

Sabbath School Lesson #7 – Sharing the Word – 8-14 August 2020

Christ would have us share the word of God and also live by every word from God. To this we read: “So shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11). When the angel Gabriel announced to Mary the coming birth of Jesus, and how it was to be brought about, he said, “No word from God shall be void of power” (Luke 1:37). Every word of God is living, and active; every word is life, so that man may live by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Therefore the Lord says: “As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of My mouth; it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Isaiah 55:10-11). His word cannot return to Him void, because it is power and life; it will produce life, just as surely as the rain causes the earth to bring forth fruit. Therefore all that ministers and teachers of the Gospel have to do, is to let the word of God dwell in them, so that they can speak it, and God will see that it reaches those who need it. “He that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully.” “Is not My word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” (Jeremiah 23:28-29).

In the sixteenth verse of the third chapter of Colossians occurs this exhortation: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.” This text, rightly understood, speaks much about “sharing the word” – the title of our Lesson. Let us, therefore, spend a few moments to see how much is involved in it. That there is a power in the word of God, far above that of any other book, cannot be doubted. The Lord through the prophet Jeremiah rebukes the false prophets, who speak their own words instead of the words of God, and says: “What is the chaff to the wheat?” “Is not My word like as a fire? Saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” And the same prophet thus relates his experience when he was reproached because of the word of the Lord: “Then I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name. But His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay” (Jeremiah 20:9).

The word of the Lord hidden in the heart protects against sin. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee” (Psalm 119:11). And of the righteous we read that the reason why none of his steps slide, is that “the law of his God is in his heart” (Psalm 37:31). David also says: “Concerning the works of men, by the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer” (Psalm 17:4). Jesus, also, in His memorable prayer for His disciples, said, “Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

The word of the Lord is the seed by which the sinner is born again. We read of the “Father of lights” that “Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures” (James 1:17-18). And the Apostle Peter says: “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently; being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:22-23). So we learn that, while those who are Christ’s are born of His Spirit, the word of God is the seed from which they are developed into new creatures in Christ. The word, then, has power to give life. It is itself “quick,” that is, alive, and powerful; and the psalmist prays to be quickened, made alive, according to the word, and then says: “This is my comfort in my affliction; for Thy word hath quickened me” (Psalm 119:25, 50). This is stated very plainly by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself in John 6:63: “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” This shows that the power of the Spirit of God dwells in the word of God.

With the knowledge that the word of God is the seed by which men are begotten unto a new life, and that the hiding of the word in the heart keeps one from sin, we may easily understand 1 John 3:9: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” How simple! There is in the word that divine energy which can transform the mind, and make a new man, “which

after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Of course the word can do this only for those who receive it in simple faith. But the word does not lose any of its power. If the soul thus born again retains that sacred, powerful word by which he was begotten, it will keep him still a new creature. It is as powerful to preserve as it is to create. Jesus, our great Example, gave us an illustration of this. When tempted on every point by the devil, His sole reply was, “It is written,” followed by a text of Scripture that met the case exactly. A Christian who would stand fast must do the same thing. There is no other way. This is an illustration of David’s words, “By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.”

It is this of which we read in Revelation 12:11, where, in speaking of the casting down of the “accuser of our brethren,” the heavenly voice says: “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.” This does not mean, as some assume, the word of their testimony in meeting, but the word of the testimony in which the psalmist found so great delight. They overcame Satan by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of God.

But this cannot be done except by those who have the word of God abiding in them. The Spirit is given to bring truth to remembrance, in time of trial; but that which one has not learned he cannot remember. But if he has hidden the word in his heart, the Spirit will, in the hour of temptation, bring to his remembrance just that portion which will foil the tempter.

Every Christian can testify as to the power of the word at such times. When inclined to congratulate himself on some real or fancied superior attainment, what a powerful check are the words, “Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” (1 Corinthians 4:7). Or when harsh and bitter thoughts are struggling within him for control, what power to quell those turbulent emotions lies in the words, “Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil” (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). When provoked almost beyond endurance, how the gentle rebuke, “The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men,” helps one to be calm. Add to this the many “exceeding great and precious promises” which bring victory to every soul that grasps them by faith. We may testify to the miraculous power resting in simple words of the Scriptures.

Now whence comes this power? The answer is in the words of Christ: “The words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.” What spirit are they? Peter, speaking of the prophets, says that it was the Spirit of Christ that was in them (1 Peter 1:10-11); the power of His Spirit dwells in the word. Of truth, Christ Himself dwells in the word, for He is the Word.

Who can understand the mystery of inspiration? – He who can understand the mystery of the incarnation; for both are the same. “The Word was made flesh.” We cannot understand how in Christ “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead”, and at the same time be in the form of a servant, subject to all the infirmities of mortal flesh. Neither can we understand how the Bible could be written by fallible mortals, exhibiting the peculiarities of each, and yet be the pure, unadulterated word of God. It is very true that the power that was in the Word that was made flesh, is the power that is in the word that apostles and prophets have written for us.

Now we can begin to appreciate more the power residing in the word. “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth” (Psalm 33:6). Christ, by whom the worlds were made, upholds them “by the word of His power” (Hebrews 1:3). The power that resides in the words of revelation, is the power that could speak the worlds into existence, and can keep them in their appointed places. Surely, then, it is worth our while to take time to study and meditate upon the word. It is by so doing that we bring Christ Himself into our hearts. In the fifteenth chapter of John, the Lord exhorts us to abide in Him, and to allow Him to abide in us; and then a few verses later He speaks of our abiding in Him, and His word abiding in us (John 15:4, 7). It is by His word that Christ does abide in the heart; for Paul says that Christ will dwell in the heart by faith (Ephesians 3:17); and “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

Many people earnestly long for Christ to come and dwell in their hearts, and they imagine that the reason why Christ does not do so is because they are not good enough, and they vainly set about trying to get so good that He can condescend to come in. They forget that Christ comes into the heart, not because it is free from sin, but in order to free it from sin.