

Sabbath School Lesson #9 – Be Who You Are – 20-26 May 2017

Christ would have us be Christians to be who we are in Him. Thus, Peter tells us: “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity” (2 Peter 1:5-7).

Sunday: A Precious Faith – Peter writes, “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:1-4). The stress which the apostle Peter lays upon a knowledge of God is quite noticeable. Twice in this passage it is mentioned. He would evidently impress upon our minds the necessity of a personal acquaintance with God – of knowing Him as we would an intimate friend – and of loving Him not simply because of what He does, but because of what He is. “God is love,” and “we love Him because He first loved us.” It is this perception of His character which first draws us to Him, – “the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance” (Romans 2:4). By this we are made partakers of the divine nature, that is, adopted into the family of God. As sons of God, it necessarily follows that our acquaintance with Him must become more and more intimate. It is intimate acquaintance with God which multiplies peace to us. “Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace” (Job 22:21). In Galatians 4:6-9 the apostle Paul makes a knowledge of God equivalent to a state of sonship. It is evident, then that the knowledge of God, of which the apostles speak, is far more than the simple knowledge and belief that God exists as Creator of the world.

Monday: Love, the Goal of Christian Virtue – Peter says, “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity” (2 Peter 1:5-7). A literal rendering of the words translated “and besides this,” would be, “and for this cause,” which is equivalent to “wherefore.” The reference may be to the divine power that hath given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, or to the exceeding great and precious promises, or to the divine nature of which we are made partakers. Because of this power, because we are sons of God, we should use all diligence to add the Christian graces. The idea of the apostle is not that any one grace cannot be obtained until the one preceding it has been perfected, as, for instance, that we cannot have any godliness until we are perfect in faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, and patience; for all these things are a part of godliness. But he means that we should possess them all, and daily add to each. It may, however, be observed that there seems to be a definite relation in point of order, especially between temperance and patience, for it is utterly impossible for an intemperate man to be a patient man. Indeed, temperance is, in a sense, patience, for temperance is self-control, and patience is the controlling of one's self under trying circumstances. All the graces are, in fact, interwoven, but faith is the foundation of all. It must precede every other good thing. By a comparison of Phil. 3:19 and Ex. 20:3 we learn that intemperance is a violation of the first commandment. But one who violates the first commandment is an idolater. Therefore it is utterly impossible that an intemperate man should be a Christian. A man who is given to surfeiting, has his mind so beclouded that he cannot appreciate divine things, or if he dimly realizes them, he is unable to give them his full attention, and so the great day of God comes like a thief and finds him unprepared.

Tuesday: Be Who You Are – Peter says, “For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither *be* barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an

entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:8-11). Who are we? We are called. Who are called?

Read the words of the Apostle Peter to those who assembled on the day of Pentecost: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are far off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:38-39). Who are they whom "the Lord our God shall call?" – Note carefully: it is those to whom the apostle was speaking, and to their children, and to "all that are far off." That includes everybody. The same thing was spoken through the prophet Isaiah. By that prophet the Lord said: "I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near" (Isaiah 57:19). The Lord proclaims peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near; there is no chance for anybody to find an exception. With this agree the words of Christ, "Come unto Me, *all* ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). This includes every needy soul. "Ho, *every one* that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1). "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And *whosoever will*, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). Not only is every one who hears invited to come, but he is also authorised to invite everybody else whom he sees. There is no partiality with God.

You say, but does it not say somewhere that 'many are called, but few chosen'? is that not evidence that all cannot be saved? Yes, and no. That statement is indeed made, but it by no means teaches that there are any who cannot be saved if they wish salvation. The question is really equivalent to this: 'Does not this last text overthrow all the others?' The Word of God is not divided against itself. Read the passages in which the statement is found (Matthew 20:1-16 and 22:1-14), and it will be apparent that those who are not chosen are those who themselves do not choose to accept the terms of salvation. That is the whole of the matter. *Election* means *choice*. The free choice is given to all. "Choose life, that thou and thy seed may live." "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve" (Deut. 30:19; Josh. 24:15).

Whoever chooses salvation, or, in other words, elects to be saved, is one of *the elect*. The non-elect are of course lost, but it is of their own choice. Of those who are lost, the Spirit of God says: "For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord; they would none of My counsel; they despised all My reproof; therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices" (Proverbs 1:29-31). When the Jews at Antioch "spake against those things that were spoken by Paul and Barnabas, contradicting and blaspheming," the apostles said, "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and *judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life*, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:45-46). They judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life, by refusing to receive it. It was indeed given to them, and they put it away from them. Note that it was all in their own hands. They were made judges in the case, and so it is with all men. Each man determines his own worthiness or unworthiness; whoever will receive eternal life, is accounted worthy of it. Each man judges of his own fitness, and elects himself. Surely God could not possibly deal more fairly with mankind.

Wednesday/Thursday: Shedding the Tent/Faith in the Face of Death – We read 2 Peter 1:12-15. Why was the apostle so zealous in stirring up the minds of the people concerning these great truths? "Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me" (verses 13-14). What had the Lord shown him concerning his death? "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me" (John 21:18-19). What was Peter's earnest desire that we should do? "Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance" (2 Peter 1:15). If these things are always in our mind, what prayer may we offer? "Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my meditation" (Psalm 5:1).