

### Sabbath School Lesson #3 – The Human Condition – 14-20 October 2017

**C**hrist was crucified on the cross that He may restore us to the glory of God. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Early in the book of Romans, Paul seeks to establish a crucial truth, one central to the gospel – the sad state of the human condition. For this study, read Romans 1:16-17, 22-32; 2:1-10, 17-24; 3:1-2, 10-18, 23.

**Sunday: The Power of God** – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jews first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:16-17). This is equivalent to saying that obedience to the law is revealed in the Gospel. The Gospel puts the law into the heart of every believer, so that its righteousness is revealed in his life. This is the same as what we read in Romans 8:4, that Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh, condemning sin in the flesh, “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Christ did not die to absolve man from allegiance to the law of God, but to enable them to keep it. Thus the apostle Paul says, “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law” (Romans 3:31).

Jesus Christ saves us from sin—not merely from the punishment of the sins already committed, but from sinning—by giving us His own sinless life. This life is eternal life. Now, the characteristic of eternal life is that it is ever new. It is eternal because each moment it springs up fresh. Then it follows that the renewing of the body is necessarily included in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God says, “If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee which I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord that healeth thee,” or, literally, “I am the Lord thy Physician” (Exodus 15:26). When Jesus was bodily on earth, He “went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him” (Acts 10:38). For be it known that the Gospel does not stop with the mere saving of a man; it has for its object something far beyond that, – so far beyond that it leaves no room for anybody to wonder if the Lord can save him; it takes a man from the very lowest state of degradation and makes him a salvation to others (Isaiah 49:6-9). The well of water which springs up into everlasting life to those who receive the words of the Lord, flows out in rivers of living water to refresh others.

**Monday: All Have Sinned** – The law cannot justify. “By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” Shall we say, Then we will do away with the law? That is what every confirmed criminal thinks. Persistent law-breakers would gladly do away with the law which declares them guilty and will now say that wrong is right. But the law of God cannot be abolished, for it is the statement of the will of God (Romans 2:18). In very fact it is the life and character of God. “The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Romans 7:12). We read the written law, and find in it our duty made plain. But we have not done it; therefore we as guilty. “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” “There is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Romans 3:23, 12).

Moreover, there is not one who has strength to do the law, its requirements are so great. Then it is very evident that no one can be justified by the works of the law, and it is equally evident that the fault is not in the law, but in the individual. Christ saves, and let the man get Christ in the heart by faith, and then the righteousness of the law will be there also, for Christ says, “I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart” (Psalm 40:8). He who would throw away the law because it will not call evil good, would reject God because He will “by no means clear the guilty” (Exodus 34:7). But God will remove the guilt, will make the sinner righteous, that is, in harmony with the law, and then the law which before condemned him will witness to his righteousness.

**Tuesday: Progress?** – “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:22). This apostasy, and the apostasy we see in our church today, was progressive. As to us, we were warned: “The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh-day Adventists, and that this reformation would consist in giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith, and engaging in a process of reorganization. Were this reformation to take place, what would result? The principles of truth that God in His wisdom has given to the remnant church, would be discarded. Our religion would be changed. The fundamental principles that have sustained the work for the last fifty years would be accounted as error. A new organization would be established. Books of a new order would be written. A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced. The founders of this system would go into the cities, and do a wonderful work. The Sabbath of course, would be lightly regarded, as also the God who

created it. Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the new movement. The leaders would teach that virtue is better than vice, but God being removed, they would place their dependence on human power, which, without God, is worthless. Their foundation would be built on the sand, and storm and tempest would sweep away the structure” {Ellen White, 1SM 204.2}. Is this progress?

Wednesday: What the Jews and gentiles Share in Common – In Romans 1, Paul deals with the sin of the Gentiles, and our Lesson writer says that but Paul “wasn’t going to let his own people, his own countrymen, off the hook either” and so Paul dealt with the sin of the Jews also. We also deal with both so-called Christians and our fellow Seventh-day Adventists – what sin do we have in common? By the trinity doctrine, all deny the Father and His Son and hence antichrist. Explaining the common trinity doctrine, our Seventh-day Adventist church now teach that the one God of the Bible is made up of three Individual Beings that have always existed, that is none of them having beginning of days. In eternity past they got together in council and took on roles, that is, role of Father, role of Son and role of Holy Spirit. Jesus is not God’s Son in this doctrine because He is the Lord God Almighty in the exact same sense as the Father and the Holy Spirit. That the terms Father and Son are simply to show us their close relationship. Our church say: “A plan of salvation was encompassed in the covenant made by the Three Persons of the Godhead, who possessed the attributes of Deity equally. In order to eradicate sin and rebellion from the universe and to restore harmony and peace, one of the divine Beings accepted, and entered into, the role of the Father, another the role of the Son. The remaining divine Being, the Holy Spirit, was also to participate in effecting the plan of salvation. All of this took place before sin and rebellion transpired in heaven” (Gordon Jenson, *Adventist Review*, October 31, 1996, p.12 – Week of Prayer readings, ‘article ‘Jesus the Heavenly Intercessor’). “Another important point involves how we interpret the Bible. Here the issue pertains to whether we should interpret some passages literally or whether we may treat them more figuratively. Maybe we could illustrate this way. While we often refer to Jesus as the Son and frequently call the first person of the Godhead the Father, do we really want to take such expressions in a totally literal way? Or would it be more appropriate to interpret them in a more metaphorical way that draws on selective aspects of sonship and fatherhood” (Whidden, Moon and Reeve, *The Trinity*, p. 94). “The Father-Son relationship in the Godhead should be understood in a metaphorical sense, not in a literal sense” (Max Hatton, *Understanding the Trinity*, p. 97). The Bible says, “He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:22).

Thursday: The Gospel and Repentance – “Despise thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance” (Romans 2:4). God is the perfection of purity and holiness; man is altogether sinful. God knows every sin, yet he does not despise the sinner. “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:17). Christ said, “If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not” (John 12:47). In everything that he said and did, he was simply representing the Father. God “is long-suffering to usward;” and “the long-suffering of our God is salvation” (2 Peter 3:9, 15). Now it is impossible that one should consider the goodness and long-suffering of God without being humbled and moved to repentance. When we consider how tenderly God bears with us, it is not possible that we should deal harshly with our fellow-men. And if we do not judge, we shall not be judged (Luke 6:37). Repentance is a gift – “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:30-31). It was not to Israel alone that God gave repentance through Christ. “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43). And so plainly did God make this appear that even the exclusive Jews were forced to exclaim, “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18).

The goodness of God leads men to repentance. Therefore the whole earth is full of incentives to repentance, for “the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord” (Psalm 33:5). “The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy” (Psalm 119:64). God may be known through his works, and “God is love.” All creation reveals the love and mercy of God. And we need not try to improve on the Scriptures, and say that the goodness of God tends to lead men to repentance. The Bible says that it does lead them to repentance, and we may be sure that it is so. Every man is being led toward repentance as surely as God is good. But not all repent. Why? Because they despise the riches of the goodness and forbearance and long-suffering of God, and break away from the merciful leading of the Lord. But whoever does not resist the Lord, will surely be brought to repentance and salvation.