

Sabbath School Lesson #7 – Mission to My Neighbour – 11-17 Nov 2023

Christ speaks to us as He did then: “And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself” (Luke 10:27). Who is my neighbour? This is the question that a certain lawyer once ask Jesus. The commandment, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” had just been quoted, and the lawyer asked the question as though it were a difficult thing to know who one’s neighbour is, so as to show love to him. The reply of the Saviour was the parable of the Good Samaritan, in which it is shown that anyone with whom we may come in contact is our neighbour, and that we are to show helpful love to all.

Sunday: The Question of Questions – In Luke 10:25, what did this lawyer ask, and why did he ask it? After the lawyer asked the question, who is my neighbour, Jesus illustrated by a parable of the good Samaritan. “By this parable the duty of man to his fellowman is forever settled. We are to care for every case of suffering, and to look upon ourselves as God’s agents to relieve the needy to the very uttermost of our ability. We are to be laborers together with God. There are some who manifest great affection for their relatives, for their friends and favorites, who yet fail to be kind and considerate to those who need tender sympathy, who need kindness and love. With earnest hearts, let us inquire, Who is my neighbor? Our neighbors are not merely our associates and special friends, they are not simply those who belong to our church, or who think as we do. Our neighbors are the whole human family. We are to do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. We are to give to the world an exhibition of what it means to carry out the law of God. We are to love God supremely, and our neighbors as ourselves” {RH January 1, 1895, par. 8}. A “neighbour” in a Christian sense can apply in an unlimited or limited sense. For instance, in the ninth commandment, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor,” apply in unlimited sense to everyone and any one with whom we come into any sort of relation; for it would be wrong for us to bear false witness against anyone, whatever might be his character, or the relation that he sustained toward us. But when it is said, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” the term is to be restricted to a particular class, for the following reasons: First, the original command, as it was given to the Hebrews as they came out of Egypt, had reference only to the people of that nation, not to the stranger who was among them. This appears from Leviticus 19, verse 16: “Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people; neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbor.” “Thy people” and “thy neighbor,” here meaning, if we mistake not, the same thing. Verse 17: “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him.” Here “thy brother” and “thy neighbor,” are synonymous expressions. Then occurs the injunction to love our neighbor as ourselves, as follows: verse 18: “Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Here “the children of thy people” and “thy neighbour,” are clearly the same. We thus have plainly before us, the extent of the injunction as first given. In commenting upon this in the New Testament, the Saviour illustrates the principle by the parable of the good Samaritan, showing that the neighbour to the man who fell among thieves, was, not the thief who had assaulted and robbed him, nor the priest and Levite who passed by his needy condition with indifference, but he who showed mercy to him and supplied his wants. Second, we are commanded to love our neighbours as ourselves; and although we are commanded to love our enemies, we are never commanded to love them to this extent. Third, we are to do good to all men, but especially to them who are of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10). This shows a plain distinction between the household of faith, and the world generally. The claims of the former take precedence over all others. We are to do them good especially; or, in other words, to love them as ourselves. But if we are to do good to all men, and to extend love to our enemies, but still in a less degree than we do to those who are with us in the faith, to what extent shall we do this? Answer. “If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.” “Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you” (Romans 12:20; Matthew 5:44).

Monday: Jesus' Method and Response – The Lesson writer says: 'our Muslim friends ask us questions related to Jesus' divinity, such as, "Where in the Bible did Jesus say that He is God?" or "Why do you say there is one God when you have three persons in the Trinity?" ...' – of course the lesson writer asks in the context of the corporate belief in the trinity, but readers of this weekly commentary know well that God is not a trinity: "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him" (1 Corinthians 8:6). Muslims regard a belief in the trinity to be a sin; the Qur'an in Al-Ma'ida 5:73 says (in the translated meaning), 'They have certainly disbelieved who say, "Allah is the third of three." And there is no god except one God. And if they do not desist from what they are saying, there will surely afflict the disbelievers among them a painful punishment.' Muslims and trinitarian Adventists both deny that Christ is literally the Son of God. Trinitarian Adventists say: "In order to eradicate sin and rebellion from the universe and to restore harmony and peace, one of the divine Beings accepted, and entered into, the role of the Father, another the role of the Son" (Adventist Review, October 31, 1996, p 12); "The Father-Son relationship in the Godhead should be understood in a metaphorical sense, not in a literal sense" (Understanding the Trinity, Autumn House, 2001, p 97); "Christ was the Son of God before He was born of a woman. ... We are dealing with a metaphorical use of the word 'son.' ... The Son is not the natural, literal Son of the Father" (Adventist World, November 2015, p 42). Muslims also deny that Christ is the literal Son of God. The Qur'an in An-Nisa 4:171 says (in the translated meaning), 'Indeed, Allāh is but one God. Exalted is He above having a son;' Al-Isra 17:111 says, 'And say: All praise is due to God, who begets no offspring.' What do the Muslims and the trinitarian Adventists have in common? "Denying the Lord that bought them" (2 Peter 2:1). They both deny the true Sonship of Christ, they do not believe Christ is literally the Son of God. To both, the Scripture declares: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22).

Tuesday: To Inherit Eternal Life – How are we to inherit eternal life? A certain lawyer asked the Master what he should do to inherit eternal life. The Master replied by asking him how he read the law, and what he found written there. He answered that he found there the injunction to love God, and to love his neighbour as himself. But when he was commended for this he asked again – "And who is my neighbour?" Who is this man to whom I should ever be polite, and courteous, tender, and kind, whom I should love as myself? Who is he indeed, and how shall I be able always to recognise him? Shall I know him by his fair skin and the cut of his clothing? "But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?" Did the question justify him? If not, then we are not justified in our prejudice.

Wednesday: Loving Others as We Love Ourselves – How can we love others as we love ourselves? The second great commandment in the law is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Our neighbour is everyone with whom we come in contact who is in need. Says Paul: "As we therefore have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). "As we have opportunity." That indicates that we are to seek occasion of serving men, and so Paul did. Paul says, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not Himself" (Romans 15:1-3). "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). But many do not feel any sense of obligation. All that is necessary to enable a man to have a burden for souls is for him to realise how much Christ has done for him. The one to whom much is forgiven will love much. Paul felt himself to be the chief of sinners, and so when he felt the pardoning love of God, he felt that he owed much service. Those who have felt the burden of their sins, and who know that they are removed, will not have to strive to get a burden for souls, and will always feel the joy to discharge their duty.

Thursday: The Good Samaritan Story Today – How do we apply the Good Samaritan story today? We should become acquainted with Christ and He will show us. The time is past in which we can have any doubt as to who is our neighbour and our brother, and as to what our duty is toward him. We know that to love the Lord, and thy neighbour as thyself, is written in the law, and that the reply of Jesus to the lawyer was, "This do and thou shalt live."