

Sabbath School Lesson #12 – Overcoming Evil with Good – 16-22 December 2017

Christ would have us overcome evil with good. Paul says, “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2). Christians are non-conformists. Again, “Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds.” But when those who think themselves as nonconformists adopt worldly methods, and also engage in worldly schemes, then they dishonour the name. “The friendship of the world is enmity with God.”

Sunday: Your reasonable Service – The closing verses of the eleventh chapter set forth the infinite, unsearchable power and wisdom of God. Nobody can add anything to Him. No one can put God under obligations to Him. No one can give Him something for which He should receive something in return. “For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things.” “He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.” “In Him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:25, 28). This being so, it is but reasonable that all should yield their bodies to Him, for Him to control. He alone has the wisdom and the power to do it properly. The word “reasonable” is, literally, “logical.” The logical result of acknowledging God’s power and wisdom and love, is to submit to Him. It is our reasonable service to submit to Him. He who does not yield to God, virtually denies His existence.

Paul cites the power and wisdom of God as reason for service. “God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God. Also unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy” (Psalms 62:11-12). “God is love.” Therefore His power is love, so that when the apostle cites the power and wisdom of God as the reason why we should yield to Him, he exhorts us by the mercies of God. Never forget that all the manifestation of God’s power is but the manifestation of His love, and that love is the power by which He works. Jesus Christ, in whom God’s love is revealed (1 John 4:10), is “the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24). It follows, hence, the only reasonable service we can offer to God is to surrender to His power and wisdom, Christ.

Monday: To Think Soberly – The exhortation to every man is not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. How highly ought one to think of himself? “Put them in fear, O Lord; that the nations may know themselves to be but men” (Psalms 19:20). “Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help” (Psalms 146:3). “Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?” (Isaiah 2:22). “Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity” (Psalms 39:5). “The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.” “The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain” (1 Corinthians 3:19-20). “What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14). “We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isaiah 64:6). “In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Philippians 2:3). Pride is the enemy of faith. The two can not live together. A man can think soberly only as the result of the faith that God gives. “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4).

Every man is exhorted to think soberly, because God hath dealt *to every man* the measure of faith. This may be known also by the fact that salvation is offered to every man, and placed within his grasp, and salvation is only by faith. If God had not given faith to every man, He could not have brought salvation within the reach of all. Now the question is, In what measure has God given every man faith? This is really answered in the fact already learned, that the faith which He gives is the faith of Jesus. The faith of Jesus is given in the gift of Jesus Himself, and Christ is given in His fullness to every man. He tasted death for every man (Hebrews 2:9). “Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Ephesians 4:7). Christ is not divided; therefore to every man is given all of Christ and all of His faith. There is but one measure: Christ.

Tuesday: The Christian and the State – “For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20). Those who through Christ have access by one Spirit unto the Father “are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). Let every man concern himself with the affairs of his own country, and not with those of another. For an American to come to the United Kingdom and presume to lecture the UK Parliament for the way in which it conducts the business of Government, or for a British to go to the United States and distinguish himself by his advice to the authorities, would be the height of impertinence. But if they should begin actively to interfere in the conduct of public affairs, or should stand for office, they would speedily be shown that they had no business there. Let them become naturalised, and then they may speak and act as much as

they please; but then they must hold their peace if they return to the country to which they once owned allegiance. One need be a citizen to be active in government affairs. This applies to the government of heaven as related to earthly governments, as well as to different countries on earth. The one who is a citizen of the heavenly country has no business to meddle with the affairs of earthly governments. He must leave that business to those who acknowledge this earth to be their home. If earthly rulers think to regulate the affairs pertaining to the kingdom of God, they are guilty of gross presumption, to say the least. If they may not of right presume to regulate the affairs of the heavenly kingdom, much less may citizens of heaven interfere in the affairs of earthly kingdoms.

Many ministers of the gospel seek to justify their dealing in politics by saying that it is their duty to make this earth the kingdom of heaven. The minister of the Gospel has but one commission, namely, "Preach the word." In no other way in the world can men be made better. Hence, ministers who turn their attention to politics are denying their calling. No true Christian meddles in politics.

We must needs be subject to earthly governments, for conscience' sake; and for this cause also we must pay tribute and perform every duty of that nature that is laid upon us. State taxes may be heavy, and even unjust, but that does not warrant us in rebelling. The apostle James speaks to rich men who oppress the poor, and his language applies as well when they are in public office as when in private life. He says: "Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you" (James 5:5-6). Mark this, the just do not resist. Why not? Because of the injunction: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:18-19). As subjects of the King of peace, and citizens of His kingdom, they are bound to live peaceably with all men. They cannot fight even in self-defense.

Christ suffered, "leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:21-23). It is worth while to remember that Christ was condemned on a political charge, and for political reasons, yet He made no resistance, although He showed that He had power to do so (See John 18:5-11; Matthew 26:51-53). It may be said that Christ knew that His hour had come. True; but He did not resist at previous times. He continually committed Himself into the hands of His Father. That is an example for His followers. If they are submissive in God's hands, they can suffer no indignity nor oppression that God does not appoint or allow; no injury can be done them before their hour comes. It is easier to profess faith in Christ than to show real faith by following His example.

Wednesday: Love One Another – This can be done only when one is able "in lowliness of mind" to esteem others better than himself" (Philippians 2:3). This can be done only when one knows his own worthlessness. The man who knows the plague of his own heart cannot think that others are as bad as himself. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who ... made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant." "Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not." To curse does not necessarily always mean to swear. To curse means to speak ill. It is the opposite of bless, which means to speak well of. Sometimes men persecute according to law, and sometimes they persecute without any legal warrant; but whether it is 'due process of law' or mob violence, no hard words are to be used against those who do it. On the contrary, they are to be spoken well of. One cannot do this without the Spirit of Christ, who prayed for His betrayers and murderers, and who did not venture to bring railing accusation even against the devil (Jude 9). To hold persecutors up to contempt is not according to God's instruction.

Thursday: Now Is Our Salvation – The remainder of the chapter thirteen of Romans is devoted to exhortations that need no comment. Their special force is derived from the fact that "the end of all things is at hand." Therefore we should "be sober, and watch unto prayer." Although living in the night, when darkness covers the earth (Isaiah 60:2), Christians are children of the light and of the day, leaving off works of darkness. Now is our salvation if we are in Christ. Those who put on the Lord Jesus Christ will not themselves be seen. Christ alone will appear. To make provision for the lusts of the flesh is most unnecessary, since the flesh ever seeks to have its lusts gratified. The Christian has need rather to take heed that it does not assert its own power, and assume control. Only in Christ can the flesh be subdued. He who is crucified with Christ, can say, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). And in that case he will conduct himself towards rulers and private persons just as Christ did, "because as He is, so are we in this world."