

Sabbath School Lesson #8 – Ministering Like Jesus – 15-21 August 2020

Christ who was moved with compassion and ministered to the people is still moved with the same compassion and ministers to the people through the believer. “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36).

Sunday: Jesus’ Attitude Towards People – “And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them” (Luke 15:5). The pride and bigotry of the scribes and Pharisees are shown by this murmur. But we may leave them, to consider the charge that they brought against Jesus. “This man receiveth sinners.” It is a cause for joy to know that the Pharisees told the truth on this occasion. Christ receives sinners. “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). He sends out the gracious invitation, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). He calls sinners to Him, and receives them, because they are sinners, and He alone has the power to cleanse from sin. Would that every despondent sinner might believe the words spoken of Christ, “This man receiveth sinners.” Poor, blind Pharisees! They trusted to themselves that they were righteous, and did not know that they were sinners, even worse than the despised publicans. Had they known that, they might have proved to their everlasting joy the truth of that which they supposed was a bitter reproach; for Christ would have received them likewise. Luke 15:4-9 contain two vivid illustrations of God’s interest in sinners. The first one is this: “What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.” In this the reasonableness of Christ’s receiving sinners is shown. A good shepherd would search for a lost sheep, even one lost sheep. God’s creatures are His flock. How natural that He should seek after the lost ones. “The Son of man is come to save that which was lost.” And since He came at an infinite personal sacrifice, to save the lost ones, who can for a moment doubt that He will gladly receive those who come to Him? How is it possible for a sinner to doubt the willingness of Christ to receive him? He gave His life for no other purpose than that they might come to Him. He “gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity” (Titus 2:14).

“Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.” But where are they that need no repentance? Not on this earth, certainly; “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). It will not do to say that Christ meant that there is more joy over one sinner that repents, than there would be over ninety-nine that needed not to repent, if there were any such. It is evident that those who need no repentance must be the unfallen angels and the inhabitants of other worlds. But this is a minor matter. The great point is that not only is Christ willing to receive sinners, but He calls for them, and rejoices when they *come*.

“Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” It does not say that there is joy among the angels over one sinner that repenteth, although we may be sure that they who are sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation, are deeply interested in everything that concerns them. But there is joy “in the presence of the angels.” The Father and the Son do not conceal Their joy “over one sinner that repenteth.” Who, then, may despise the day of small things, or esteem it a small thing to convert one sinner? What if the labour be hard, and the expenditure great, and only one soul is saved as the result, is it a small thing to add to the joy of Heaven? And does not this give us a clue to the meaning of the words which the Lord will say to the faithful servants, namely, “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord”? The joy of the Lord is to see sinners repent and be saved. This joy is great because the salvation, has been achieved at an immense sacrifice. If we are permitted to share the joy of the Lord, it will be to rejoice over

the salvation, not of ourselves, merely, but of others, and especially of those whom our influence, the working of Christ in us, has helped to bring to the knowledge of the gospel.

Monday: Jesus' Treatment of People – Although Jesus treated all with grace, not all were converted. When Jesus read the prophecy of Isaiah, in the synagogue at Nazareth, and began to say to the people, whose eyes were fastened upon Him, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth" (Luke 4:21-22). The Spirit of the Lord was indeed upon Him, and as the result His words produced conviction. Involuntarily they responded to the power of the Spirit. Then came in another feeling. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" They gave place to doubt. True, the words which Jesus had read and spoken had come with the force of the Holy Spirit, and they had acknowledged their gracious power; but they could not make the gracious words harmonise with their experience, and so they lost the blessing.

The same thing is repeated again and again in these days. People hear burning words of truth, which cause their own hearts to burn in response, and then doubt comes in under the guise of 'prudence' and 'caution.' 'We must not be too quick to accept new things;' 'Have any of the leaders at General Conference believed this?'; 'We will not commit ourselves until we see how this thing is going to turn;'; 'We cannot be too cautious' – these and many other things hold many people back from following the convictions produced by the Holy Spirit. Looking at the matter from a worldly critical point of view, they conclude that the influence of the Spirit was only a sudden impulse, which it would be most unwise to yield to. They are confirmed in this view by the fact that, as the result of their unbelieving calculation, the Spirit's voice has been silenced, and they no longer feel that response in their hearts to the words of truth. And thus carnal wisdom proves their ruin. May the grace of our Lord help us.

Tuesday: Jesus' Healing Ministry: Part 1 – When Jesus saw the poor paralytic lying at the pool of Bethesda. He asked him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" (John 5:6). When Peter found the man who had kept his bed for eight years, he said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately" (Acts 9:34). This wholeness which comes through Jesus of Nazareth is wholeness of body as well as of soul and spirit. This is shown by the fact that the body was made whole; and the body was made whole in order that men might see the completeness of the salvation that is in the Gospel. So we read, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction" (Psalm 103:2-3). The words of the Lord are "life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh" (Proverbs 4:20-22). This is no theoretical, but real and practical, every-day life.

Wednesday: Jesus' Healing Ministry: Part 2 – The words "whole" and "holy" have a common Saxon origin. They are, in fact, but one word. So to be made *whole* means to be made *holy*. Wholeness is holiness. Now a man is not made whole if something is lacking. There can be no real wholeness of body without inward holiness. A man may have eyes that are as good as any man has in the world; but if he does not see God in His works, they are of no use to him. Ears are useless to a man who will not hear the Word of the Lord. If a man does not speak as the oracles of God, of what use are a mouth and a tongue to him? If a man does not think God's thoughts, he might as well have no brain. In short, if our bodies do not move in response to the impulse of the Spirit of God, they are altogether corrupt and perverted, no matter how fair and healthful an appearance they may present. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." God sees the sin in the heart; and since death is the product of sin, and disease is the working of death, He looks at the body of the person who is a sinner, and sees that "from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it" (Isaiah 1:5-6). If sin is not removed, it will reveal itself as "a noisome and grievous sore" (Rev 16:2).

Thursday: What Matters to Jesus – Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables. This was not to conceal truth from the multitude, but just the contrary; for the prophet also says in the same connection, "We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord" (Psalm 78:4). The parables were for giving life. What matters to Jesus is we receive all His words as life: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life" (John 6:63).