

Sabbath School Lesson #10 – Unity and Brocken Relationships – 1-7 December 2018

Chrst would have us allow Him to save us by His life. “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Romans 5:10). Christ did not give His life to us for the purpose of taking it away again. When He gives us His life, He designs that we shall keep it forever. How do we get it? By faith. How do we keep it? By the same faith. “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him” (Colossians 2:6). His life can never end, but we may lose it by unbelief. We have not this life in ourselves, but “this life is in His Son.” “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:11-12). People sometimes say that they can believe that God forgives their sins, but they find it difficult to believe that He can keep them from committing sin. If there is any difference, the latter is the easier of the two; for the forgiveness of sins requires the death of Christ, while the saving from sins requires only His continued life. We are saved from sin by the life of Christ, and He has but one. He is “the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). It is by His present life that we are saved, that is, by His life in us from day to day. But the life which He now lives is the very same life that He lived in Judea years ago. He took again the same life that He laid down. Think what was in the life of Christ, as we have the record in the New Testament, and we shall know what ought to be in our lives now. If we allow Him to dwell in us, He will live just as He did then. If there is something in our lives that was not then in His, we may be sure that Jesus Christ is not living it in us now.

Sunday: Restored Friendship – Mark joined Paul and Barnabas in ministry, dissented, but later had a restored friendship: “Their way was toilsome; they encountered hardships and privations, and were beset with dangers on every side” {AA 169.2}. “Mark, overwhelmed with fear and discouragement, wavered for a time in his purpose to give himself whole-heartedly to the Lord's work. Unused to hardships, he was disheartened by the perils and privations of the way. He had labored with success under favorable circumstances; but now, amidst the opposition and perils that so often beset the pioneer worker, he failed to endure hardness as a good soldier of the cross. He had yet to learn to face danger and persecution and adversity with a brave heart. As the apostles advanced, and still greater difficulties were apprehended, Mark was intimidated and, losing all courage, refused to go farther and returned to Jerusalem” {AA 169.3}. “This desertion caused Paul to judge Mark unfavorably, and even severely, for a time. Barnabas, on the other hand, was inclined to excuse him because of his inexperience. He felt anxious that Mark should not abandon the ministry, for he saw in him qualifications that would fit him to be a useful worker for Christ” {AA 170.1}. “Paul was afterward reconciled to Mark and received him as a fellow laborer. He also recommended him to the Colossians as one who was a fellow worker ‘unto the kingdom of God,’ and ‘a comfort unto me.’ Colossians 4:11. Again, not long before his own death, he spoke of Mark as ‘profitable’ to him ‘for the ministry.’ 2 Timothy 4:11” {AA 170.2}.

Monday: From Slave to Son – We are told of Onesimus: “Paul might have urged upon Philemon his duty as a Christian; but he chose rather the language of entreaty: ‘As Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ, I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds; which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me.’ {AA 457.2}. “The apostle asked Philemon, in view of the conversion of Onesimus, to receive the repentant slave as his own child, showing him such affection that he would choose to dwell with his former master, ‘not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved.’ He expressed his desire to retain Onesimus as one who could minister to him in his bonds as Philemon himself would have done, though he did not desire his services unless Philemon should of his own accord set the slave free” {AA 457.3}.

Tuesday: Spiritual Gifts for Unity – When Christ “ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men” (Ephesians 4:8). These gifts were the gifts of the Spirit, for He said, “It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you” (John 16:7). And Peter said on the day of Pentecost: “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the

Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:32). These gifts are described in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, given to established the church. "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." What is the profit? "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12-13). The gifts of the Spirit must accompany the Spirit. As soon as the early disciples received the Spirit in accordance with the promise, they received the gifts. The absence of the gifts of the Spirit in any marked degree in the church, is evidence of the absence of the Spirit, not entirely, of course, but to the extent that God has promised it. The Spirit was to abide with the disciples forever, and the gifts of the Spirit must be manifest in the true church until the second coming of the Lord. The absence of any very marked manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit is evidence of the absence of the fullness of the Spirit; and that is the secret of the weakness of the church, and the great divisions that exist. Spiritual gifts establish the church; therefore the church that does not have those gifts cannot be established. Who may have the Spirit? Whoever asks for it with earnest desire (Luke 11:13). The Spirit has already been poured out, and God has never withdrawn the gift; it only needs that Christians should ask and accept.

Wednesday: Forgiveness – "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). But we must also note how this forgiveness can be received by us. In Matthew 18, the forgiven debtor went out and straightway became an unforgiving creditor. Then his lord said unto him, "Thou wicked servant, shouldest not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow servant, even as I had mercy on thee?" As the result of this unforgiving spirit the servant lost the benefit of the compassion which had been extended toward him, for "his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due him." And then comes the application of the lesson: "So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (Matthew 18:35). The same terrible fact is thus stated in James: "He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy" (James 2:13). But this does not grow out of any arbitrary refusal on the part of God to show mercy, as a punishment on a specially wicked class, but it is because in showing the unforgiving spirit *we cut ourselves off from forgiveness*. Jesus teaches that we can receive forgiveness from God, only as we forgive others. It is the love of God that draws us unto Him, and that love cannot touch our hearts without creating love for our brethren. To cherish an unmerciful spirit toward others, is to close the heart against the mercy of God toward ourselves. As if this above all others was the sin that His followers needed to be warned against, the one for which they were in the greatest danger of shutting from their hearts the light and love and peace of heaven, Jesus, after completing the Lord's prayer, added this: "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:15). He who is unforgiving, cuts off the very channel through which alone he can receive mercy.

Thursday: Restoration and Unity – People suppose that they are not required to exercise forgiveness unless the trespasser expressly asked for it, and that they are warranted in severely censuring anyone who offended them. They do not understand the spirit with which they are to rebuke the offender. Paul explained it when he said to Timothy: "Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2). Still more it is explained in Galatians 6:1: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." And our Lord Himself makes it still more plain: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother" (Matthew 18:15). The object of "rebuke" is not to irritate the trespasser, and make him feel bitter, but to win him from his evil way. The one trespassed against is to go with a spirit of forgiveness in his heart, utterly forgetful of the fact that he has been injured, but mindful only of the fact that the one before him has by the course which he has taken, wronged his own soul. His object must not be to make the brother feel that he has injured *him*; self must not appear. He must simply try to win the erring one to the right path.