

Sabbath School Lesson #4 – Mercy & Justice in Psalms & Proverbs – 20-26 July 2019

Christ would have us be true witnesses to the mercy and justice of God in the final judgment of the world. The psalmist laments that men “judge unjustly” and then calls them to “Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid *them* out of the hand of the wicked” (Psalm 82:3-4). Only God does justly. Christ calls on us to be true witnesses so that in the judgment of the world God may be vindicated. This is what Paul refers to: “That Thou mightest be justified in Thy sayings, and mightest overcome when Thou art judged” (Romans 3:4). When God judges He Himself is judged. God has been slandered by Satan. He has been charged with selfish indifference to the wants of His creatures, and many have believed and repeated the accusation. God is now on trial, and the final judgment of the world will be the announcement of the verdict in His case, when every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess to God, “just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints.” The forty-first chapter of Isaiah begins with a call for silence in the court – to be still and know that He is God, and to come near and produce their cause, bringing forth their strong reasons (verse 21). God declares the end from the beginning, and does whatsoever He will; but the idols of men cannot tell even the things that are past, and have no power to do either good or evil. In the forty-third chapter, when all the nations are assembled, God says to those who stand with His Servant, Christ: “Ye are my witnesses.” A whole “cloud of witnesses” testify to God’s lovingkindness and faithfulness, and His power and willingness to “deliver the poor and needy.” God leaves His case in the hands of men; those who testify for Him, and change not, will triumph when His character is vindicated before all the worlds; and they who doubt God, when the overwhelming weight of evidence wrings the confession from them at last, they will be punished as false witnesses.

Sunday: Psalms: Songs of Hope for the Oppressed – When like David in the Psalms we are oppressed, let us remember that soon the judgment of the world will be finished, our God will come out to deliver the oppressed. There is hope for the oppressed. As we wait, we are told: “Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God; which made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is; which keepeth truth for ever; which executeth judgment for the oppressed; which giveth food to the hungry” (Psalm 146:3-7).

Monday: “Do Something, God!” – In Psalm 82 we find in verse 8 what the Lesson writer here terms as David’s call upon God to do something – but it reads: “Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.” The call is inspired. That David was inspired of Christ, we learn from 2 Samuel 23:2: “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue.” David says: “The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice” (Psalm 50:1-5). Again the Lord spoke by David to the same: “Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice Before the Lord; for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth; he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth” (Psalm 96:11-13).

Tuesday: A King’s Promises – Let us bring this Lesson home and apply it to the many TV programmes and Movies that many Seventh-day Adventists are deceived to watch. King David promised: “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes” (Psalm 101:3). Most of our senses have been damned over the years of abuse with what the world offers us through the TV, that when we watch snatches or short clips of immoral acts in TV documentaries and in educational programmes, we have come to rationalise as acceptable innocent looks. We fail to detect this innocent look as sin. Jesus tells us that “Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:27,

28). Our creator, the all wise Jesus, is simply telling us the science of our wonderfully made beings: that since the brain is the decision centre for the body, every act performed must first be conceived in the mind before it can be translated into action. To our movies on TV, Jesus is simply telling us that by beholding we become, and that we vicariously participate in the actual act. Even though the viewer may be mature enough to know that the scene is only a fabricated, pretend-situation, yet he becomes as emotionally involved in the picture as if he were actually living out the experience. The heart pounds with fright, the eyes fill with tears, and the viewer is mentally projecting himself into the movie scene. Whether fighting and shooting his way out of a desperate situation, suffering the trauma of incurable disease, addicting to immoral habits, or yielding to the excitement of a provocative bedroom scene, the viewer is caught up in the plot, taking part by proxy in the adventures of the hero or heroine. Jesus said that this kind of participation is just as wrong as the actual physical involvement in sin. Jesus gives a solution to the lusts of the eye: "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell" (Matthew 5:29).

If we apply the principle to our TV scenes, Jesus is saying that if the eye is looking at a movie that is liable to lead the mind to harbour sin, the most drastic action should be taken to put those scenes out of view. Jesus is saying here that if we have a TV set in the home which we cannot control, it is better to cast it out of the house onto the junk pile than to be led into sin by its influence. Better to lead a so-called one-eyed existence without television than to lose our soul by defiling through sinful thoughts created by television. The only way to be pure-minded is to look at, listen to, and speak only the things that are pure. Paul tells us: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever, things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8). The secret of being pure, and virtuous is to think that way, and the way we think is determined by what we see, hear and speak. Saints, let us learn from the lessons King David learnt and say, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes" (Psalm 101:3). Put on Christ "and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14).

Wednesday: Walking With the Lord – We may recall Daniel who walked with the Lord. A test came upon him when the king made a decree that none shall pray to any divine but to the king. Daniel was not affected, for he knew the Lord. Even if the king were to be taken to have promised the highest possible reward and protection, Daniel would not be safe. "It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes" (Psalm 118:9). "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help." "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for its help, whose hope is in the Lord his God, which made heaven and earth, the sea and all that therein is; which keepeth truth for ever" (Psalm 146:3, 5-6). What is a god good for, that cannot save in times of trouble? Strange that professed Christians, who pity the poor heathen who worship gods that can do nothing, will, when danger threatens, act as though the God whom they profess to serve were like the gods of the heathen. That is just when God's power is seen at its best. "God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). There was never a time in the world when Daniel needed to pray more than when that decree went forth against prayer. What is a witness good for, if he does not give straight testimony when others are swearing falsely? Let all Adventists, by the grace of God, walk with the Lord, and in time of trial or trouble be a true witness for God.

Thursday: Proverbs: Mercy on the Needy – Let the needy trust in the mercy of the Lord. The Lord has identified Himself so closely with them that whosoever gives to the needy is considered as lending to the Lord. Christ was on this earth as a poor man, so that "he that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker" (Proverbs 14:31). "The Lord heareth the poor" (Psalms 69:33). "The needy shall not alway be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever" (Psalms 9:18). "The Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor" (Psalms 140:12). "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him" (Psalms 12:5). "Lord, who is like unto Thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?" (Psalms 35:10).