

## Sabbath School Lesson #5 – Living for God – 22-28 April 2017

**C**hrist taught that the Father loves us, which suffice for us to live for God. The apostle Peter says: “For the eyes of the Lord *are* over the righteous, and His ears *are open* unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord *is* against them that do evil” (1 Peter 2:9).

Sunday: Being of “One Mind” – The apostle Peter says, “Finally, *be ye* all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, *be pitiful, be courteous*” (1 Peter 3:8). If two people are truly Christians, as in having the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5), they of course are of one mind. The apostle Paul teaches the same message of being of one mind.

The apostle Paul, in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, as his last earnest injunction to them, says: “Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.” These are the final words of encouragement, warning, exhortation, with which he closes this epistle. The apostle Paul urges the church, while joyously striving for perfection, to be of the same mind one toward another, that they may live in peace, and thus the God of love and peace may be with them. If they are not of the same mind they cannot live in peace. There will be contention. Where there is contention there can be no joyousness or comfort, and certainly the striving of those who are divided in thought, and purpose, and mind, is far from a struggle after perfection. And, moreover, it is certain that the God of love, and peace, and perfection, will never be with those who do not strive to be perfect. The heart of the apostle was deeply stirred for the brethren of the church at Corinth when he so urgently desired them to “be of one mind.”

Again in another place, in the Epistle to the Romans, the apostle Paul dwells upon the same subject of one mind, with similar earnestness, but more fully. “Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:9-21).

And still in another epistle the same apostle breaks into a personal entreaty. He mentions two of the church at Philippi by name, and begs that their differences be smoothed away, and that they become of the same mind. “I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord” (Philippians 4:2). This earnestness of the apostle and exhorting to be singleminded in the things of God, and to have no differences and to have no contention, arose from the vivid realisation of the fact that all those in whom Christ dwells must be as one man in mind and heart, as that man Christ Jesus. He who is at variance with the brethren (in whom Christ truly lives) may test himself by that sign, and by that he may know that he has not wholly given his heart and his life to God, and that Christ has not entered into his heart and made His abode there. No variance if Christ lives in you and me.

Monday: To Suffer in the Flesh – Peter says, “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18). Sin separated us from God (Isaiah 59:2), and Christ suffered that He might bring us nigh to God. How Christ draws us to God is taught even by nature: hunger suggests food; so the sense of sin suggests Christ, who saves from sin.

It is God who gives the sinner the consciousness of sin; for “by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20). Sin is separation from God. As soon as the sinner realises his sin, he is conscious of separation from God, and a sense of helplessness, and a feeling that he is lost, comes upon him. The first effect of this consciousness of sin is commonly a feeling of despondency and almost despair. This feeling often comes upon the Christian who has been allowing more place in his heart to the world than to Christ. That is simply the emissaries of

Satan saying, 'There is no help for thee in God.' But the fact that it is God Himself who gives the consciousness of sin, is sufficient evidence that there is hope. It is He who makes us feel our need, in order that we may be reminded of the help that He has provided, just as the feeling of hunger makes a man think of food, or the cold makes him think of heater/fireplace.

The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7). "In Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13). "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Although sin is separation from God, the very moment we become conscious of that separation, we are reminded of the blood of Christ which brings us near again. So God causes the light to shine out of darkness, and makes His strength perfect in weakness, if we but heed His word.

Tuesday: Born Again – "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin" (1 Peter 4:1). Christ "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet was without sin" (Hebrews 4:15) and "He Himself bore our sins in His body" (1 Peter 2:24). Now we must not take Scriptures for discouragement, for that is to abuse them. So we must not despondently say; 'But He was without sin,' implying that there is after all a difference between Him and us. Yes, truly "He did no sin," and "knew no sin." It is true also that we have sinned; but it is still further true that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Corinthians 5:19). "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). Therefore "as He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). As such, the Lord counts us as sinless as He counts Christ, and the sins that we bear are the sins of the world.

Do not misunderstand the sense of counting us sinless, for it is a vital truth; what it means is: Since God does not impute our trespasses to us, it is evident that He counts us sinless. In this knowledge we may rejoice, and assure our hearts before Him. Then we may know that the sins that we must struggle against in the flesh are not our personal sins, as indeed they are not so long as we reckon ourselves to be dead unto sin (Romans 6:11). Sin will not have dominion over us (Romans 6:14), no matter how sorely sin press us; we shall know that the burden of sin is upon us solely in order that we may be able to lift the burden off from some poor soul that is fainting beneath it. It is that we may show him how Christ bears his sins even in His flesh, that he may be wholly free from them even while bearing them in his body.

The nature of the flesh of a Christian is not a bit different from that of a sinner. The flesh of every man is corruptible, and will be till the Lord comes to change us to immortal glory (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; Philippians 3:20-21). The difference between the sinner and the Christian is this, that the sinner is ruled by the flesh "fulfilling the desires of the flesh of the mind," while the Christian allows the Spirit of Christ in him to rule the flesh, and to subdue its passions; for he has "power over all flesh." The body itself is an example of this life that cleanses. By the breaking down of tissue, poisons are continually forming in it, that is retained, would kill us; but the life stream flowing from us bears them away, and keeps us constantly alive and active. It is action that breaks down tissue; yet that very action, if it is rightly related to the fountain of life, tends to the removal of the waste matter.

Wednesday: Sins of the Flesh – In "the time past of *our* life" "we walked in lasciviousness" (1 Peter 4:3), "no condemnation to them that are in Christ" (Romans 8:1). "Licentiousness is the special sin of this age. Never did vice lift its deformed head with such boldness as now. The people seem to be benumbed, and the lovers of virtue and true goodness are nearly discouraged by its boldness, strength and prevalence. I was referred to Romans 1:18-32, as a true description of the world previous to the second appearing of Christ" {CG 440.1}.

Thursday: Love Covers All – "Have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity [love] shall cover the multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). "The Lord is coming in a little while, and are we performing the duties that result from righteousness? Love is the basis of godliness. No man has love to God, no matter what his profession may be, unless he has unselfish love for his brother. As we love God because He first loved us, we shall love all for whom Christ died. We shall not feel like letting the soul who is in the greatest peril, and in the greatest need, go unwarned, unlabored for, and uncared for. We shall not feel like holding the erring off, and being critical and exacting, or letting them alone to plunge into further unhappiness and discouragement, and to fall on Satan's battleground, for God will deal with us as He deals with our brethren or the younger members of the Lord's family" {TDG 239.2}.