

Sabbath School Lesson #7 – Keys to Family Unity – 11-17 May 2019

Christ prayed for His disciples: “That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, *art* in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me” (John 17:21). In the family, and in church, the extension thereof, this union is to exist not in mere sentiment, but in teaching, in doctrine, in purpose. Thus Christ speaks through Paul: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all *speake 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 Corinthians 1:10). It need scarcely be said that the only mind which will thus unite mortal man, with all their limitations of early environment, education, habits, prejudices, and sins, is the mind of Christ. Therefore “let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). Thus the key to family unity is each member of the family having in him or her the mind of Christ.

Sunday: Christ the Center – Christ should not only be the centre of the family, but the life of every member of the family (see Galatians 2:20). Christ was but the Model Man. He is, in fact, “*the Man Christ Jesus*” (1 Timothy 2:5). There is no other man, for He makes all who believe and makes them in Himself “one new man” (Ephesians 2:15). It is only in Christ that we become “a perfect man” (Ephesians 4:13). The seed that is sown produces other goods, endowed with the same life, that they may in turn be producers of life. So all who believe are here on earth in Christ’s stead, to carry on, in His name and by the power of His life, the work begun by Him. He calls all to come to Him and drink the water of life; but He adds, “Let him that heareth say, Come” (Revelation 22:17). And, in order that their call may not be in vain, that none may come to them for life and be disappointed, He says, “He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38). The Word of God abiding in us transforms us, so that we have its nature, and are, in Christ, also the Word of God; so that if any man speak, he will “speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11). God says: “I have put My words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of Mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art My people” (Isaiah 2:16). The Word of God, the Seed that is to beget children for the kingdom, and also to prepare the kingdom for them, is to be spoken by men. But it will be by men who have died with Christ, giving up their lives, never to take them again, and whose lives are nothing but God’s Word incarnate. When they speak they will speak with authority, for they will speak just what they are, yet not of themselves, but Christ.

Monday: Becoming One Through His Love – Let the love of Christ be in the family, and it is a certainty that love will overflow to our neighbours. The Bible idea of love differ materially from that held by majority of the people. There is so much selfishness in the world, and it is so natural to the human heart, that few have any proper conception of what love is. There is only one true standard of love, and that is the Divine: “That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12). And Paul says that “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). This utterly overturns the common idea that was embodied in the Pharisaic saying, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemies.” The Bible rule is, “Love your enemies.” Therefore the one who loves his neighbour simply because his neighbour loves him, does not love his neighbour at all. “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:10). This does not mean simply that we must refrain from doing actual injury to our neighbours, but that we must do them all the good we can. For if I have power to save my neighbour from any ill, and do not do it, it is the same as though I did him the injury. “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10). “Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it” (Proverbs 3:27). The Golden Rule: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12). If there be love in the family, it will overflow to neighbours.

Tuesday: Selfishness: Family Destroyer – Selfishness is not love. “Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own” (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). It needs no argument, but only the statement of the fact, to cause all to know that

the most of that which is called love in this world is to a greater or less extent a desire to receive some benefit or pleasure for self. The one who loves, or thinks that he loves, another, is fully as much taken up with the thought of pleasure that he is to derive, as he is with the thought of giving pleasure to the other. The love that gives everything, and asks for nothing for itself, except the privilege of loving, is rare. It is found among men only to the extent that the love of God is shed abroad in the heart. Nevertheless that is what real love is. To love in deed and in truth is to give self for and to the object of affection. Therefore when we read that the law of God demands that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind, it means nothing less than that every faculty and fibre of our being is to be given up to the Lord: He gave Himself to us, without any reserve; and that was simply a manifestation of love; therefore when we love Him, we shall do the same thing. Our soul, body, and spirit will be yielded to Him, for Him to use absolutely as He will. His Spirit will then be given entire possession of our bodies, so that we shall have no mind but the mind of Christ. If anybody thinks that this is a great thing, it can only be replied that we are talking about "the great commandment."

Selfishness is self-love and a destroyer of family. "Love seeketh not her own." Therefore self-love is not love at all, in the right sense of the word. It is only a base counterfeit. Yet the most of that which in the world is called love, is not really love for another, but is love of self. Even that which should be the highest form of love known on earth, the love which is used by the Lord as a representation of His love for His people, – the love of husband and wife, – is more often selfishness than real love. Real family happiness exist only in unselfish love. True happiness is found when one ceases to seek for it, and sets about making it for others.

Wednesday: Submission – The one lesson which God wishes men to learn is submission, and trust in Him. Only by His power are we kept. Never in time or in eternity can a saint of God stand or walk alone. The experienced Christian is not the one who tries to stand alone, but the one who has learned absolutely to trust God in every detail of life. The true Christian, overcomers are those who 'have no confidence in the flesh.' Submission is also a Bible principle governing man to man relationship, and is applicable in families. Yet, submission is despised by the world. Earthly associations often regard submission as contrary to equality. But the church of Christ, as directed by Himself, is a place on earth where 'liberty, equality, and fraternity' can be fully realised. The apostle Peter proceeds, "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5). The trouble with earthly associations formed for the purpose of promoting liberty and equality on earth, is that they are only human organisations, directed only by human wisdom and human power, and among men self is bound to predominate. Only the Spirit of Christ is unselfish.

Thursday: Living the Love we Promised – Many have made promises to each other only to break them. Most of them that make the promises do not believe in what they promise. The only way to live the love we promise is when that love and promise is made in Christ. It starts by us trusting in God fully to direct our lives. God's promises never fails. Yet many distrust even God as they distrust their fellow men. Distrust is displeasing to God. His promises are abundant. Listen to a few: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15-16). "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" (James 1:5). "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust" (Psalms 103:13-14). "Be content with such things as ye have for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). Read also Hebrews 2:18; 12:1-4; 13:8; Philippians 4:4, 13; and especially Psalms 130:17-18, and Lamentations 3:22-33.