the cause of every suffering. But when Job was afflicted, Eliphaz ventured to ask Job: “Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?” (Job 4:17). Our Lesson asks: curse causeless?

To answer the question: nothing happens by accident, for “the curse causeless shall not come” (Proverbs 26:2). No person on this earth ever suffered anything that was not made necessary, either by his own sins or the sins of others. If the suffering was wholly the result of his own sins and errors, it was in the nature of instruction and warning, that he might learn to shun the evil course and its consequences in the future; and so it was a message of peace. And whether the suffering came for his own sins, or wholly because of somebody else’s failure, it was that the sufferer might be filled to assist others in affliction. Even Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, was made “perfect through sufferings,” being in all things “made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2:10,17-18).

Knowing that ‘the curse causeless’ does not come, let us, “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). This is one of the most important commands in the Bible. On it depends all our peace, and the receiving of all the blessings which God has for us. No matter if everything does not appear favourable, we are to give thanks therein. This, like all of God's commandments, is not an arbitrary rule for us to follow blindly, but is most reasonable when we consider it from the side of God.

Very often people think that they have nothing for which to be thankful. This is the greatest mistake in the world. Even professed Seventh-day Adventist Christians often give way to such thoughts. Of course if they were to give candid thought to the matter they could see enough to give thanks for under all circumstances. But fortunately God has not left to us the task of searching out among the affairs of our lives those things for which we should be thankful. Here are the Divine directions: “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; *giving thanks always for all things* unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:18-20). To every son and daughter of God is given to know that instead of there ever not being anything for which we may return thanks, there is never anything for which we may not thank the Lord.

Some one may say, ‘I do not see how this can be done; there are some things of which it is impossible to be thankful.’ Not if one is a Christian. Some one will bring up to me some circumstance, and will ask, ‘How can I be thankful for that? What is there about that to be thankful for?’ I cannot answer those questions. You must take them to the Lord, and let Him answer them for you. It is not necessary for us to know everything. It is sufficient for us to know the Lord knows all things; that He knows the way that we take, and is leading us, if we yield to Him; that He cares for us far more than we can care for ourselves; and that He has all power to do the good for us that His love prompts Him to do. Let us be thankful always.

If we know but this one thing, and really know it, we may be thankful in all circumstances, and for all things: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). Some will ask, ‘How may we know that?’ We may know it because God says so. That is reason enough. We are not called upon to know how it can be, but only to know the fact. ‘But perhaps I am not one of them who love the Lord,’ you can settle that very easily. It is the easiest thing in the world to love God. But we must not think that we are to force ourselves to love Him. No; that which is easy does not require force; and where there is force there is never love. Force destroys love. How may we love God? By thinking about Him. We cannot help loving things that are altogether lovely, if we but know them. “God is love” (1 John 4:8). He has shown His love in giving us His only begotten Son. “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8); and whosoever meditates upon this one thing, cannot fail to love God. “We love, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

If we love God “we shall know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *His* purpose” (Romans 8:28). We shall know it for He says so; if we love Him we shall believe Him. Mark, that it does not say that all things *shall* work together for our good, but that all things *do* work for good. We do not have to wait until some future time for the good, but we get it as we go along. Everything that comes to the Christian is good. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that 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 8:35-39).

Well, then, if everything that comes to the Christian is good, and he knows that it is good, how can he help giving thanks? Would he not be a surly fellow, who would complain all the time, while he was all the time receiving good things? It is not for us to ask, ‘How can any good come from this or that thing?’ We have nothing to do with that. God has taken on Himself the task of making all things work out for good, and as long as He knows how to do it, and is able to do it, that should be enough for us. But we may see this much, for the encouragement of our faith: Everything is in Christ. “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32). Mark this: it says “all things.” Both the things that seem bad, and the things that seem to be good. All come to us in Christ, if we are only His. The devil seeks our destruction, but Christ has conquered him, and has power to turn the greatest curses that he would bring upon us into blessings. He can make the wrath of man to praise Him. See how He overruled the hatred of Joseph’s brethren, and made it work out His own purposes.

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree; that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:13-14). This one thing contains everything. The mystery of the cross has in it all other mysteries. It is by means of it that all things work together for good. The law has for sinners only curses and death. But Christ receives in Himself, on the cross, the curse of the law, and suffers the death that the law pronounces upon the ungodly, and, lo, to every one who believes Christ, and through faith hides in Him, the law brings life and blessing. In His body death is turned to life, and cursing is turned to blessing. Here is Divine alchemy, far surpassing the wildest dreams of the old philosophers. They thought to find a means whereby all metals could be turned into perishing gold; but in Christ everything is transmuted into the gold of the everlasting kingdom of God – into eternal life and glory.

In view of the cross, therefore, how plain becomes the exhortation and promises, “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7). Thanksgiving must be a part of every prayer. Thanksgiving for what? for all things, as we have already read. Thank God not only for blessings in the past, but for the blessings that you are about to receive. Thank Him for the things for which you are making supplication. Only on this condition are you sure of receiving anything. “Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:24).

We are to believe that we have the things, because we have them in the very promises of God, which are the basis of our prayers. If it were not for the promises of God, we could not pray at all. Prayer is simply coming to God with the promises He has made, and presenting them to Him, and claiming all that there is in them. The substance of the thing promised is in the promise. When we take the promises in faith, then we have the things promised, and of course we can thank the Lord for them. Faith is the appropriating of the words of God. If we believe the promises of God, then we do have the things asked for, and our thanksgiving from the heart is the evidence of our faith. If we have not faith enough to thank God for the things asked for, we have not faith enough to take the things that God has promised.