

Sabbath School Lesson #10 – The Holy Spirit, the Word, and Prayer – 4-10 Mar 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: “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*” (Romans 8:26-27). We add verse 28: “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.”

The Lord says, “Ask, and it shall be given unto you.” Already our Father has given men everything; for “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). And “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). Christ is heaven’s greatest gift; and the giving of Him is proof that “all things” have been freely given. Therefore we do not need to importune God to bestow upon us good gifts, but only to express our belief that He has given them, and our gratitude to Him that it is so. This is the prayer of faith. The fact that people often ask God for things which they do not get, is no evidence that God has not given us liberally as His word has said. God gives men only good things, and He alone knows the needs of the soul. While we pray, “the Spirit maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” Prayer must not be offered according to the will of man, without reference to God’s will; and then whatever God sends in answer must be taken as being in harmony with His will, even though it may seem at first quite otherwise. “All things work together for good to them that love God.” In this way we can believe that we receive the things we ask (Mark 11:24), even if we may not see them in the shapes God’s hand has given them for our good.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and none can know it except God (Jeremiah 17:9-10). It is why we know not what we should pray for. We do not know the things that God has to give us; and even if we did, our lips could not describe them, for “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (1 Corinthians 2:9-12).

God desires to give us “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20). A petition for such things cannot be put into words. The next clause however says that it is “according to the power that worketh in us;” and the sixteenth verse tells us that the power that works in us is the Spirit. Thus we find the same thing that we read in the eighth of Romans and the second of 1 Corinthians. “The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” Hence, the Spirit knows just what the Lord has for us. The deepest thoughts are too great for language, and so the Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings that can not be uttered. But, although there is no articulate speech “He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” The Lord knows that the Spirit asks for just the things that He has to bestow. He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know therefore that whatever is asked according to God’s will is granted (1 John 5:14-15).

Now note how this statement in regard to prayer fits in with what goes before in the eighth of Romans. God has given us His Spirit to be in us, to lead us, and to direct our lives. The

possession of the Spirit of God proves that we are the sons of God, for “because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts” (Galatians 4:6). Being sons, we can come to Him to ask for things to supply our need, with all the confidence of a child to a parent. But while we have all confidence, our thoughts are as the earth is below the heaven (Isaiah 45:8-9). Not only are our thoughts feeble, but our language is still more so. We cannot give proper expression even to the little that we do realise. But if we are the sons of God, we have in us “the Spirit of His Son,” who helps our infirmity and who is able to take of the things of God to give to us. What a wonderful confidence this should give us in praying to God; and especially should it give confidence to those who are particularly infirm in regard to language! It makes no difference if one has a very limited vocabulary, if he stammers, or even if he is dumb; if he prays in the Spirit, he is sure to receive all he needs.

With these facts before us, how much more forcible becomes the exhortation of the apostle Paul, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ephesians 6:18).

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” Without this knowledge we could not have that confidence in prayer that we ought to have and that is indicated in the preceding verses. Whoever knows the Lord must love Him, for He is love. And the Spirit reveals Him to us. Whoever knows that “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” cannot fail to love Him. And then all things work together for good to him.

Take notice that the text does not say that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, but that they do so work now in this present time. Everything as it comes is good to those who love and trust the Lord. Many people lose the blessing of this assurance by reading it as though it were for the future. They try to be resigned to troubles that come by thinking that by and by some good will come from them; but in that case they do not get the good that God gives them. Note further that the text does not say that we know how all things work together for good to them that love God. People in trouble often sigh piously and say, ‘Well, I suppose that it is all for good, but I cannot see how.’ Of course not; and they have no business to see how. It is God that makes them work good, because He alone has the power. Therefore it is not necessary for us to know anything about how it is done. The fact is knowledge enough for us. God can overrule all the plans of the devil, and can make the wrath of man to praise Him. Our part is to believe. There is no trust in the Lord if we must see how He does everything. Those who must be able to see how the Lord works, show that they cannot trust Him out of sight, and thus they give Him a bad name to the world.

God has called everybody to come to Him. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17). God is no respecter of persons; He desires that all men shall be saved, and so He calls them all. Not only does He call us, but He draws us. No man can come to Him without being drawn, and so Christ is lifted up to draw all to God. He tasted death for every man (Hebrews 2:9), and through Him all men have access to God. He has destroyed in His own body the enmity, the wall that separates men from God, so that nothing can keep any man from God unless that man builds up again the barrier.

God calls us “in the grace of Christ” (Galatians 1:6). “He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Ephesians 1:4). Still further, we read that He hath “called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Timothy 1:9). In our text in Romans we learned that those who love God are the “called according to His purpose.” His purpose is that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. If we yield to His purpose, He will see that it is carried out. God designed man for a companion for Himself. But no true companionship where there is restraint. Therefore, in order that man might associate with Him on terms of intimacy, He made the will of man as free as His own. God cannot work against His own purpose; and therefore He not only will not, but He cannot, force the will of man. All men are as absolutely free to choose as is God Himself; and when they choose to yield to the call of God, His purpose of grace is wrought out in them to make all things work together for good.