

Sabbath School Lesson #1 – Living in a 24-7 Society – 26 June-2 July 2021

Christ's follower, a Christian, must seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness; he must hunger and thirst after righteousness; his condition is described in the words the psalmist tells us that, "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God" (Psalms 84:2). Nothing of this world we desire can satisfy. There is only one thing that can satisfy, and that is Christ. He is the Desire of all nations, and He satisfies "the desire of every living thing" (Psalms 145:16).

"There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked" (Isaiah 48:22). "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Isaiah 57:20). "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain; ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:1-3).

This is a description of man by nature. Everywhere we find unrest and dissatisfaction. The poor have no cause to envy the rich, for discontent is found in the mansions as well as in the hovel. Those in any station of life who are perfectly contented, are in a very small minority. Everywhere we see people working for happiness in various ways, vainly confident that they will find it if they pursue the object of their desires for enough. But these longings are so often for things forbidden, and for that which only increases the very dissatisfaction, it is God Himself who has implanted this in the human heart. It is not that God has caused men to desire unlawful things, but that the desire of unlawful things is only the perversion of a desire which God Himself has planted in man. God is a bounteous provider. He scatters His benefits with a lavish hand. He desires that men should enjoy the abundance which His love has prepared, and that they should be satisfied. He is no niggard, neither is He a tyrant. He knows what will perfectly satisfy every soul, yet He never attempts to compel any one to find satisfaction in His way. He knows that no one can be satisfied under compulsion, and that even that which is real will not satisfy unless it is the individual's own choice. So He gives everyone full liberty to choose whatever he will. Christ is "the Desire of all nations" (Haggai 2:7). There are comparatively few people in the world who recognise Him as the object of their desire, but it is a fact that all the varied longings of the human heart can be satisfied in Christ, and in Him alone. God has implanted desires in every soul which can be satisfied only by the possession of Christ, then, they may see in Him the object of their desires and be drawn to Him. The devil's work is to deceive people with the thought that those desires may be satisfied in some other way than by the possession of Christ.

Sunday: Worn and Weary – "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made" (Genesis 2:2). God rested, not because He was weary, but because His work was finished. When work is finished, and is well done, nothing but rest remains. In six days God finished His work, and as He surveyed it, He pronounced it "very good." There was no flaw in it. It was without fault before Him. Hence, since God's work was done and well done at the close of the sixth day, "He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made."

He had no sad reflections, no regrets. His rest was not marred, as what man calls rest so often is, by any such thought as, 'To-morrow I must go at that work again;' nor, 'I wish that I had done this portion a little differently;' nor, 'If I could do that over again, I could make an improvement;' nor, 'That last day's work is so bad that I cannot bear to look at it; I was so tired when I got to it that I could not half do it.' Nothing of the kind! Every portion of the work, even man, was as perfect as it was possible for it to be, and God took pure delight in contemplating the work from which He was resting because it was complete and perfect.

This is the rest which He offers to us. It is not something that He imposes on us, but which He in everlasting love and kindness gives to us. Rest is not a task that is laid on one. It is not a burden. They who look upon the Sabbath as a burden, have no idea of what the Sabbath of the Lord is. It is rest, perfect, unalloyed rest. Jesus Christ is the One by whom the worlds were made, "for in Him were all things created, in the heavens, and upon the earth" (Colossians 1:16), therefore He is the one who offers us this rest. To every soul He

clearly cries, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). The rest is found in Him, because in Him the works of God are completed. In Him is the new creation, and "therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17). On the cross Jesus cried, "It is finished" (John 19:30), thus showing that in His cross we find that perfect rest that comes alone from the finished work of the Lord.

Monday: Running on Empty – "The word that Jeremiah the prophet spake unto Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch; Thou didst say, Woe is me now! for the Lord hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest. Thus shalt thou say unto him, The Lord saith thus; Behold, that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land. And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest" (Jeremiah 45:1-5). So by not seeking great things for ourselves, the greatest thing will be given us for life is more than all things else, inasmuch as it includes all things. A blessed promise for gospel workers. The one who goes at the bidding of God to carry His message, does not 'take his life in his hand.' If he carried it in so insecure a place, he would certainly lose it. But his life is hid with Christ in God, and being "bound in the bundle of life with the Lord" (1 Samuel 25:29) it is as safe as God's life.

Tuesday: Defining Rest in the Old Testament – "And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them" (Deuteronomy 31:16). There is no rest in serving other gods. After their settlement in the promised land, and the death of Joshua, with his elders and all the people, the new generation "...forsook the Lord God of their fathers... and followed other gods" (Judges 2:10). God sent warning after warning, but every reformation was followed by deep apostasy. And so they did not get rest in other gods.

Wednesday: Rest in the New Testament – "And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately" (Mark 6:30-32). "After the disciples had worked hard for a time, the Saviour invited them to retire to a quiet place with Him. They needed to enjoy not only a little rest but also a season of communion with Him. In the closeness and privacy of the Master with the disciples, He could communicate freely with them, correct their mistakes, encourage them, and strengthen them for their future work. As disciples, we too need the refreshing company of Him who is the Source of all power, comfort, and wisdom. Every child of God has a vital need to enjoy the wonderful companionship of Jesus in the precious moments of private communion with Him. Amidst the hurry and worry of life, even in the work of God, every Christian needs enough time dedicated to his private devotions" (Adult Sabbath School Lessons, July-Sept 1979, p 98).

Thursday: A Restless Wanderer – "When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth" (Genesis 4:12). Here we see that Cain became a restless wanderer due to his sin. He could have repented to find rest in Christ, for all souls who become wanderers due to their sin have an opportunity to repent. We find this illustrated in the parable of the lost sheep. Those who hear Christ's voice will find rest. For let it never be forgotten that in Christ is all fulness. He is not only the Shepherd seeking the lost sheep, but He is the door into the fold, and the fold itself. So, no matter how far away we have wandered, the very moment we yield to the call which He utters close beside us, we are at home. The Shepherd and the fold come to find the sheep; and from lost wanderers, we find ourselves at once in our Father's house. What a blessed encouragement that Jesus has brought heaven itself down to earth for us. "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-7).