

Sabbath School Lesson #1 – The Rhythms of Life – 30 March-5 April 2019

Christ would have us lay up treasures in heaven not on earth. In the rhythms of life, let us remember we are Christ's by purchase and all we have belongs to Him. Christ says "sell that ye have, and give alms" (Luke 12:33); to a rich young man wishing to follow Him, He said, "sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven; and come and follow Me" (Matthew 19:21). We do not wish to be understood as advising all indiscriminately to sell their property. We are to be guided by sanctified reason, and not by fanaticism. This Lesson memory verse says, "to everything there is a season" (Ecclesiastes 3:1) – if we are filled with and led by the Spirit of Christ, we shall know when the time comes for us to part with our possessions. We need not hold it all, however, so that it may be sold at once. If we study the lives of reformers, devoted Christians, we will find that they gave away nearly all, in their life-time, and died poor. Had they been intent on laying up treasure on this earth, they would not have given themselves so unreservedly to the work of preparing themselves and others for a better world; their interest would have been divided.

Sunday: In the Beginning – We read: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). In the beginning of what? Not of God's existence, because He is from eternity. Not the beginning of eternity, because eternity has no beginning. Then the text must mean that in the beginning of time God created the heaven and the earth. Time begun with the first act of the creation of this earth. "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day" (Genesis 1:3-5). Here we have the work of the first day. What was it? It was the creation of the heaven and the earth, and the creation of light, and the separating of the light from the darkness, thus forming day and night. The measurement of time by days and nights must have begun as soon as time began. "In the beginning" refers to the first day of the first week of time, in which the heaven and the earth were created.

Monday: The Rhythms of Life – In the rhythms of life, one of the things men care for is clothing. Christ says, "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Matthew 6:28-29). What is the difference between Solomon's clothing, gorgeous as it was, and the lilies? Here is something for us to study. We know that Solomon was clothed with garments, out of material taken from plants and animals. Spinning and weaving were necessary. Was it so in the beginning? No; Adam and Eve, as long as they remained faithful to God, were clothed with light, even as God is. God is clothed with light, as with a garment (Psalms 104:2), and man also when first created was covered with light (Psalms 8:5). But all have sinned, and so have lost the glory of God (Romans 3:23), and as one consequence, they must have clothing made for them by hand. Let God Himself provide this, even as He did for our first parents (Genesis 3:21). But what is the clothing of the lily? – It is its colour, or the various colours, green, white, yellow, red, that it has "for glory and for beauty" (Exodus 28:2, 40). Yes, but what forms these colours? – It is nothing else but light. So the lily has its original clothing of light, which man has lost, and which all Solomon's wealth and wisdom cannot equal. This clothing comes direct from God, without the intervention of human hands. God is "bringing many sons unto glory" (Hebrews 2:10). The "robe of righteousness" and the "garments of salvation" with which He clothes those who trust Him (Isaiah 61:10) are the glory of the Lord with which they shall shine forth in the kingdom of their Father (Matthew 13:43). Well, cannot He who does that which is greatest be trusted to do that which is least? If we believe that God, and His power alone, can give us eternal life and "all things that pertain until life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3), as we go through rhythms of this life, can we not trust Him to provide the things that pertain to this earthly life? If we cannot thus trust Him, do we have faith in His promise of eternal life?

Tuesday: The Unexpected – We read of Job, how the unexpected things befell him, yet we learn not the lessons from Job to trust in the Lord always. Oh how many times in the life of many Christians there come seasons of depression! Temptations press sore; reverses come; the purest motives are misconstrued; the most unselfish acts are criticised; and for

the truth's sake, even their dearest friends forsake them. They know that up to this time the Lord has led them – they are sure of it – yet how hard to believe that He still is going before them. They think, as did Jacob, “All these things are against me” (Genesis 42:36), and we perhaps murmur and complain. Then right in the midst of their bitterest sorrow and deepest grief, there comes a turn in affairs. The dark clouds roll away, the apparently insurmountable obstacles vanish, and what were looked upon as mountains of difficulty prove to be not mountains at all. And all this, though unexpected, comes in such a natural way, that it never occurs to them that it is God who has overruled evil for their good. Oh that Christians may learn to look up and not down when in times of darkness! Though cast down, they are not forsaken. God's people are more precious in His sight than fine gold (Isaiah 13:12), and He never afflicts, even though He permits His children to pass through the “furnace of affliction” (Isaiah 48:10). Even here He suffers none to be tempted above that they are able to bear. “We know,” says the apostle Paul, “that all things work together for good to them that love God” (Romans 8:28). Anyone would undergo, without a murmur, the pain of the surgeon's knife, if he knew that it was the only means of saving his life. So when Christians, in their experience, actually know this truth, how easy it becomes to bear the severest trials; and not only to bear them, but even welcome them, for it is only through “much tribulation” (Acts 14:22) that anyone can be fitted for eternal life in the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Wednesday: Transitions – Like Paul transitioning from death to life, we must or else we perish. Paul cries out, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?” and he immediately answers, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 7:24-25), and his new condition – a Christian experience – is stated as: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). The Christians are new creatures. They are not the ones that the law condemned. The condemned ones have died, have been crucified with Christ, and now although they live, it is no more they, but Christ dwelling in them. Once sin dwelt in them; now Christ has taken its place (Romans 3:21-22; 8:2). The righteousness of Christ imputed to the sinner, frees him from sin and the fear of death. For a long time he may have tried to make himself righteous, but he found his best deeds so far below what the law requires that they alone would have been sufficient to ruin him. Even if he could have fulfilled the requirements of the law, that would not have removed past transgression. What the law cannot do is to make a sinner righteous. This is not on account of any defect of the law, but is solely owing to the weakness of the flesh. The law points out the disease and shows what a condition of health would be; then the man begins an ineffectual struggle to reach that high condition; the law goads him on until he finds that he has not power to accomplish his desire; and when he has lost all confidence in himself, he accepts Christ as the only source of help, and at once he is free. The law drives a sinner to Christ that Christ may free him from his past sins and enable him to keep the law.

Thursday: Interactions – In our interaction with one another, we are exhorted “him that is weak in the faith receive ye” (Romans 14:1); “Wherefore receive ye one another” (Romans 15:7). How are we to receive one another? The answer is, “As Christ also received us.” Christ did not in the slightest degree make any concessions in the commandments in order to accommodate those whom He would receive. He said, “Think not that I came to destroy the law, or the prophets” (Matthew 5:17); “If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love” (John 15:10). To a young man wishing to follow Him, He said to him, “Keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17). Therefore it is evident that in making concessions for the sake of peace and harmony, no concession is to be made in respect to keeping the commandments. “Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification” (Romans 15:2). We are never exhorted to aid a brother to sin, in order to please him. Neither are we exhorted to close our eyes to a brother's sin, and allow him to go on in it without warning him, lest we displease him. There is no kindness in that. The exhortation is, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in anywise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him” (Leviticus 19:17). The mother who would be so fearful of displeasing her child that she would not stop it from putting its hand into the blaze, would be exhibiting cruelty instead of kindness. We are to interact pleasingly with all, but only for their good, not to lead astray.