

Sabbath School Lesson #10 – Worshiping the Lord – 30 Nov-6 Dec 2019

Christ would have us learn the goodness of God and be able to worship and praise God for ever and ever. Of the people in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, we read: “And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because *He is good*, for His mercy *endureth* for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid” (Ezra 3:11). Herein we focus on praising God for His mercy.

The Divine injunction is, “Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord” (Psalm 150:6). This is without qualification. Rich and poor, high and low, the prosperous and the afflicted, the good and bad, – all are called upon to praise the Lord. There is no reason in the world why all men should not praise Him. “He is good;” and “His mercy endureth for ever” (Psalm 136:1). “The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord” (Psalm 33:5). “He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil” (Luke 6:35). “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). But some will say, ‘I do not see how it is possible for the wicked to praise the Lord; for when I am conscious of having sinned, my mouth is closed, and I cannot praise Him.’ There are very many professed Christians, even among Seventh-day Adventists, whose experience is the same. They praise the Lord when they feel in good case, and not otherwise. That which such ones call praising the Lord is really praise of themselves. The Pharisee doubtless thought he was praising the Lord when he said, “God, I thank thee that I am not as other men” (Luke 18:11). He felt good and had no consciousness of sin, and so he praised-himself. The fact that so many persons do not think that they can praise the Lord except when they *feel* in the best condition, is evidence that their praise is not for what the Lord is but for what they are, or what they think they are.

True praise to God is that which arises solely from a sense of His goodness. The highest angel in heaven would find nothing for which to praise the Lord, if he looked to himself. We can praise only the object that we are looking at and thinking about. Praise to God is for what He is, and not for what we are. Now God is always the same, no matter what our condition. Therefore He is always worthy of praise. Out of the depths we may praise the Lord, and thereby be lifted up into the presence of His glory; for He says, “Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth Me” (Psalm 50:23). If the wicked would begin to praise the Lord, they would cease to be wicked. In our greatest sinfulness we may praise the Lord for His love and mercy to sinners. “Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” (Romans 2:4). The continual recognition of God’s goodness keeps the soul in dependence upon it. So let all say in sincerity: ‘I will extol Thee, my God, O King; and I will bless Thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless Thee; and I will praise Thy name for ever and ever.’

“I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever; with my mouth will I make known Thy faithfulness to all generations” (Psalm 89:1). But nobody can live upon a past experience. The Christian’s rejoicing does not consist merely in telling what God did at some time in the past even for him. Life – real life – is not in the future nor in the past; it is now. Therefore the only reason why we can sing of the mercies of God for ever, in that “His mercy endureth for ever.” “For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever, Thy faithfulness shalt Thou establish in the very heavens” (verse 2). “Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.” “For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.” “The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children’s children” (Psalm 36:5; 103:11, 17).

Someone will say: Yea; the mercy of the Lord is for ever, but only to a certain class; there comes a time when His mercy ceases for sinners; and may it not be that it has now ceased? To this it is necessary only to say that it will be time enough for people to talk about God’s mercy ceasing, when they read something in the Bible to that effect; but in the face of the statement, repeated many times, that “His mercy endureth for ever,” and that “the Lord is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works” (Psalm 145:9), it is exceedingly presumptuous for anybody to say that there ever will come a time when God’s mercy for anybody will cease, or be in the least diminished. God’s mercy is Himself, for He is love, and

it must be as enduring as He is. We read that He is “from everlasting to everlasting,” and even so have we just read of His mercy. To say that there will come a time when God’s mercy will cease, is the same as saying that there will come a time when His righteousness will cease. No more reason to limit God’s mercy than there is to limit His righteousness.

True, it is said that His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, but the same thing is also said of His righteousness. But neither the one nor the other statement gives us any reason to conclude that either God’s mercy or His righteousness will ever cease, or over be restricted in any degree. The righteousness of God endures for ever, yet it will not be found on everybody. Why not? – Because so many will not submit unto the righteousness of God. The free gift comes upon all men unto justification of life (Romans 5:18), but many reject the gift. It is evident, then, that God cannot be charged with unrighteousness. If men will not take what He freely gives, He is clear. So His tender mercy is over all, and it endures for ever; and the fact that many utterly refuse His loving mercy, does not in the least diminish it. “Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out,” says Jesus. He is “able to save to the uttermost,” not simply the worst sinner; but to the longest time that any sinner may need and desire pardon, because “He ever liveth to make intercession for us.” There will indeed be a time when men who have abused his love, and definitely refused His call of mercy, will call, and will not be heard (Proverbs 1: 24, 33).

But the reason why souls will not be heard is that they do not desire pardon-cleansing from sin. They would gladly escape the consequences of sin, but they do not desire holiness. Their sorrow is not godly sorrow that worketh repentance. He does not heed their cry, because they do not ask for anything that He has to give. Even though they might seem to ask for life, they do not really ask for it, because they do not ask for holiness. There will never be a time when a truly repentant sinner will be rejected by the Lord. The only reason why probation will cease, will be that there will no longer be any need of it. The decree, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still” (Revelation 22:11), will not be an arbitrary fixing of destiny. It will not be that God’s patience is exhausted, so that He will say, ‘I will not stand this any longer; I will not give them any more opportunity.’ No; it will simply be the announcement of the fact that everybody has made a final decision, so that no change would be made even were probation to be continued for a thousand years. And the mercy of God will be as great when the wicked are destroyed, as it was when Jesus hung on the cross – see Romans 8:32. We read in Psalm 136:10, 15-20: “To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: ... but swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea; His love endures forever. to him who led his people through the wilderness; His love endures forever. to him who struck down great kings, His love endures forever. and killed mighty kings— His love endures forever. Sihon king of the Amorites His love endures forever. and Og king of Bashan— His love endures forever.”

It was “according to the will of our God and Father” (Galatians 1:4) that Christ hung on the Cross to save all. God wills 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 spurn it and throw it away. Christ hath brought life to light for all (2 Timothy 1:10). The judgment will reveal the fact that full salvation was given to all men and that the lost have deliberately thrown away their birthright possession.

The greater the thing refused, the greater the loss. Let no one think that because the mercy of God is so infinite and so eternal, therefore he is safe without it. What a foolishly fatal conclusion! The fact that the mercy of God is so great, filling heaven and earth, is the great reason why we should accept it; for if we reject it, there will be nothing left for us but eternal destruction. If His mercy were feeble, it might be rejected with comparative impunity; but since it fills eternity, the rejection of it is an eternal loss. Let us rather at once accept His mercy, and accept it as freely as He gives it; and then, since “His mercy endureth for ever,” we, being filled and surrounded and transformed and preserved by His mercy, must also endure for ever. Then indeed we can sing of the mercies of the Lord, praising Him for ever.