

Sabbath School Lesson #4 – The Cost of Rest – 17-23 July 2021

Christ would have us remember the creation in keeping the Sabbath in order to have real rest. In the beginning God sanctified the Sabbath as a memorial of His creative power. He set it apart for the use of men, in order to remind them of His power to sanctify them (see Ezekiel 20:12). The Sabbath, which calls attention to creation, and thus shows God's eternal power (Romans 1:20), makes known the sanctifying power of God, since sanctification is the exercise of creative power. "Create in me a clean heart" (Psalm 51:10). "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Christ is Creator, and He created all things (Colossians 1:16). The Sabbath comes to us from Eden, when the earth was new, to remind us of the power of God in Christ to make us new creatures, as perfect as man and all things were in the beginning. As we enjoy keep the Sabbath holy and enjoy the blessings, let us allow Christ to create us anew so as to truly rest in the Sabbath.

Sunday: Worn and Weary – The Apostle Paul says, For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written" (Romans 2:24). In our Lesson, reference is made to the sin of David (read the story in 2 Samuel 11:1-5), which caused the name of God to be blasphemed. "The name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles through you." Who has done this? The one who teaches the law, and who says that one who teaches the law and who says that one should not take the name of the Lord in vain. When David sinned in the case of Uriah's wife, God said to him, "By this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme" (2 Samuel 12:14). That is, he was a professed follower of the Lord, and by his violation of the law of the Lord he had given unbelievers a chance to say, 'There, that is a specimen of Christianity.' Who is there that can say that as a professed follower of the Lord he has always correctly represented the truth? Who is there that must not admit to himself and God that, either by his words or actions, he has very often misrepresented the truth which he professed? Who is there that has not by his failures, either in teaching or acting, given people a miserably inadequate idea of what true godliness is? In short, who is there that must not say yes to the apostle's question, "Through breaking the law, dishonorest thou God?" (Romans 2:23). And since thus the name of God is blasphemed through professed Christians, who is there that can declare himself guiltless before God's law? Let the sin of David remind us of our own sin, that we may earnestly seek for forgiveness and redemption even for a clean heart with us: "Create in me a clean heart."

When David had committed the grievous sin of taking the wife of Uriah, and his sin had been brought home to his conscience, he cried out to the Lord: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (Psalm 51:4). He realised that his sin was primarily against God. We also recall that when Joseph was tempted to wrong his master, he recalled how his master had trusted him by putting everything into his hand, he said, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Every act which shows a lack of love for our neighbour, shows a lack of love for God; the wrong which one may do to his fellow-man is only secondary; the greater wrong is against God. Only conscientious souls realise this; those who have not the "fear of God" before their eyes, will not stop to consider the interest of their neighbour, when it comes in conflict with their own pleasure.

Monday: Wake-Up Call – "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Confession is acknowledgement. The word "confess" is derived originally from words meaning, "to speak together," that is, to speak the same thing-to agree. God says that all men are sinners, and He also, by His Spirit and His word, tells us of the particular instances in which we have sinned, saying, as through the prophet Nathan He did to David, "Thou art the man" (2 Samuel 12:7). To confess, to speak together, or agree with the Lord, is to respond, "That is true; I have sinned." Many people suppose that the Lord requires us to confess sin, in order that we may be humiliated. They think that the object of confession is to make one so ashamed that he will not do the thing again. But that is a mistake. None of God's requirements are arbitrary. He requires us to confess, because confession of sin means agreement with Him; and unless we are agreed with Him there is no life for us. He desires us to walk with Him; and two cannot walk together except they are agreed (Amos 3:3). So it is impossible that we

should live with Him unless we are agreed with Him. Indeed, who would wish to? It is very trying to live even for a short time with one with whom we are in constant disagreement. That would be the very opposite of heaven. God intends that His people shall “delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” ‘By the law is the knowledge of sin,’ and “the law is spiritual.” “Spiritual” means of the nature of the Spirit. Accordingly it is the Spirit of God that convinces men of sin. If God did not do this, we should not know that we had sinned. “The heart is deceitful above all things; and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord search the heart” (Jeremiah 19:9-10). God alone can know what is in man. How foolish, then, when God tells us that we are doing wrong, for us to say, ‘I cannot see it; it does not seem to me to be wrong.’ Of course not; and that is why the Lord shows it to us. For us to say that we have not sinned, when God says that we have, is to charge God either with ignorance or falsehood; and who can expect to be saved while making such a charge against God? There would be war in heaven at once, for we would be setting our will and our judgment against God’s. Sin is a hateful thing. God so regards it. His great love for us is shown in that He loves us while we are full of sin. Knowing the terrible nature of sin, He wishes to deliver us from it. Therefore He makes known to us our danger, that we may flee for refuge to the hope set before us in Christ. Now since confession means agreement, it is plain that when we truly confess sin we agree with all that God says about its nature. And since he tells us of our sin, in order that we may be freed from it, it is also plain that confession of sin means that we desire to be freed from it. Therefore as soon as we truly confess sin we are fully agreed with God; since He is righteous, His righteousness is ours.

Tuesday: Forgiven and Forgotten? – One thing should not be forgotten: forgiveness immediately follows confession; forgiveness of sin is cleansing from it. David, blinded by passion, did not realise that he had grievously sinned. The prophet Nathan, in a parable, set the wickedness of the act clearly before him, and then said, “Thou art the man.” David immediately exclaimed “I have sinned against the Lord,” and instantly the response came, “The Lord also hath put away thy sin” (2 Samuel 13:13). As soon as the sin is really confessed it is forgiven, and the soul is cleansed from it. Well may we say to the Lord: “Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:18-19).

Wednesday: Something New – Since true confession involves desire to be separated from sin, it follows that it means restoration wherever anything has been unlawfully taken; for it is evident that no one can be freed from the sin, while resolutely clinging to it. Restoration, therefore, even though it be fourfold, is not for the purpose of appeasing God with a bribe, but it is the natural manifestation of the earnest desire to be rid of the sin. But it must not be supposed that making ‘a good confession’ means the recollection and acknowledgement of every act of sin that has ever been committed. That is an impossibility. In the first place, life would not be long enough for a man to recount all his sins, even if he knew them; and in the second place, no man can know all his sin. The sins that lie hidden in the heart, – the sinful nature, – are as deadly as those that have come to the light. So confession involves the acknowledging to God that there is no good thing in us, and praying, “Cleanse Thou me from secret faults” (Psalm 19:12). And this alone is sufficient to show that confession should be to God only, and not to man, except to the man whom we may have offended. For confession does not mean the telling of news, but the acknowledging of a known fault.

Thursday: Reflectors of God’s Light – David understood that sacrifices of animals could not give him the rest he needed. The very offering of a sacrifice indicated that death is the wages and fruit of sin. But anyone could see that the life of a lamb, a goat, or a bullock, was not worth as much as a man’s own life. Therefore none of those animals, nor all of them together, could answer for the life of a single man. Thousands of rams, or even a human sacrifice, could not atone for a single sin (Micah 6:6-7). David said, after he had committed a great sin, “Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering” (Psalm 51:16). May we learn from David, that we may pray for a clean heart: “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10).