

Sabbath School Lesson #4 – The Key to Unity – 20-26 October 2018

Christ would have us know His Father's will: "Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in Him" (Ephesians 1:9-10). It is not only that the One and only true God (John 17:3) puts all things under Christ, but Christ also is and will always be subject to the One true God (1 Corinthians 11:3; 15:27-28). Sin had separated us from God (Isaiah 59:2), but "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3) and after an end is put to sin "then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28). The Son is ever subject to His Father.

Sunday: Blessings in Christ – "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). It is impossible for trinitarians to receive the blessings in this verse, for they deny the very basis of the blessings in the verse: that Jesus also has a God and it is the God of Jesus who gives us the blessings. By virtue of the trinity doctrine, many forfeit the blessings, for they cannot have the blessings until they first accept and acknowledge that the giver of those blessings is both "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." But trinitarians cannot so acknowledge the source of the blessings, for they have the spirit of antichrist given that by their doctrine they deny "the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22). The testimony of Paul and of Peter is very clear that the Father is both "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 11:31; 1 Peter 1:3). Jesus Himself said to Mary, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God" (John 20:17).

In Christ "we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Ephesians 1:11). That A call to all: "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). "Whosoever will," admits no exception. Christ died to deliver every man from sin to everlasting life. All this deliverance is "according to the will of our God and Father" (Galatians 1:4). The will of God is our sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:3). God will that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). It is the love of God that whosoever believes in Christ should not perish (John 3:16). This love is extended to everyone. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation has appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). God has wrought out salvation for every man, and has given it to him; but the majority spurns it and throws it away. The judgment will reveal the fact that full salvation was given to every man and that the man lost deliberately has thrown away his birthright possession. God does know, and He foreknows. "Known unto God from the beginning are all his works." Does "predestinated" mean God chooses who to save and who is lost?

The foreknowledge of God does not mean He decides who is saved and lost. A man sits in his room, looking out over the country with a binocular. Away he sees a traveller crossing the plain. The traveller can see but a few rods before him, while the man with the binocular can see for miles ahead of him, and can note all the difficulties or pleasant places in the way. Now the fact that the man with a binocular sees what the traveller is coming to does not oblige the man to come to them. It has no effect upon him in any way whatever. Even so the foreknowledge of God does not affect the destiny of man. God knows the end of everything from the beginning, not because He studies it out, but because He is God. He inhabits eternity, and everything is present with Him. The thing a thousand years in the future is as much present with Him as a thing of today. Man by searching cannot understand God, and we are not called upon to explain all His acts; let us remember that, "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (2 Peter 1:10).

Monday: Breaking Down the Wall – Christ "is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances" (Ephesians 2:14-15). Our faith in the integrity of the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16) forces us to conclude that the "abolished"

law referred to is different from that of which Christ said, "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail" (Luke 16:17). Among the ordinances chiefly recorded in Exodus 25-30 were many burdensome ceremonies – the requirement that every male should go up to Jerusalem three times in every year, circumcision, "diverse washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation" (Heb. 9:10). We say that these ceremonies were burdensome, for Peter himself said that they were a yoke, "which neither *our* fathers nor we were able to bear" (Acts 15:10). Some of them were an "enmity," or a cause of enmity, between the Jews and Gentiles. The ceremony of circumcision, which was designed to serve as a line of demarcation between the Jews and the Gentiles, was especially the cause of much enmity. The Jews regarded it as a sure proof of their superior sanctity, and therefore looked with contempt upon the uncircumcised Gentiles; while the Gentiles in turn hated the Jews, and despised their circumcision, looking upon it as little different from a badge of slavery. Acts 11:2-3 indicates how the Jews regarded those who were uncircumcised. This rite of circumcision was done away in Christ. It was given to Abraham as a sign or "seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised" (Rom. 4:11). Thus we see it was designed to mark a *real* separation, the separation which always exists between the righteous and the wicked. But when a Jew departed from God, his circumcision and separation from the Gentiles was only an outward form, a mockery. Paul assures us that real circumcision is "of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:20). God looks upon the heart, and demands that righteousness shall be from within, and not merely from without, as an outward sign. The man who is pure in heart is really separated from the world more completely than he could possibly be by any mere outward mark. And so "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Gal. 6:15).

Tuesday: Unity in One Body – God has tempered the body together, "that there should be no schism in the body" (1 Corinthians 12:24-25). "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6). The apostle's exhortation is, "that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). But let it be borne in mind that this union is not artificial, but natural; not the human nature, however, but the Divine nature. The unity of belief in the church is not forced by the church coming together and the majority defining the creed to be believed. The church cannot define doctrine, nor make laws for itself or anybody else. The church of Christ is made up of all who obey the Lord's commands, not a body to issue commands. The Head directs, the body obeys. God speaks; each one must listen to His voice, for faith comes by hearing the Word of God, and no one can give faith to another. "It is the gift of God."

Wednesday: Church Leaders and Unity – Is it safe today for souls in our Seventh-day Adventist Church to ask church leaders for spiritual guidance? "If Nathanael had trusted to the rabbis for guidance, he would never have found Jesus" {DA 140.5}. The Jewish Church had missionaries all over the world (Matthew 23:15), yet "the people whom God had called to be the pillar and ground of the truth had become representatives of Satan" {DA 36.2}. So are many church leaders today. "Bewildered and deceived, they were moving on in gloomy procession toward eternal ruin" {DA 36.3}. Sadly, "There is the same falling away" {5T 75.3}. "What would the Saviour do if He should come to us now as He did to the Jews? He would have to do a similar work in cleansing away the rubbish of tradition" {RH June 4, 1889}.

Thursday: Human Relationships in Christ – True relationship is by the Spirit of Christ. The life of Christ in each member of the church will produce the most perfect union in the whole body. Submitting one to another (Ephesians 5:21) can only refer to brethren who have the Spirit of Christ. Paul says: "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that can not be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you" (Titus 2:7-8). "Be thou an example to the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. ... Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:12,16).