

Sabbath School Lesson #8 – Innocent Blood – 12-18 Nov 2016

Christ would have us exercise faith in Him even in our suffering. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). In suffering we often forget God as Israel did. “They forgot God their Saviour, which had done great things in Egypt: wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red Sea” (Psalm 106:21-22). It was wicked for Israel just as it is for us to forget Him. It is a sin to forget that the Lord is our salvation, and that He has promised, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5). “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Romans 14:23).

Talking of ‘innocent blood,’ we read of Cain and Abel. “Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his works were evil, and his brother’s righteous” (1 John 3:12). Cain and Abel each brought an offering to the Lord. Cain’s offering was of the fruit of the ground, and Abel’s of the firstlings of the flock, and of the fat thereof. Abel’s offering was accepted, while Cain’s was rejected; therefore Cain was envious, and slew his brother as they were alone in the field. Then said God to Cain, “Where is Abel thy brother?” “The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto Me from the ground” (Genesis 4:9-10).

What did Abel’s blood say to the Lord, as it cried from the ground? It cried for vengeance. A life had been taken, and nothing but life could satisfy the demand of justice. It cried just as does the hire of the labourers who have reaped the fields of the rich, which has been kept back by fraud (James 5:4). All the innocent blood that has been shed on the earth, cries to the Lord for punishment which will be meted out to the violent ones who have shed it; for “the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain” (Isaiah 26:21).

Our Lesson poses a number of questions concerning human suffering – yet there seems to be no answers. The lack of answers to why seemingly innocent blood is shed, is simply because we do not look unto Jesus. We are deluded to magnify human suffering, ignoring our sin that caused the suffering of Christ and the shedding of His innocent blood! If only we looked upon the suffering of Christ, we would lack no answers to our human suffering! The prophet says: “All we like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6). “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed” (verse 5). Note that the healing is present; but present healing means a present remedy, therefore Christ suffers from the stripes even now. “With His stripes we *are healed*.”

The sufferings of Christ for us were not all confined to the cross. “For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2:18). Christ still bears our suffering. “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to our profession. For we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Let us ever remember that it was our sins that nailed Christ to the cross. “He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). “Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Peter 2:24). “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Galatians 3:13).

The suffering, therefore, that Jesus endured for us, was not simply the pain of the nails through His hands and feet. Many men have endured that physical suffering. At that very time there were two thieves undergoing the torture of crucifixion; and many men have been tortured in body to the fullest extent that fiendish cruelty could invent; yet no man has ever suffered as Jesus did. And why? – Because no one but He has ever suffered the sins of the world. “All we like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” It was human weaknesses and frailties that caused the suffering of the Son of God.

Now the apostle says that although He is bodily in the heavens, He is still “touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” That is, the same things that caused Him pain when He was

bodily on earth, causes Him pain now that He lives in us by His own Spirit (Galatians 4:6). And this is still further shown by the statement that those who turn away from the Lord, and go deliberately into sin, “crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh” (Hebrews 6:6).

Surely in this there is something to hold us back from sin. We cannot keep the Son of God from suffering, for in all our affliction He is afflicted, and He suffers in all the temptations that beset us; but we can keep from putting Him to open shame. The thought that our sins cause grief and pain even now to the Son of God, and also that in our temptations He has the sympathy that comes from actual common suffering, must draw us to Him. It must bind us to Him, so that, as He shares our suffering, we may share His strength that is able to bear it. We are admonished, “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:19).

But few commit their souls to Christ. He says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:28-29).

This is the invitation of Christ, the world’s Redeemer, to all those “that labour and are heavy laden” in the journey of life. It is the invitation of Him who “hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows” (Isaiah 53:4); of Him who is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities,” who has been “in all points tempted like as we are” (Hebrews 4:15). Come to Christ, for He knows fully the nature of the responsibility He is assuming; and He is fully able to assume it, for He has said, “All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18).

It is a very easy thing to cast our cares and our sorrows upon Him who has thus made Himself the great Burden Bearer of the race, yet how few seem inclined to avail themselves of the privilege. Christ does not force us to give Him our burdens; we cannot carry them ourselves if we choose to. But He stands ready to take freely every load that is laid at His feet. Yet it is almost always the case that we take our burdens to our earthly friends, instead of to the Lord. We go to them for their sympathy – which perhaps they are not slow to give – and we talk over our troubles with them, and get such satisfaction from it as we can; but ah, who ever knew their burden of tears and grief to get any lighter by this process? Who ever found that it did not, on the contrary, make it even heavier than before? And besides this, it has added to the load of others who already have burdens enough of their own.

But when we come to Jesus with our load of cares and our suffering, what a difference! When we have told Him all our sorrows, how much lighter the burden all at once becomes! And we experience the rest that He promised to the weary and heavy-laden. But let no one burden themselves with borrowed troubles, for all these they will have to carry alone. Jesus has not offered to take upon Himself our imaginary troubles, but only those which are real. He has said, “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matthew 6:34). To borrow trouble is to distrust God. Our blessings are not sent to us weekly or monthly, but “daily,” as He has taught us to say, “Give us this day our daily bread” (verse 11). Thus there is no occasion to burden ourselves with the imaginary troubles, which are usually the hardest to bear.

Are you in trouble? Have you been sorely afflicted? Of course, Yes; for “man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble” (Job 14:1). But there is a still more important question. It is, Are you comforted in your affliction? Do you have peace in the midst of your trouble? You say no? Why are you not? Here is the word of truth: “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may, be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Christ also has said, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you” (John 14:27). If you say that you have no comfort and peace, you deny the word of God, making Him a liar; or else you have thrown away the gift of God. You did not know it before? Well, it is not too late now; know it now, and ever remember it, that comfort is always present wherever there is trouble. God speaks peace to you. God has sent the Comforter, the Spirit of His Son, and you have been comforted, for He who cannot lie says so. Then wait in the fear of the Lord, and “in the comfort of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 9:31). What a blessed; glorious Gospel, that turns our very trouble into a means of conveying comfort to us! “For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ” (2 Corinthians 1:5).