

Sabbath School Lesson #10 – Living the Gospel – 31 Aug-6 Sep 2019

Christ will have a people who are “zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14-15), but the good works must be those which God Himself has wrought for us in Christ. Our best works are utterly worthless to save. Only His work is enduring. “His work is honourable and glorious; and His righteousness endureth for ever” (Psalm 111:3). We do not work for eternal life. No works that we could do would make the smallest part of payment towards it. It is the gift of God. True, it comes only through righteousness, but righteousness is a gift. Therefore, “by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast; for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8-10). It is “not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour” (Titus 3:5-6). It is by the works of God, therefore, that we are saved, and not by our own works. Good works there are in abundance, and they are for us too, but through no work of our own; solely through the perfect work of God in Jesus Christ. When we cease from our own works and stop all boasting, and confess that it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves, we leave the way open for the Lord to display His own infinite workmanship. We simply show forth His excellencies. Whoever thus commits His way entirely to the Lord may rest in the knowledge that all is well. The good works which will be required of him in the Judgment, when God, without respect of persons, will judge according to every man’s work, are already prepared. Indeed, they are finished; for the works of God were finished from the foundation of the world. We were then created in Christ, and when we acknowledge this, His works are ours. “Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:11).

Sunday: “For God So Loved ...” – The keynote of the Gospel call is “whosoever.” “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). “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17). “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” No distinction is made; “for there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek.” Read again the second and third chapters of Romans, and the fourth also. Indeed, the whole book of Romans gives a deathblow to that wicked idea that God is partial, and that He favours some people more than others. The idea that God has special blessings for one nation of earth that He has not for others, and no matter whether that one nation be called Jews, is a direct denial of the gospel of the grace of God. The thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth verses of the tenth chapter of Romans show the steps necessary for salvation. First, men must call upon the Lord. But in order to call upon Him, they must believe in Him. But they cannot hear without someone being sent. But preachers have been sent, yet all have not believed and obeyed, although they have all heard. What have they all heard? – They have all heard the word of God. In proof of this, the apostle says that faith comes by hearing the word of God, and adds: “Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world” (Romans 10:18). All in the world have heard the gospel, and there is no excuse for unbelief on the part of any human.

Monday: Compassion and Repentance – Christ had compassion on those who were in distress, who were burdened with sin, and it was this that led Him to die for the world. The same spirit in anyone will reveal itself in the same way – he will be touched with the woes of others, and like the Master will go about doing good. But it is said, ‘Oh this is all well enough for Christ-He was the Son of God.’ Yes, but hear Him: “I speak not of Myself; but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works” (John 14:10). We can take courage in this, that what Jesus did, was in just such flesh as ours; as God through Him wrought great things, so we can say, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 3:13). Having had compassion on us, Christ purchased us with His blood and gives us His faith to overcome sin. “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe” (Galatians 3:22). He who knows that he is a sinner is in the way to acknowledge it; and “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). No one hates the man who has saved his life by pointing out to him an unknown peril; on the contrary, such an one is regarded as a friend, and is always remembered with gratitude. Even so will the law be regarded by one who is prompted by its warning voice to flee from the wrath to come – he will ever say, "I hate vain thoughts, but Thy law do I love" (Psalm 119:113).

Tuesday: Grace and Good Works – "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16). "The brethren" for whom we are to give ourselves are the sons of Adam, for all who are children of Adam must be brethren. Of course those who give themselves for their brethren in Adam, will without question give themselves for their brethren in Christ, who Himself counts even those who do not know the name of God as His brethren, saying, "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren" (Hebrews 2:12). "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Let no one say or think, 'My life is so commonplace and uneventful that I have no occasion to lay down my life for anybody; no great opportunities come to me.' It is not in dying on some great occasion that laying down one's life consists, the laying down of life consists in not counting it our own, reckoning yourselves as dead, deliberately putting our life from us, and forgetting all about it in thoughts of others. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). It is not by our own efforts that we can be saved or do good works. Nobody can be saved by trying to be saved. Salvation is too great a thing to be accomplished by human efforts. Strange as it may seem, we can be saved only as we cease all efforts to save ourselves, and lose all thought of self in efforts to save others. Only so do we enter into sympathy with Christ and become labourers together with Him. But that casting away of self is our salvation, for while we are concerning ourselves for others, Christ, who is also concerning Himself for others, is as a matter of course caring for us. We read in Scripture that God "turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends" (Job 42:10).

Wednesday: Our Common Humanity – In Christ we find our common humanity. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28-29). "There is no difference." "All have sinned" and "whosoever" will can be saved. This is the key-note of the Gospel. All are sinners, and all are saved in the same way. They who would make a distinction on the ground of nationality, claiming that there is something different for the Jew than for the Gentile, might just as well make a difference on the ground of sex, claiming that women cannot be saved in the same way and at the same time as men, or that a servant cannot be saved in the same way as his master. No; there is but one way, and all human beings, of whatever race or condition, are equal before God. "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus," and Christ is the One. So it is that "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy Seed, which is Christ." "For ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." There is but one seed, but it embraces all who are Christ's.

Thursday: The Everlasting Gospel – The "everlasting gospel" (Revelation 14:6) is the glad tidings, or good news, of the everlasting covenant. The "everlasting covenant" is spoken of as the covenant made with David, but it in that case refers to David's seed, Christ, through whom the covenant was to be established, around whom all the blessings of the covenant clustered, through whom they all came (see 2 Samuel 23:5; Psalm 50:5; 89:28; Isaiah 24:5; 55:3; 61:8; Jeremiah 32:40; Ezekiel 6:60). It is called the "everlasting covenant," because it is the only means through which the blessings of God have come to fallen man from the beginning to the close of probation. The last proclamation of the everlasting Gospel "to every nation, and kindred, and tongue and people" as a witness to all nations, the announcement the fulness of which is to make ready a people prepared for the coming of Christ, is this: "Fear God, and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come; and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Revelation 14:7). This knowledge is that which the Sabbath is designed to keep in our mind. "He hath made a memorial for His wonderful works." Through His work we have salvation; in the works of His hands we triumph; therefore the Sabbath, which makes known to us the wonderful, finished works of the Lord, is that which reveals to us to the full the sanctifying power of God. The everlasting Gospel is but a call to worship Him that made heaven and earth and all things.