

Sabbath School Lesson #9 – The Most Convincing Proof – 24-30 November 2018

Chrst died on the cross to save us and to gather believers in Him. This gathering in unity as a result of Christ's death is what the haughty Caiaphas prophesied even in his stupor when he said it is better for one man to die than all to perish: "And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John 11:51-52). Only those who are Christ's are gathered. "We must have the Spirit of Christ, or we are none of His" {Ms103-1902.11}.

Sunday: Under the Cross of Jesus – "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4). The death of Christ is by which we become united to Him. Baptism signifies the death and resurrection of Christ. But it signifies more than a simple recognition of that fact. It signifies our acceptance of that sacrifice, and that we actually share His death and resurrection. If we ever are glorified with Christ, we must suffer with Him (Rom. 8:17). We must share the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death, and must know the power of His resurrection (Phil. 3:10).

Caiaphas prophesied that the death of Christ would gather us into one. At the voice of Christ the righteous dead, Lazarus, arose from the grave, but the unrighteous living, who were dead in their sins, nevertheless to their living death. They made this exhibition of Divine power a pretext for bringing His case before an extra-legal assembly. They argued that the Christ must be put out of the way, – lest the Romans come and take away their place and nation. The futility of this argument was proved by the event, not so many years after, when Jerusalem was utterly destroyed and both their place and nation indeed taken away, while only those who believed in Christ and remembered His warning words, directing them how and when to escape, were saved. But the words of Caiaphas are particularly remarkable, in that he, being a wicked man, while advising, with cold-blooded cruelty, the death of Christ, at the same time, unconsciously, states the mission upon which He came to the world, – to die for the people, – prophesies its success in gathering from all nations of the children of God.

Monday: Ministry of Reconciliation – In the first place, and including everything else, the relation of Christ to the world is one of love and sacrifice. "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). This is as true of Christ as of the Father, for He "loved us," and "gave Himself for us" (see Galatians 1:4; Revelation 1:5). He said, "The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). This means that the attitude of the church and of each member of it, to the world and to each individual in the world, whether ruler or subject, whether official or private citizen, is to be one of salvation, and not of condemnation and reproach. "For 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 to the rebellious Jews, "Do not think that I will accuse you unto the Father" (John 5:45). To His disciples He said, "Ye are the salt of the earth." "As My Father hath sent Me, so send I you" (John 20:21). Another text which shows at the same time the relation both of Christ and of His true disciples to the world, is 2 Corinthians 5:19-20; "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. So then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God." That is, we are now, as members of Christ's body, to do the same work that Christ did when He bodily on earth. We are "in Christ's stead," "ambassadors for Christ." God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and now He appeals to the world through the church of Christ, just as He did through Christ Himself when Christ was bodily on earth. This is the ministry of reconciliation.

Tuesday: Practical Unity – Many wrongly think practical unity exhibited by Christ can be copied as a schoolboy copies his lesson from the teacher. If it were so, there would be no hope for anybody; for the pattern is Christ, in whom dwelleth "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and no human being could ever successfully copy that life. "For my thoughts are not

your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 40:8-9). He who would copy the life of Christ as the schoolboy copies his lesson, and do it successfully, must have power equal to that of God. If the boy whose hand the master holds and guides in imitating the copy, were used as an illustration of the Christian life, it would be a step nearer the truth; but even that would not be the truth. That is mechanical. The boy may yield his hand willingly to the master, that it may be guided, but the writing is after all not his own. God does not use men as dead instruments to be operated upon, although men are to yield themselves as instruments of righteousness unto Him. The Christian life is simply the life of Christ. If the master who sets the copy for the schoolboy, could put all his own skill and power into that boy, so that what he writes will not be merely an imitation of the master's copy, but the master's own writing, and still the free act of the boy, we should have an illustration of the Christian life. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12-13). "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked" (1 John 2:6). And how was it that He walked? Christ Himself said, "The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works" (John 14:10). Christ has set us the copy, but instead of standing off and watching us try to imitate Him, He gladly comes in to our hearts, becoming one with us, so that His life is our life, and His act is ours. Only Christ does practical unity.

Wednesday: Unity Amid Diversity – It is sad that the many divisions in our church over doctrine and practice – health reforms, dress reform, worship styles, women ordination – are a stumbling-block to unbelievers. It is seeking unholy justification for an abnormal condition to say that all this division is unity in diversity, and all are just diverse parts of one great army under the One Leader. Jesus Christ said that union, not division, was an evidence of His divine mission. Hear Him pray: "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (John 17:21). Neither is this union to exist in mere sentiment, but in teaching, in doctrine, in purpose. Thus the Spirit of Christ, which also was in the prophets (1 Peter 1:10-11), speaks through Paul: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). It need scarcely be said that the only mind which will thus unite mortal man, with all their limitations of early environment, culture, education, habits, prejudices, and sins, is the mind of Christ. Therefore "let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

Thursday: Unity in Mission – We must be unanimously united in mission. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1). "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul" (Acts 4:32). When there was a question under consideration in the church at Jerusalem, "the apostles and elders, with the whole church" were of one mind in regard to it (Acts 15:22). The Apostle Paul wrote: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Again: "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 15:5-6). This gives the secret of unanimity. It must come from God. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). This comes not by votes or argument, but by prayer for the Spirit of submission one to another. Prayer and the study of the word of God, in which is the mind of Christ is revealed, and not discussion and legislation, is the proper way to settle all the affairs that concern the church of Christ. If there is not perfect unanimity in the church, there is wrong there. The wrong may lie with the majority, or with the minority, or with both; but it is certain that when there is not unanimity in regard to any question, the proper thing to do is to drop that question for the time, and seek the Lord. The "peace of God" is the only thing that should rule in the church of Christ.