

Sabbath School Lesson #6 – The Holy Spirit and Living a Holy Life – 4-10 Feb 2017

Christ who breathed on His disciples saying, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22), wants us to receive the same “Spirit of Christ” which was in all the prophets (1 Peter 1:11), because “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Romans 8:9), which Spirit is Christ Himself, as “the Lord is that Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:17), for Christ being “the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45) and “because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts” (Galatians 4:6), and for these reasons, let us have Christ; as Ellen White says, “It is not safe to catch the spirit from another. We want the Holy Spirit, which is Jesus Christ” {Lt66-1894 (April 10, 1894) par. 18}.

The memory text for this lesson reads: “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23). This is a prayer for living a holy life, to be a holy man. But a holy man is a whole man, one who is whole physically as well as mentally and spiritually. And, conversely, a perfectly whole man is a holy man; for no man is whole if he lacks anything that is necessary to the making of a perfect man, that is, according to “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). There have been many feeble saints, it is true; but sickness and sallowness are no signs of saintliness. Therefore the Apostle prays: “The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

A perfect man is an indescribably higher being than a perfect animal of any other species. Man alone was made in God’s image, to be an associate with His God, in the government of the rest of creation. This should be borne in mind by every one who seeks healing from any infirmity. A horse that has no blemish in any limb or organ is a perfect horse; but a man may be as sound physically as the horse, and still he far from a perfect man. If all his members are not under Divine control – if they are used in any way that does not honour God, that is, that would be a disgrace for God Himself to do – he is most imperfect. If a man listens only to vile talk and foolish gossip, it is useless for him to have good hearing; so far as any good a man’s ears do him, he might as well be deaf. If a man’s feet are swift to do evil, he might better be lame, or even have no feet. If a man talks only evil, he is in a worse condition than if he could not talk. So no one should ask the Lord for restoration of any of these faculties, unless he expects to devote them wholly to the Lord’s service and control. Otherwise, even though physically healed, he is still maimed and diseased, and he is not “every whit whole” (John 7:23). The Apostle Paul writes: “What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Living a holy life is incomplete if it neglects physical health. Neglecting physical health in pursuit of spiritual life is rooted in the doctrine of immortality of the soul. But Adventists who have had much light on health reform, yet neglect their physical health, are, by their conduct, believers in the false doctrine of immortality of the soul. According to this false doctrine, the soul is the living, acting, thinking part of men, and the body only the poor clay tenement in which it is confined for a time here, till death strikes off its earthly shackles and sets it free to soar away to the eternal realms. It could hardly be possible that such a doctrine should fail to foster in men’s minds a contempt for the body which would cause them to treat physical health with neglect. It is a doctrine which makes the body and the soul almost antagonistic, like a prisoner and the shackles by which he is held back from the freedom for which he longs. And therefore to bestow much attention upon the body was to slight the soul and the spiritual interests, while to neglect the body and leave it almost unnoticed in the pursuit of spiritual things, came to be regarded as evidence of the attainment of a high degree of piety.

Even today, with all the light which modern medical science has shed upon the matter, the subject of the proper care of the body is but little understood; and the doctrine of man’s natural immortality does much to encourage the unconscious violation of the command, “Thou shalt not kill.” Physical health does not matter to many today as it did not matter to the penance-doing ‘saint’ if his body, worn out from continued abuse, succumbed at last and sank into the grave, since (in his view) his soul was all the more sure in such a case to soar

direct to the realms of unending bliss. Nor is it today regarded as a sin to sacrifice the body to the (fancied) interests of the cultivation of the spiritual nature. It is impossible that interest should be taken in the body and that attention given it which should be felt and given while it is looked upon as the mere clay shell and which all that is important of man is enveloped.

No living holy when health reform is neglected. The Bible teaching upon this subject is, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). There is such a thing as living to the glory of God even in eating and drinking. The same inspired writer says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). We are to serve God, therefore, with our bodies. Again, as we read earlier, the apostle writes, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

How are we to glorify and serve God in our bodies? Evidently, not by subjecting them to misuse, but by preserving each faculty in the best condition for use in His service. This is how we can eat and drink to the glory of God. The preservation of the faculties of the body is intimately connected with eating and drinking; and therefore we are bound to eat and drink such things and to do this in such a manner, as will tend to keep our physical faculties strong and unimpaired. For, as the text declares, even our bodies are not our own, but belong to God, and are to be used not to gratify ourselves, but to serve Him. We are therefore accountable to Him for the manner in which we treat them, as men are accountable for the use they make of the property of another. For Adventist, Health reform is part of living holy.

The spiritual faculties are, to a large extent, dependent upon the physical. The two are not separate and distinct, but closely joined together. And no one can fully exercise his spiritual faculties while his mind is beclouded and his physical faculties benumbed from any cause, as for example from improper eating and drinking. The fate of Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron is set before us as a terrible warning of the danger that lurks in this act, and an object lesson for us upon the relation between the physical nature and the spiritual perceptions.

Thus, the prayer of the apostle Paul for the church of the Thessalonians (and doubtless for all believers) was, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Holiness is wholeness. That which is perfect is holy. But man is imperfect. He was perfect at his creation, but he sinned and lost his uprightness. Body and soul and spirit became tainted with sin and therefore subject to death; for sin is a cancer that, left to itself, eats its way steadily into the soul, until death is a result. Bringing man again to a state of holiness, is bringing him back to the condition that was his before the fall. And this is done not by any visible outward change, but by the gift of Christ – the substitution of His perfection for all that is imperfect in man. Christ gives Himself to us, so that His perfection is our perfection, whether of body or soul or spirit. And hence the prayer of Paul can be answered, and believers be preserved blameless in all these unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Holiness, therefore – or wholeness – comes only from the presence of Christ, bringing His perfection. Nothing that man can do can bring holiness, but only that which is opposite to it; for if he did but use any tool upon the altar which he built to the Lord, it became polluted. God only can make that which is holy, and that which is not so can be made so only by His presence. But His presence is not found in the midst of that which is unclean. Decay and filth are not conditions which invite the presence of the Lord of life. Not that any man can make anything clean in the sight of God; but he is bound to co-operate with God to the extent of the power that God has given him; let us co-operate with God as true health reformers.

The soul which dwells in a body polluted from neglect or misuse cannot be holy, for God will not dwell with it. The temple of God – the body – which is defiled can only be destroyed (1 Corinthians 3:17; 6:19). Hearken to the call: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 6:17-18; 7:1).