

Sabbath School Lesson #3 – Preparing for Change – 13-19 April 2019

Christ would have us allow Him to go before us to prepare our way. Says the psalmist, “Righteousness shall go before Him; and shall set *us* in the way of His steps” (Psalm 85:13). Times might seem hard, but we must trust our present and future with God. “Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines;” says the prophet, “yet will I rejoice in the Lord, and I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Habakkuk 3:17-18).

Sunday: Unprepared – So many things come to men, even to professed Christians, and finds them unprepared! It should not be so with Christians. If we abide in Christ always, He who was always prepared, we too will always be prepared. But there are things such as preventable diseases like diabetes, cancer and heart failures, that should not find true Seventh-day Adventists unprepared. “Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday” (Psalm 91:5-6). What a blessed condition! what perfect rest and content, to ‘be quiet from fear of evil;’ to know that we are immune when the pestilence rages. Who may have this confidence? He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, making the Lord his habitation. But you say that it refers to ‘the time of trouble,’ when the seven last plagues shall be on the earth. Very true: but how can we know that God will protect us in the time of trouble to come, if we do not have His protection in present troubles? And if men do not now take God’s presence as the shield against disease, how can they trust in it when ‘sudden destruction’ comes? Will they not be found unprepared? “God is our refuge and strength” today, as surely as He ever will be, if we will but take Him as such. It is possible, and is God’s desire for us, that we shall be as free from the ravages of epidemics now, as when a thousand fall at our side, and ten thousand at our right hand.

Monday: Preparing for Marriage – “Those who regard the marriage relation as one of God’s sacred ordinances, guarded by His holy precept, will be controlled by the dictates of reason. Jesus did not enforce celibacy upon any class of men. He came not to destroy the sacred relationship of marriage, but to exalt it and restore it to its original sanctity. He looks with pleasure upon the family relationship where sacred and unselfish love bears sway” (CCh 133). “When so much misery results from marriage, why will not the youth be wise? Why will they continue to feel that they do not need the counsel of older and more experienced persons? In business, men and women manifest great caution. Before engaging in any important enterprise, they prepare themselves for their work. Time, money, and much careful study are devoted to the subject, lest they shall make a failure in their undertaking.” “How much greater caution should be exercised in entering the marriage relation — a relation which affects future generations and the future life? Instead of this, it is often entered upon with jest and levity, impulse and passion, blindness and lack of calm consideration. The only explanation of this is that Satan loves to see misery and ruin in the world, and he weaves this net to entangle souls. He rejoices to have these inconsiderate persons lose their enjoyment of this world and their home in the world to come.” “Shall children consult only their own desires and inclinations irrespective of the advice and judgment of their parents? Some seem never to bestow a thought upon their parents’ wishes or preferences, nor to regard their matured judgment. Selfishness has closed the door of their hearts to filial affection. The minds of the young need to be aroused in regard to this matter. The fifth commandment is the only commandment to which is annexed a promise, but it is held lightly and is even positively ignored by the lover’s claim. Slighting a mother’s love, dishonoring a father’s care are sins that stand registered against many youth” (id 116).

Tuesday: Preparing for Parenting – If any of the married would have children, the counsel by Ellen White is sufficient: “What the parents are, that, to a great extent, the children will be. The physical conditions of the parents, their dispositions and appetites, their mental and moral tendencies, are, to a greater or less degree, reproduced in their children” {MH 371.1}. “The nobler the aims, the higher the mental and spiritual endowments, and the better developed the physical powers of the parents, the better will be the life equipment they give their children. In cultivating that which is best in themselves, parents are exerting an influence to mold society and to uplift future generations” {MH 371.2}. “Fathers and mothers

need to understand their responsibility. The world is full of snares for the feet of the young. Multitudes are attracted by a life of selfish and sensual pleasure. They cannot discern the hidden dangers or the fearful ending of the path that seems to them the way of happiness. Through the indulgence of appetite and passion, their energies are wasted, and millions are ruined for this world and for the world to come. Parents should remember that their children must encounter these temptations. Even before the birth of the child, the preparation should begin that will enable it to fight successfully the battle against evil" {MH 371.3}. "Especially does responsibility rest upon the mother. She, by whose lifeblood the child is nourished and its physical frame built up, imparts to it also mental and spiritual influences that tend to the shaping of mind and character. It was Jochebed, the Hebrew mother, who, strong in faith, was 'not afraid of the king's commandment' (Hebrews 11:23), of whom was born Moses, the deliverer of Israel. It was Hannah, the woman of prayer and self-sacrifice and heavenly inspiration, who gave birth to Samuel, the heaven-instructed child, the incorruptible judge, the founder of Israel's sacred schools. It was Elizabeth the kinswoman and kindred spirit of Mary of Nazareth, who was the mother of the Saviour's herald" {MH 372.1}.

Wednesday: Preparing for Old Age – We read a psalm of Moses: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (Psalm 90:10). This verse states the fact that at the time it was written the average age of man was threescore and ten years. It does not say, nor does it intimate, that God ever fixed the limit of man's age at seventy years. Indeed, evidence to the contrary is furnished by the writer of the psalm in question. The psalm is "a prayer of Moses, the man of God," who at the age of fourscore was just beginning his lifework, and whose "eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated," at the age of sixscore years. Caleb, one of the associates of Moses, successfully carried on difficult military enterprises, involving severe bodily exercise and exposure, at the age of eighty-five, and was as vigorous and athletic at that age as when he was forty. Moses was not writing his own experience, but was merely telling how it was with the majority of man.

When God called Israel out of Egypt by Moses, it was His design that their days should "be long upon the land" which He was giving them. "But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness" (1 Corinthians 10:5). He gave them the bread of life and the water of life, and was justly disappointed and grieved when they died. In the dessert, God desired His people return to plant-based food, but they refused the manna, and many died without reaching old age. God has given Seventh-day Adventists the health message, but like Israel, many refuse plant-based food, and are unprepared for old age.

Thursday: Preparing for Death – In Matthew 26 we read of the feast that was prepared for our Lord just before His death. The feast took place "in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper." This is where a woman poured "an alabaster box of very precious ointment" unto the head of our Lord. Christ said, "she hath poured this ointment on My body, she did it for My burial." In the meantime Judas Iscariot was busy with the chief priests conspiring to betray our Lord to death. Yet, Jesus was not disturbed by what He knew was going on. Nothing in the entire Gospel history more fully shows the quiet calmness of the life of Jesus, and His perfect ministry of every situation, and His constant readiness for every event, than this feast at the house of Simon. Jesus was exactly what the ordinary man is. Although nobody else knew what was coming, Jesus well knew that within two or three days He was to be betrayed and crucified; nevertheless He accepted an invitation to a supper that was made specially for Him (see John 12:2). The ordinary man, not merely the man of the world, but the professed Christian, would under such circumstances think that he ought to be 'preparing for death;' but Jesus was always prepared for everything. There was no necessity for Him to change His manner of life in view of any event whatever. This contains a lesson for us. Even though we are not expecting death, but the coming of the Lord, we ought to be living day by day so that if it were announced as a certainty that the Lord would come tomorrow, it would make no difference in our arrangements. The exhortation of Jesus is: "Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 24:44). We have no time given us except "to-day." Therefore every day ought to be spent as though it were to be our last, and yet not our last, but our entire time of preparation for eternity.