

## Sabbath School Lesson #6 – The Marks of a Steward – 3–9 February 2018

**C**hrist would have us know that to be truly His stewards we must accept Him to live out His life in us, for He alone living in us can work the works of God. “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:1-2). Our Lesson study this week is taken from: Heb. 11:8-12; Rom. 4:13, 18-21; Matt. 6:24; Heb. 9:14; 1 John 5:2, 3; Luke 16:10-12.

Sunday: Faithfulness – As faithful stewards, our instruction is to “fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life” (1 Timothy 6:12). This fight is an individual affair, not a battle of armies, no other person can have faith for us. It is a dangerous thing, therefore, to learn to lean upon others and look to them for upholding faith in the Christian pathway. Jacob fought the good fight of faith when, on the night before his meeting with Esau, he was “left alone, and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day” (Genesis 32:24). None of the company he brought with him could have aided him in that conflict; they would have been a hindrance rather than a help. For that was a spiritual conflict, where faith and doubt were contending for the mastery. Jacob had the promise of God, made to him years before, and his faith grasped this, and he triumphed. Abraham fought this fight when, alone with his terrible secret, he went up with Isaac to the top of Mount Moriah. He had the promise of God concerning the seed that should come through Isaac, and his faith grasped this, “accounting that God was able to raise him from the dead” (Hebrews 11:19). The Saviour met the temptations of Satan alone in the desert, and His faith in the word of God won the victory. Again, in His last most terrible conflict, He was alone in Gethsemane; but His faith did not fail. If we win the prize of eternal life, we must certainly fight this fight, and we must fight it as those did who have been victorious before us, that is, by trust in the promises of God. We have His promises given us in rich abundance. We must know them so that we can say to Satan, “It is written” (Matthew 4:10). Faith alone wins the victory, and faith is perfect trust in the Word of God.

We review the fight of faith by answering few questions. May Christians fight? – Yes, certainly: “fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life” (1 Timothy 6:12). May they take human life? – “The Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them” (Luke 9:56). “He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk even as He walked” (1 John 2:6). “Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not” (1 Peter 2:23). With whom, then, are Christians to contend? – “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12). “Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh” (2 Corinthians 10:3). With what weapons only may Christians fight? – “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4).

As faithful stewards, we ought to know that our warfare is accomplished in Christ. We are enjoined to “fight the good fight of faith;” but we do so by laying hold on eternal life (1 Timothy 6:12). We are to fight only in the armour of God (Ephesians 6); which is Christ Himself, for He has overcome the world. Note the various pieces of armour. We are to have our loins girt about with truth; and Christ is the truth (John 14:6). Next comes the breastplate of righteousness; and Christ is made unto us righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30). Our feet are to be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; and Christ is our peace (Ephesians 2:14). Most important of all is the shield of faith. Now “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;” and Christ is the Word. It is by the faith of Christ that we are saved. Then we must have the helmet of salvation; and God in Christ is become our salvation (Isaiah 12:2). Jesus Christ is the Saviour. “And the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” Christ is the Word. So we see that to put on the whole armour of God is but to put on Christ. That armour has been tested in the fiercest fight, and has been proved invincible. We have to fight with principalities and powers and wicked spirits; but Christ has “spoiled principalities and powers,” and has led them openly in His triumphant procession. He triumphed over them in Himself. He is the Conqueror. He has won the victory. The foe with whom we wage our warfare is already defeated. What is it then but that our warfare is accomplished?

Monday: Loyalty – The Lord will not accept divided service. He will not go into partnership with the devil, each having an equal share in a servant. A man must be wholly the Lord’s, or he is not the Lord’s at all. Says Christ: “No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). No man can serve two masters, especially when they are directly opposed to each other, as God and mammon. Mammon was the Chaldean god supposed to

preside over wealth and the acquisition of property. So here it stands for property of any kind, not necessarily great riches, but whatever one acquires of this world's goods. If, then, we have given ourselves to the Lord as His servants, and then seek in anything to please ourselves only, we rob Him of service which is His due. Our strength, both of mind and body, belongs to the Lord, for He says: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind" (Luke 10:27-28). Now suppose a man indulges a wrong habit, which destroys his strength of body and vigor of mind; he is not then the Lord's slave; he is the slave of sinful indulgence. One man eats more than is good for him, more than he needs. He does so, simply because the food tastes good. That extra quantity of food, instead of increasing his strength, is a tax upon it. Strength that he should have to devote to the Lord is perverted to the service of appetite. Now it matters not what that man's profession is, he is not the bondservant of Christ. If he were, he would glorify God in eating and drinking, as well as in every other act of life.

Tuesday: A Clear Conscience – To have a clear conscience in Christ we must have "no more conscience of sins," and for that to be, "He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second" (Hebrews 10:2, 9). What is this "first" and "second"? The next verse makes it clear, for it continues without break, "by the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ." "The second" is the will of God by which we are sanctified. This is what Christ establishes in every human body that He is allowed to control. "The first," then is evidently "the will of the flesh," which is yielded up to Him, that He may take it away, and which must necessarily be removed from those who become sons of God through receiving Christ (John 1:12-13). With the will of God established in us by the indwelling of Christ by His own Spirit, it is evident that one's consciousness will be all of God's presence, and not at all of sin. That is the right way of losing the consciousness of sin. The wrong way, which is by far the most common, is to persist in sin, to refuse to confess that we are sinners, until the conscience becomes "seared with a hot iron" (1 Timothy 4:2), so that it cannot feel the presence of sin, and evil seems the same as good. The person in that condition says with Satan, "Evil, be thou my good." This state of things is hopeless, but it is certain to be the final result with every one who does not regard his body as a thing prepared solely as a sacrifice unto God, that He may do His own will in it. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

Wednesday: Obedience – "By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for His name" (Romans 1:5). This verse is of course dependent on that which has preceded, and the antecedent of the pronouns "whom," and "His," is the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. The apostle's statement is, that by Jesus Christ he has received the grace to be an apostle, for obedience to the faith among all nations. Paul said that his great desire was to "win Christ, And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Philippians 3:8-9). Faith itself brings righteousness, even the imputed righteousness of God through Christ, in the remission of sins. It is that righteousness which is "without the law, unto all and upon all them that believe" (Romans 3:21-22). It is the same righteousness which Abraham received, when he "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:3). This righteousness is "imputed without works" (Romans 4:6); it is bestowed as an act of God's free grace. This imputed righteousness is simply "the remission of sins that are past," and may be called passive righteousness. The man is counted as though he had always been obedient, although he has never been obedient. But following this there must be active righteousness through the remainder of life; for it is only to those who patiently continue in well-doing (righteousness) that God will render eternal life. Now this active righteousness is just as much the work of faith as is the other. This is shown by Philippians 3:9, already quoted, in which Paul says that he wants to be found not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is by faith of Jesus Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. The same is shown also by Paul's prayer, that the Philippians might be "filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:11). This is the righteousness, or the obedience, of faith. From these texts we can say that a man does good works, not in order that he may be righteous, but because he is righteous. His works will never bring righteousness, for the righteousness of God is only by the faith of Jesus Christ; and when he has once experienced that blessedness, he works because he cannot help it, unless he renounces his blessed experience and faith. He works because the love of Christ constrains him.

Thursday: Trustworthy – "We are to be faithful, trustworthy subjects of the kingdom of Christ, that those who are worldly-wise may have a true representation of the riches, the goodness, the mercy, the tenderness, and the courtesy of the citizens of the kingdom of God" {6T 189.3}.