

Sabbath School Lesson #4 – Escape From the World’s Ways – 20-26 January 2018

Christ would have us know that our only hope to escape the allure of the world is to have His life, for He alone overcomes in us. “Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death ... He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch” (Proverbs 11:4, 28). Our Lesson study this week is taken from: Psalms 119:11; Ephesians 6:18; Romans 8:5-6; Hebrews 11:10-6; 1 Kings 3:14; and Ezekiel 36:26-27.

Sunday: A Relationship With Christ – To escape from the world’s ways, we must not only have a relationship with Christ, but also the “Spirit of Christ” which was in all the prophets (1 Peter 1:11) like Moses of whom we read: “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt” (Hebrews 11:24-26). Was Moses’ choice a wise one? We think of his life of trial and leading a host of murmurers and fault-finders, but also of his unparalleled communion with the Lord, as with a friend, face to face. And then, too, we think of him as he is now – for he was raised to life (Jude 9) – and as he appeared on the mount of transfiguration with Elijah who never died; and how small do the glories of Egypt, which he might have held for a few years, appear in contrast with the eternal glories which are his! It is so always, but when Christ and His truth bring us to the choice now, how large seems a little fragment of this world’s possessions or prospects, and how far off seems the Divine inheritance. It is because the devil blinds the eyes, and men do not believe the Lord. The “Spirit of Christ” in prophet Moses led him to set a proper value upon this world, and the same “Spirit of Christ” (Romans 8:9) will lead us to escape from the world’s ways.

Monday: In the Word – Jesus prayed to His Father, “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth” (John 17:17); and as He is the Divine Word He also said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). “This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent” (John 6:29). It is not per se that the more we read the Bible we become sanctified; No! The Bible is the written word, but it is the author of the Bible, Jesus, through who God sanctifies us. The Jews searched the scripture for sanctification, ignoring Christ and killing Him to retain their written word. But Jesus said to them, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39). He who truly knows Christ knows the truth, and so can tell the truth, for the truth is the very life of Christ in the believer. God sanctifies us through Christ. “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30). You need Christ for sanctification. God has given everything in the life of Christ. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Tuesday: The Life of Prayer – Does God hear all kinds of professed prayers? “If I regard iniquity in my heart; the Lord will not hear me” (Psalms 66:18). Does that mean that God will not hear the prayer of a sinner? Must a man be a doer of the law of God before God will listen to him? Certainly not! He justifies – makes righteous – the ungodly. The publican who prayed, “God be merciful to me, a sinner” (Luke 18:13), was justified. But if a man regards iniquity in his heart, while praying with his lips, – if while seemingly praying to God for righteousness, he in his heart clings to sin, – of course God will not hear him, because he does not really ask for anything. He *seems* to ask for the will of God to be done, because he says, ‘in the name of Jesus;’ but the will of God is to free man from sin, and that the man does not wish done in his case. But “this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15); and He says, “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37), and, “If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it” (John 14:14). The sum of it is, that whoever earnestly desires any good thing from the Lord will surely receive it; but the man who asks for righteousness while in his heart he desires sin, need not expect anything. He does not really pray at all; for God looks at the heart, and not at the lips. God gives every man just what he really desires. If he wants sin, He allows him that to have it with all its consequences, no matter what he may profess with his lips; but whoever desires righteousness will receive it from the Lord, no matter how great a sinner he may be.

What of many Seventh-day Adventists who reject health reform, eating animal products despite the moral and health dangers, does God answer their prayers for healing? Ellen White says: “The life that many live is not half what it ought to be. Light is shining upon the subject of temperance, and much labor has been put forth to instruct people upon this point, but the dietetic habits of those who live for selfish gratification, who do not wish to be corrected, and refuse to practise health reform, leave them diseased and enfeebled. They may ask the Lord to heal them; but will He who caused the light to shine out of darkness heal them of that which is the result of not heeding this

light, but continuing to eat, drink, and dress unhealthfully? Shall we not seek to do all that it is possible for us to do by placing ourselves in the right relation to health reform? Then we can say, 'Father in heaven, I have done all that I can to place myself in a correct position by denying appetite and following the light given in regard to health. Heal me of disease, that I may glorify thee.'" "It is labor lost to teach people to go to God as the healer of their infirmities unless they are educated also to lay aside every wrong practise, and cease to indulge perverted appetite. They must be taught to use the provisions God has given. To refuse the remedies which they may have as well as not, without paying a doctor's fee, and to neglect to let into every room in the house God's pure air and sunshine, show a lack of faith in Him. Faith in God's power to heal infirmities is dead unless the one diseased improves the light God has given him by bringing his habits into harmony with right principles." "The grace of God is always reformatory. Every human being is in a school, where he is to learn to give up hurtful practises, and obtain a knowledge of what he can do for himself. Those who ignore these things, who take no precautions in regard to getting pure air to breathe and pure water to drink, cannot be free from disease. Their systems are defiled, and the human structure injured. Such people are careless, reckless, presumptuous, and self-destroying. Knowledge is strewn along their pathway, but they refuse to gather up the rays of light, saying that they depend on God. But will God do those things that He has left for them to do? Will He supply their neglect to co-operate with Him? Will He wink at their willing ignorance, and do great things for them by restoring soul, body, and spirit, while they ignore the most simple agencies, the use of which would bring them their health? While day by day they indulge their appetites by eating that which brings disease, can they expect the Lord to work a miracle to restore them? This is not the Lord's way of working. By doing this, they make the Lord altogether such an one as themselves. Faith and works go together." (*GosHealth*, 1 November 1897, paragraphs 6-8). "Those who will gratify their appetite, and then suffer because of their intemperance, and take drugs to relieve them, may be assured that God will not interpose to save health and life which are so recklessly periled. The cause has produced the effect. Many, as their last resort, follow the directions in the word of God, and request the prayers of the elders of the church for their restoration to health. God does not see fit to answer prayers offered in behalf of such, for He knows that if they should be restored to health, they would again sacrifice it upon the altar of unhealthy appetite" (MM 14.1).

Wednesday: The Life of Wisdom – "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering" (James 1:5-6). Solomon said to the Lord, "Give therefore Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people, that I may discern between good and bad; for who is able to judge this Thy so great a people?" (1 Kings 3:7-9). The Lord gave Solomon "wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore" (1 Kings 4:29-34). 'But I do not get wisdom when I pray in faith,' you say. Let us see where the trouble is. The word is, "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." "But faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). The man whose trust is not according to the word of God, has not faith. But here is another very striking text: "My son, if thou wilt receive My words, and hide My commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding... Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path" (Proverbs 2:1-9). These are the words of the Lord to Solomon, which he has passed on to us. It is the Lord's answer to Solomon's prayer for wisdom. It tells us how Solomon obtained his great wisdom. We greatly mistake if we suppose that Solomon obtained his great knowledge without any effort. He valued wisdom so much that he was willing to search for it as for gold and silver, and the Lord gave it to him. And so the Lord will do for us, if we also have a longing desire to know true wisdom. And we must ask in faith. But since faith cometh by hearing the word of God, we must not ignore the text we have in Proverbs 2. "Nothing wavering."

Thursday: The Holy Spirit – To escape from the world's ways, Christ must breath on us His own Spirit saying, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22) we must receive the same "Spirit of Christ" which was in all the prophets (1 Peter 1:11), because "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Romans 8:9), which Spirit is Christ Himself, as "the Lord is that Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:17), for Christ being "the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit" (1 Corinthians 15:45) and "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts" (Galatians 4:6), and for these reasons, let us have Christ; as Ellen White says, "It is not safe to catch the spirit from another. We want the Holy Spirit, which is Jesus Christ" {Lt66-1894 (April 10, 1894) par. 18}.