

Sabbath School Lesson #1 – God’s Mission to Us: Part 1 – 30 Sep-6 Oct 2023

Christ would have us know that God takes the initiative to seek us when we stray from Him. “And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?” (Genesis 3:9). But Adam struggled with self-defence. Let us examine his answers. Adam answered God saying, “I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.” God asked him, “Who told thee that thou wast naked?” Now the question: “Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?” Did he answer: ‘Yes, I have, and I am inclined to think that it was not exactly right and I am sorry.’ Did he? Oh, no. The question is, “Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?” Had he not eaten of it? Certainly he had. Why did he not say, Yes? He did not answer, Yes. Though that is all the answer there was any room for. But he said, “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” It came in at last, admitting that he was involved in it. But whereabouts did he come in? The last possible place. The woman, and even the Lord Himself, must come in for the blame before the man could allow himself to come into it at all. In all this he was simply saying, ‘I would not have done it if it had not been for the woman, because she gave it to me; and if the woman had not been here, she would not have done it; and if you had not put the woman here, she would not have been here; if she had not been here, she would not have given it to me, and if she had not given it to me, I would not have done it. So, as a matter of fact, I did eat, but the responsibility is back yonder.’ What was it about him that would lead him to involve everybody else in the universe before himself and before admitting that he had any part in it at all? Nothing but love of self, self-defence, and self-protection.

Sunday: The God Who Reaches Out to Us – Throughout history, God continues to ask: “Where are you?” In your personal experience, what does this mean for you, and how have you answered Him? “And the Lord called unto Adam and said unto him, Where art thou?” (Genesis 3:9). This is the first question that God ever put to man. Adam had yielded to temptation. He had broken God’s law. He was ashamed to look God in the face. When he heard his Maker approaching he fled. He vainly endeavoured to hide himself from God’s omniscient eye. He foolishly thought to escape from God’s terrible justice. He fled! But where? He tried to hide himself! But what would conceal him? Nothing. He is summoned. He must appear. He is questioned. He must reply. But what can he say? He has sinned – and sinned foolishly, and sinned wickedly. He cannot with any show of reason or justice excuse himself. This is just the case of every one of Adam’s descendants. We have all sinned – sinned without any reason for doing so. We have broken a law which is holy, just and good. In addition to this we have rejected a gospel which is gracious, which is merciful and full of compassion. We have refused to accept a pardon, – a pardon procured at the expense of the sacrifice of God’s only begotten Son, – a pardon freely offered and urged upon us by everything kind and winning. We have refused to be reconciled to God, though He has sent His servants as His ambassadors to us, beseeching us to be so. We turned to Him the back and not the face, we have wandered far from Him; and now He comes near to us and asks, “Where art thou?” Where, Lord! – among Thine enemies, afar from Thee by wicked works, and fearing to see Thy face. Where? – in sin under condemnation, and doomed to go down in woe. “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body” (2 Corinthians 5:10). Has there never been a time, when, if God had spoken in a voice of thunder to your soul, and asked, “Where art thou?” you would have trembled at the sound, and shrunk from the appalling inquiry? If there has, thank God, that in that forbidden act, in that guilty hour, you were not cut off and taken away forever; thank God, from the bottom of your hearts, that there was One who then said, “let it alone this year also” (Luke 13:8), One who interceded for you, and we trust successfully, that you might yet be spared, to live, to repent, to believe, to the saving of your soul. Pray that God asks you the question, “where art thou?” each time you stray or about to stray from the narrow path.

Monday: The God Who Longs to Be With Us – What are ways that you experience God’s presence in your life? Reflect on the experience of Joshua. “Be strong and of a good courage” (Joshua 1:9) was the word of God to Joshua as the children of Israel were about to

cross Jordan, and to enter the promised land, and this is His word to every one who enters His service. "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed." And then He gives the reason, "For the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." "I will be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Joshua 1:5). To all who feel discouraged, the Lord says, "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; ... I will be with thee; I will not fail thee nor forsake thee." Christ is our example in this as in everything else. He was despised and rejected of men, He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, the faces of men were hid from Him, and by them He was not esteemed. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:11). Yet in view of all this it was written of Him, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged" (Isaiah 42:4). And having passed through it all, His last words to His disciples before going over the brook Cedron, His words to us, were, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Tuesday: The God Who Became One With Us – Think what it means that God's love for us is so great that He would come to us in our own humanity. How should we respond to this love, especially in terms of mission to others? "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). He was made our flesh, which is every man's flesh, for "there is one flesh of men" (1 Corinthians 15:39). He took a nature common to all man, high and low, rich and poor. He was "made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Romans 1:8). He is "the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). Although the Word was made flesh, even our own sinful flesh, He was "full of grace and truth." He was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). God made Him "to be sin for us," yet He "knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21). He was made to be sin, yet He "did not sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:22). It is these two things combined that make Him a sympathising Saviour, in whom we may freely confide. No one can sympathise with another's failings, if he has not been tempted in the same way. Moreover, those who are guilty of any sin are the quickest and fiercest to condemn others for the same sin. Sinners excuse sin, but have no sympathy for fellow-sinners. It is only those who are cleansed from sin, who can exercise charity or mission for the erring. Christ was tempted to the uttermost, and was always pure from the slightest taint of sin; therefore we may trust Him as one who knows and who cares.

Wednesday: The God Who Continues to Be With Us – In what ways have you seen Jesus' promise to be "with you always" being fulfilled in your own life as you are engaged in mission? He said to His disciples, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature; ... I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." He is with them by being in them. So it is written, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (2 Cor 6:16). He is Immanuel, "God with us." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." The presence of Christ with His people is the presence of God also. "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Isaiah 57:15). "My presence shall go with thee" (Exodus 33:14). "Christ may dwell in your hearts, ... that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph 3:16-17, 19). "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col 2:9). It is by His Spirit that Christ dwells in us. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom 8:9).

Thursday: The God Who Will Come Back for Us – In what ways is the text in John 14:1-3 connected with the end-time message found in the Scriptures? Our compassionate Saviour would not leave His children in torturing suspense. Noticing their despondent looks, our Lord said: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (verses 1-3). "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." What can these words mean, but that the words which He was about to utter were the words of God Himself, true and unchangeable? Whatever this promise means, then, it will as surely be fulfilled as that God is God of truth. We can rely upon it implicitly.