

Sabbath School Lesson #4 – Prayer Power: Interceding for Others – 18-24 July 2020

Christ would have us confess our sins. But to whom should confession of sin be made? “Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). “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). Confession of sin should only be made to the party or parties that have been wronged. God is always one of these parties, for every sin is a transgression of His law. A sin that is against God alone, should be confessed to Him alone. One that is against our neighbour should be confessed to God and to our neighbour. God forgives the wrong that has been done to Him in the transgression of His law, and our neighbour forgives – or should forgive – the wrong done to him. This way, the one who committed the wrong is cleared from the guilt of his transgression. Man has no power to forgive sin, for sin is the transgression of the law of God, and no man has authority to say that the claims of that law are satisfied. Even God Himself could not say so had not the demands of that holy law been met in the death of Christ. Any man can forgive a wrong done to himself, but this would not free the wrong-doer from the claims of the law of God. But if a man will not forgive a wrong that is done him, he cannot hold the wrong-doer in guilt if the latter has made confession. And what is confession? It is coming into agreement with the Spirit of Christ and saying that the act of which we have been guilty, is wrong. But in confessing that we were wrong we also testify that God and His law are right. By the very act of condemning ourselves we justify God. We say with Paul, “The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good; . . . but I am carnal, sold under sin” (Romans 7:12-14). When we have transgressed against our neighbour we have thereby testified against the law of God, which commands us to love our neighbour as our-self. We have in the act condemned God and His law, and justified self. Our confession, our condemnation of self and justification of God and God’s law, must be as extensive as was our justification of self.

Sunday: A Cosmic Struggle – The apostle Paul describes a cosmic struggle that we face as follows: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12). Who can hope to win in such a contest? Surely no one by himself, for every man is at a terrible disadvantage when he cannot see his foe, and when that foe has superior power, and when it is a legion to one. So the apostle continues, “Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (verse 13). But only God can use the armour of God. Therefore the apostle James says: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). So our part is to submit to God, and let Him protect us from the evil one. How forcible, therefore, in connection with these texts, is the prayer uttered by the Psalmist: “Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me” (Psalms 36:11). It is with the hands and feet that men wrestle, but God will protect us from the foot of pride and the hand of evil. “The foot of pride” is very appropriate, because it is pride that makes men fall. He who humbly submits to God, is sure to win. We are to submit and continue so in faith. “Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4). That means that a man can live a just life only by retaining that humble simplicity that will lead him to distrust himself and to trust God. If when he wrestles well for a season, by the grace of God, he begins to think that the strength which has enabled him to gain victories resides within himself, then he will fall; for says the Scripture: “A man’s pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit” (Proverbs 29:23). So it also is that, “pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18). When a man is high up, he is apt to become dizzy-headed, and if in that state without strength, he must surely fall. But there is no such danger to the humble-minded man, for, as John Bunyan aptly put it, ‘He that is down needs fear no fall; He that is low no pride; He that is a humble ever shall have God to be his guide.’

Monday: Jesus: The Mighty Intercessor – That our Lord intercedes for us is illustrated well in how He dealt with Peter. On the morning that our Lord resurrected, when the women

came to the sepulchre on that morning of the third day the angel reminded them that Christ had said He would rise again the third day, and told them to hasten to tell the disciples. Mark's narrative adds two words, not mentioned by the other writers, which we know meant so much to one in that sorrowing company: "Go your way, tell His disciples, *and Peter.*"

Poor Peter had denied his Lord, and then knowing his awful sin, and remembering Christ's words, that before the hour of cock-crowing he would deny Him thrice, his heart must have well-nigh broken as the Lord turned upon him that last look of love and sorrow. It must have been the love in the look that kept any heart at all in him; and now on the morning of the third day, with no recollection of Christ's words regarding the rising again from the dead, with only the leaden sorrow of this sin weighing upon his soul, he must have wept at the dawning of another day of waking and reflection. But then came the word that the angel spoke: "Tell His disciples, and Peter." The Lord knew Peter's sorrow; and how that special personal message must have thrilled the burdened heart! It is not to be wondered at that the fervency of Peter's desire to see Jesus and fall at His feet was rewarded by an interview that same day. We are told that the Lord had appeared to Peter before he appeared to all together. All assembled were to see Him that day that they might be witnesses of the fact that He rose the third day according to the Scriptures; but the tender compassion of the Lord for the erring, even for the one weakly denying Him with cursing, were shown for the encouragement of the repentant sinner in all time by that special message and the special interview. It was the prayer of the Lord, too, that saved Peter in the midst of his sin, and gave him repentance and contrition of heart. Jesus had told him that Satan was trying to get him into his power, that he might sift him as wheat. "But I have prayed for thee," He said, "that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:31). It was the prayer of Christ that saved Peter from utter shipwreck of faith. We may well think it a blessed thing to have the prayers of such an One, and long for such a promise as that for ourselves. We have it. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word" (John 17:20). Jesus prays for every believer. "The Spirit itself maketh intercession" (Romans 8:26). The Lord longs to help and to save us all. Peter's awful sin could not baffle the love of God which brought him to repentance and to the feet of Christ, more humble, less self-reliant. That love is drawing every sinner today. Oh, that God's goodness might yet lead to repentance the multitudes who are still refusing to be drawn, and still continue to do despite to the Spirit of Grace.

Tuesday: Paul's Intercessory Prayers – Paul prayed for the people to receive Christ. The trouble with many is they do not know the value of the treasure they have received. They receive Christ, and are blessed; then, by reason of not increasing in the knowledge of Him, they are conscious of a great lack, and so hastily conclude that the gift which they have received is not great enough, and that God must have another in reserve for them. As though God had any greater gift than Christ, or that when He gave Christ, He made some reservation. No; with Him He freely gives us "all things." If we have received Christ, our part is to know that in Him all our wants are supplied. Paul said, "after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" (see Ephesians 1:15-20).

Wednesday: Unseen Powers at Work – In Daniel 10 is an illustration of unseen battle. We are told: "The king of Persia was controlled by the highest of all evil angels. He refused, as did Pharaoh, to obey the word of the Lord. Gabriel declared, He withstood me twenty-one days by his representations against the Jews. But Michael came to his help, and then he remained with the kings of Persia, holding the powers in check, giving right counsel against evil counsel. Good and evil angels are taking a part in the planning of God in His earthly kingdom. It is God's purpose to carry forward His work in correct lines, in ways that will advance His glory. But Satan is ever trying to counterwork God's purpose. Only by humbling themselves before God can God's servants advance His work. Never are they to depend on their own efforts or on outward display for success" {EG White, 14LtMs, Lt 201, 1899, par 6}.

Thursday: Prayer Focus – We are counselled: "Souls are to be sought for, prayed for, labored for. Earnest appeals are to be made. Fervent prayers are to be offered. Our tame, spiritless petitions are to be changed into petitions of intense earnestness" {7T 12.1}.