

Sabbath School Lesson #3 – The Law as Teacher – 10-16 October 2020

Christ would have us receive His life and for that He appoints the law to teach us and lead us to His life. Our memory text reads: “And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deuteronomy 6:5). Paul wrote, “if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law” (Galatians 3:21). It follows that righteousness is life. It is no mere formula, no dead theory or dogma, but is living action. Christ is the life, and He is, therefore, our righteousness. “The Spirit is life because of righteousness” (Romans 8:10). At Mount Sinai, the law written on two tables of stone, could not give life, any more than could the stones on which it was written. All its precepts are perfect, but the flinty characters cannot transform themselves into action. Any person who receives only the law in letter, has a “ministration of condemnation” (2 Corinthians 3:9), and death. But “the Word was made flesh” (John 1:14). In Christ, the Living Stone, the law is life and peace. Receiving Him through the “ministration of the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:8), we have the life of righteousness, which the law approves. Galatians 3:21 shows that the giving of the law was to emphasise the importance of the promise given to Abraham. All the circumstances attending the giving of the law at Sinai, – the trumpet tone, the awful voice, the quaking earth, the “fire, and blackness, and tempest” (Hebrews 12:18), the thunders and lightnings, the bounds about the mount, beyond which it was death to pass, – all these told that “the law worketh wrath” to “the children of disobedience” (Colossians 3:6). But the very fact that the wrath which the law works comes only on the children of disobedience, proves that the law is good, and that “the man that doeth them shall live in them” (Galatians 3:12). In giving the law in such a majestic way at Mount Sinai, did God wish to discourage the people? – Not by any means. The law must be kept, and the terrors of Sinai were designed to drive them back to the oath of God, which four hundred and thirty years before had been given to stand to all people in all ages as the assurance of righteousness through the crucified and ever-living Saviour.

Sunday: To Love and to Fear God – Many who profess faith in Christ, even among us, tend to, especially by their actions and lifestyle, cast away the law of God. But what is there about the law of God that should cause men to try to shake it off? Is it a burdensome yoke? – Not by any means. Jesus said: “Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30). Now see how perfectly this agrees with what is said of the law: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.” “Love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:10). Instead of being a burdensome yoke, the law of God in Christ gives peace and rest. It is a comfort. “For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life” (Proverbs 6:23). “Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them” (Psalm 119:165). Since the law of God is love, it is evident that those who seek to cast away God’s bands and cords, are rejecting His love. “The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee” (Jeremiah 31:7). Men are drawn by Christ (John 12:32), because in Him is God’s law of love.

Monday: A Witness Against You – “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets” (Romans 3:21). Paul, speaking of Abraham, states as follows: “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded, that what He had promised, He was able also to perform... therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:20-25). “Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.” The same thing, says Paul, will be done to us also, if we also believe. The case, then, stands thus: The law demands perfect and unvarying obedience, but it speaks to all the world and finds none righteous; all have violated it, and all are condemned by it (Romans 3:9-19). And present or

future obedience will not take away past transgression, therefore the law cannot help us. But Christ is perfect righteousness, for in Him dwells "all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Now God says that He will impute the righteousness of Christ to everyone who will fully believe on Him. Impute means "to set to the account of." Therefore we are to understand that whenever we accept Christ, His righteousness is set to our account. "The righteousness of God" is manifested in our past lives, even though we ourselves have never done a single act of righteousness. Has the law relaxed its claims? No! "The righteousness of God without the law is manifested, *being witnessed by the law.*" The law stands by and witnesses to the righteousness that is thus manifested in our past life. Whereas it before condemned us, now it justifies us, for in the righteousness that is imputed to us it can detect no flaw. It makes no difference to the law that the imputed righteousness to which it witnesses is not the result of our own works; the imputed righteousness is accounted as ours, and that satisfies the law.

Tuesday: That You May Prosper – The Lord does not desire that His people should give way to discouragement. The same exhortation that was addressed to those who were about to enter into the earthly Canaan, is applicable to the Israel of God, who are striving for an inheritance in the heavenly Canaan. "Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed" (Joshua 1:9). Why not to be discouraged? Are we not weak, is not our enemy powerful? Would it not be presumptuous to feel strong and confident? Yes; it would if we depended only on our own strength; but fortunately we have also the same promise that was made to Joshua. It is this: "For the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." And he has also said, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." The Christian should ever realize this glorious truth: "The eternal God is my refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Knowing this, how can he be discouraged? We are not discouraged. And Paul's exhortation is, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Ephesians 6:10).

Wednesday: The Toils and Struggles of Law Keepers – We often hear about the cross involved in the keeping of the Sabbath. By this is meant the loss of employment, etc, for it is a fact that to many there seems to be nothing ahead of them but starvation, if they begin to keep the Sabbath of the Lord. Then, too, people who do so peculiar a thing as to keep the seventh day of the week, are often despised, and deemed almost insane. All these things are naturally trying to a person's feelings. And so Sabbath keeping is called a cross that is hard to bear. How little those who speak of it in that manner realise what the cross is! There is more truth in what they say about the Sabbath and the cross, than they think; but how different! The Apostle Paul said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14). The cross of Christ, therefore, is something to glory in. Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt (Hebrews 11:26). It is by the cross that the Lord gives to us His life, by which we are saved; and therefore the glory of the cross is the joy of salvation. We are reconciled to God by the death of Christ, and saved by His life. The life which does this, is the life from which all created things came, and by which they exist. The power of redemption is the power of creation, and that is the power of the life of Christ. The Sabbath is a great memorial of the wonderful works of God, which are the measure of His graciousness. He gave it that we might know that He is the Lord that sanctifies us. Therefore as the cross of Christ brings joy and celebration, so the cross of the Sabbath is not a cross hard to be endured, but a cross that lifts up and saves. Instead of mourning over difficulties involved in keeping the Sabbath, we say with the psalmist, "For Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy work; I will triumph in the works of Thy hands" (Psalms 92:4).

Thursday: Jesus, Our Example – The Christian life is simply the life of Christ. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12-13). "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked" (1 John 2:6). And how was it that He walked? Christ Himself said, "The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works" (John 14:10). Christ has set us a copy of perfection, but instead of standing off and watching us try to imitate Him, He gladly comes in to our hearts, becoming one with us, so that His life is our life, and His act is ours.