

Sabbath School Lesson #11 – Waging Love – 6-12 March 2021

Christ went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him. He desires to do the same through us, thus He promises: “And *if* thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness *be* as the noonday” (Isaiah 58:10). The next verse tells us, “And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not” (verse 11). Why would you be like a watered garden and spring of ever-flowing water? – Because of partaking of the water that Christ gives which is a well of water springing up into everlasting life. Our light will rise in obscurity and our darkness be as the noonday only when the Light of the world shines upon us and in us. That is, such going “about doing good” as is spoken of in Acts 10:38 can be done only by one in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells in full measure; and to such the health of Christ will necessarily be imparted. Although Christ did bore our sicknesses, no one ever saw Him ill or unable to respond to a call for help.

Sunday: Buy Something Free? – Paganism is a threat, Christianity is a promise. Paganism is essentially pessimistic. Christianity is essentially optimistic. The heathen knows no future, has no assured hope. But the Christian is a man with more than a hope, – with a Gospel, with a faith, with an inheritance unfailing and eternal. This Gospel, this faith, this inheritance is offered “without money and without price” (Isaiah 55:1). Whosoever will, let him come and take it. Why then should he who knows the Christian promises remain in heathen fear, trembling under threats of Satan instead of rejoicing in the promises of Christ?

Throughout the whole Bible the invitation is being constantly given to us, “Come.” When the world was threatened with destruction by the flood, “the Lord said unto Noah, *Come* thou and all thy house into the ark” (Genesis 7:1). This was an invitation to salvation, and was put on record for our benefit. Under various forms this invitation is repeated through the Scripture until it is given the threefold form in the last chapter of the Book: “And the Spirit and the bride say, *Come*. And let him that heareth say, *Come*. And let him that is athirst *come*” (Revelation 22:17). Through the prophet Isaiah it is said: “Ho, every one that thirsteth, *come* ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; *come* ye, buy, and eat; yea, *come*, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ... Incline your ear, and *come* unto Me” (Isaiah 55: 1-3). This Gospel invitation is repeated by the Saviour in the flesh, saying, “*Come* unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). We are urged, “*Come out* from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, . . . and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you” (2 Corinthians 6:17-18). And in view of a time of trouble, now near at hand, the Lord has said unto us, “*Come*, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the world for their iniquity” (Isaiah 26:20-21). Then there is the final call: “*Come*, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34). Although the invitation has been often rejected, yet “being full of compassion,” He continues the call, so that it is written, “But to Israel He saith, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people” (Romans 10:21). That heart must be hard indeed which will not yield to all these gracious invitations. Come, and let us “return unto the Lord.” SDA Hymnal 279: “Come, every soul by sin oppressed, There’s mercy with the Lord; And He will surely give you rest, By trusting in His Word.”

Monday: High Thoughts and Ways – Many people, when reproved for an improper word or action, excuse or justify themselves by saying, ‘It is my way.’ Is this a proper ground for justification? Let us see what the Scriptures say about it. The Lord says, “Amend your ways” (Jeremiah 7:3). If our ways are not right they should be amended, and not justified. The weeping prophet says, “Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord” (Lamentations 3:40). The Lord calls upon us to consider our ways (Haggai 1:5, 7). By careful consideration our ways may not appear excusable. But the fact that certain ways are our own ways should be no excuse for retaining them, but rather a reason for rejecting them. If you “shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways” then the Lord shall “feed thee with the

heritage of Jacob thy father” (Isaiah 58:13-14). “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord” (Isaiah 55:8). Of the wicked He says, “Destruction and misery are in their ways” (Romans 3:16). In pleading with Israel He says, “Thou shalt remember thy ways and be ashamed” (Ezekiel 16:61). The psalmist asks, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?” and the answer is given, “By taking heed thereto according to Thy word” (Psalms 119:9). His own experience is given in verse 104, “Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.” The law of God is a detector of false ways, therefore we should test all our ways by it. If they are not in harmony with this rule, let us not extenuate nor follow them, but “ask for the old paths, where is the *good way*, and walk therein” (Jeremiah 6:18). The greatest and most common mistake among men is to judge God by themselves. The Lord’s reproach to man is, “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself” (Psalms 1:21). The facts in the case are stated in these words: “For My thoughts are not your thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Tuesday: Fast Friends – “Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and Thou seest not?” (Isaiah 58:3). How were the Israelites fasting? Fasting, in itself, whether as a religious act or otherwise, is entire abstinence from food and drink. The case of Daniel (Daniel 10:2-3) is sometimes referred to as indicating that eating to a certain extent is compatible with fasting; but the careful reader will note that Daniel does not say that he was *fasting*, but that he was “*mourning* three full weeks,” in which time he “ate no pleasant bread.” A person may mourn without fasting, and this Daniel did. Whenever instances of fasting are recorded in the Bible, we find that neither food nor drink was taken during the time of the fast. It is as impossible for a person to be fasting while eating and drinking, as it is to be awake and asleep at the same time, or to be at once running and sitting still. Our common word “breakfast,” indicates this. The longest period of abstinence from food is in the night, when we are asleep. When the morning comes, we *break our fast* by partaking of food. At the ninth hour of the day Cornelius said “Four days ago I was fasting until this hour” (Acts 10:30). If we should substitute, ‘Four days ago I ate very little until three o’clock in the afternoon,’ it would make the whole affair ridiculous. No one should prescribe fasting to others. Let each decide for himself whether or not he will fast, at what time and how long; but no one can possibly have the choice of eating or not eating during a fast, for as soon as anything is eaten fast ceases.

Wednesday: Fast Fight – What is fasting for? From its connection with prayer, and from Scriptures, it is evident that it is for the purpose of gaining special help and strength from the Lord, for the performance of some necessary work or the overcoming of some peculiarly strong temptation. This is indicated in the Lord’s description of an acceptable fast, where He says, “Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to lose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?” (Isaiah 58:7). But while fasting means special earnestness and importunity in prayer, it must not be considered as a penance, nor as buying the favour of God by the mortification of the body. God does not delight in human suffering, and we could not buy His favour even with the sacrifice of our lives. He bestows His grace freely, because He is love and mercy; and as an evidence of His favour He has given Himself for us. Christian prayer is not like heathen prayer. The heathen think that they shall be heard for their much speaking (Matthew 6:7), and in their importunity they lacerate themselves and afflict their bodies (see 1 Kings 18:28). God’s servants do not do so, for they know that God is their Father, tender and loving, that He knows what we have need of before we ask Him, and that He has already richly provided every necessary thing for us (Matthew 6:8; Romans 8:32; Ephesians 1:3; 2 Peter 1:2-3).

Thursday: A Time for Us – “If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, ... then ... I will ... feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father” (Isaiah 58:13-14). God requires us to devote to Him a portion of our time – one-seventh; and a portion of our means – one-tenth. This requirement is based on property rights. Our time, as our lives, belongs to God: “it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people” (Psalms 100:3). Our means belong to God: “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psalms 24:1).