

Sabbath School Lesson #13 – A Community of Servants – 21-27 September 2019

Christ would have us distrust ourselves whilst trusting in God so as to be a community of servants who are steadfast in the faith. Paul admonishes us: “Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works” (Hebrews 1:23-24). Many a professed Christian is discouraged by his weaknesses. There are two ways of looking at our weaknesses. One is to brood over them, lose sight of God’s willingness to help, and become discouraged. This pleases Satan. If we are prone to doubt and become faint-hearted, Satan will assist us to see more lions in the way than really exist. And such a course is really a form of selfishness. The individual becomes so intense by self-conscious that he can take cognisance of nothing else. He thinks of himself so much that he loses sight of Christ. He imagines that he himself must do the great work that is to be done, and when a few attempts show him the impossibility of it, he becomes discouraged. Another way to consider our own weakness is in light of God’s promises (2 Peter 1:3-4). In doing this we have every reason to be encouraged; God is pleased with us. The more we distrust ourselves while trusting God, the stronger we will be, for the Lord says: “My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). And in this, Paul was led to say: “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake; for *when I am weak then am I strong*” (verse 10). None ever had more trials than Paul had, or felt less confidence in himself; but he believed God’s promises, and it was no vain boast for him to say: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

Sunday: Agents of Change – This calls for understanding of Christ’s relation to the world. 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 2:20; Revelation 1:5). Christ 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.” We are now, as members of Christ’s body, to do the same work that Christ did when He was on earth in the flesh. 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 then through Christ Himself.

Monday: A Servant Remnant – The example of Moses as a servant remnant is brought to view. “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me” (Deuteronomy 18:15; Acts 3:22). These words were spoken to the children of Israel by Moses, and the Prophet of whom he spoke was the Lord Jesus Christ. From his very birth the history of Moses was a shadow of the history of Jesus. Satan moved on Pharaoh’s heart, and made him afraid that the children of Israel would grow too many and too strong, and would fight against him. Then he tempted him to try to stop this by killing all the baby boys. But the angels of God were watching over Moses when his mother left him in the little ark by the river, and the Spirit of God moved the heart of Pharaoh’s daughter with pity for the beautiful child, so that she took him for her own, and gave his mother the money to take care of him. Of the Child Jesus, Satan made Herod feel afraid that Jesus would try to take his place on the throne. Then he suggested to him to get rid of Jesus by slaying all the little

children, so that he would be sure to kill Him. But the angels of God, who watched the cradle on the banks of the river Nile, also watched the Babe in the manger in Bethlehem. An angel brought Joseph a message from God, telling him to take the young Child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, away from the wrath of Herod. Through Pharaoh's daughter God sent the money to Moses' mother. And by the Star that appeared in the East He led the wise men to Bethlehem, with rich presents for the infant King, – these gifts provided for all their needs while Joseph and Mary and the Child Jesus went on their journey to flee to Egypt and during their stay in Egypt. Another thing that we noticed in the life of Moses was that his brethren "refused him" (Acts 7:35); they would not believe that God had chosen him to deliver them. And the Jews ill-treated Jesus, and said, "We will not have this Man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14). But this did not upset the plan of God, for He exalted Jesus to be a Prince and a Saviour of those who had rejected Him. Moses spent forty years of his life as a shepherd, and was thus prepared for the time when the Lord "led His people like a flock" (Psalm 77:20) through the wilderness by the hand of Moses. In this he was a shadow of the great Good Shepherd, who leads His sheep and lambs through the wilderness of this world, feeds them and shelters them, and keeps them from straying into dangerous places. If we listen to the voice of our Shepherd and follow Him, He will lead us safely to the Promised Land where all His flock will be gathered at last; "there shall be one fold and one Shepherd" (John 10:16).

Tuesday: Reaching Souls – In our reaching souls by faith in the spoken word we should also have corresponding works. The scriptures (see James 2:17-25) show how inseparable are faith and works. So closely united are they that the possession of one presupposes the possession of the other. Yet it must not be forgotten that faith is first. There can be no works where there is no faith. We read: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith," and, "the just shall live by faith." This is literally true. It is also true, as Paul says, that "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9). When the jailer asked, "What shall I do to be saved?" Paul answered him truly, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). This may be said to comprise all that is necessary for salvation, because works are included in faith; they follow it as surely as flowers follow the showers of spring. If a man has the faith of Abraham, he will do the works of Abraham; if a man really believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, he will bring forth works "meet for repentance."

Wednesday: Grace within the Church – "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1). "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:20-22). "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:33, 40). To grow into unity, church members should be "fitly framed together." Each member must find his proper place in Christ. We are not to unite in error. "If unity could be secured only by compromise to truth and righteousness, then let there be difference, and even war" {GC 45.3}. Both within and outside our church there is a battle going on between truth and error. "We have far more to fear from within than from without. The hindrances to strength and success are far greater from the church itself than from the world" {RH March 22, 1887 Par 4}. "The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing controversy concerning the law of God. Upon this battle we are now entering – a battle between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition" {GC 582.2}.

Thursday: Encourage Each Other to Good Works – "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). It means character must be settled, hardened, established, by meeting in the grace and strength of Christ the trials and conflicts of life. It also means we should so much the more not forsake the assembling of ourselves together and exhorting one another. As the day of the Lord draws near, perils thicken around the little flock; the enemy brings upon us sorer temptations. So much the more we ought not to neglect every means of grace. And courage and faith in God should be our watch word.