

Sabbath School Lesson #6 – Finding Rest *in* Family Ties – 31 July-6 August 2021

Christ would have us understand and fully appreciate the value of receiving Him in our lives in order for us to have true family ties. “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen” (2 Peter 3:17-18). The trouble with so many people is that they do not know the value of the treasure which they have received. They receive Christ, and are blessed; then, by reason of not increasing in the knowledge of Him, they are conscious of a great lack, and so hastily conclude that the gift which they have received is not great enough, and that God must have another to reserve for them – as though God had any greater gift than Christ, or that when He gave Christ, He made some reservation. No; with Him He freely gives us “all things.” If we have received Christ, our part is to study Him, that we may know that in Him all our wants are supplied. “Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places” (Eph 1:15-20).

Sunday: Dysfunction at Home – The Lesson traces Joseph’s family lineage to Abraham and how in spite of the dysfunctional family history, they are names as faithful. Suffice to briefly talk about Abraham. Abraham was counted a righteous man. We must not, however, fall into the mistake of supposing that Abraham was originally good, and that it was for this reason that God called him, or that he had none of the temptations, and was subject to none of the weaknesses, of ordinary men. Goodness is not natural to mankind, and Abraham was very human. He was weak, mortal, sinful flesh, but “he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). Some very bad things are recorded against Abraham, and if we mention them it is not to disparage him, but to show that God “justifieth the ungodly” (Romans 4:5). “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4). To ignore the sins of the patriarchs, is to deprive ourselves of the comfort which God designed for us in recording them. To make heroes of them, as though they were naturally different from other men, is to make of none effect the grace of God. On two different occasions Abraham weakly lied about his wife, putting her into a most compromising position in order to screen himself from possible danger. His course of action in Egypt was base in the extreme. And here we might note in passing that all the connection of God’s people with Egypt has been to their disadvantage. As Abraham was about to enter Egypt he formed the plan of passing his wife off as his sister, lest the Egyptians, enticed by her beauty, should kill him in order to possess her. Whether Abraham thought of it or not, it is very evident that while this subterfuge might save his life, it was fitted to endanger his wife’s honour, since if the Egyptians would be inclined to abduct a man’s wife, they would have still less hesitancy in taking his sister. And this very thing happened. “The Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh’s house. And he entreated Abram well for her sake; and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels” (Genesis 12:14-16). A more cowardly and base part could not be played by any man than this. Pharaoh learned, however, through the judgments of God that the woman was Abraham’s wife, and not his sister, and then he very indignantly reproved Abraham for his unmanly course. Not only so, but Abraham was summarily sent out of Egypt in disgrace. “Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had” (verse 20). This simply means that Abraham was told to get out at once, and Pharaoh’s servants were ordered to conduct him

away forthwith. It was humiliating, but Abraham had not a word to say in self-defence. Yet the man who could be guilty of so base an act as this, became the father of all them that believe, and was called "the friend of God" (James 2:23). Here then is comfort for all. Says the prophet Isaiah: "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord; look unto the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you; for when he was but one I called him, and I blessed him, and made him many" (Isaiah 51:1-5). Thank God that Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance! The goodness that appeared in Abraham's life was only that which the Lord gives every sinner who receives Him. We too, like Joseph, can turn out to be righteous, in spite of our dysfunctional family backgrounds.

Monday: Choosing a New Direction – After Joseph was sold by his brother into slavery, he chose a new direction. In his way to Egypt in the hands of his captors, Joseph was for a moment feeling bitter, but quickly remembered the God of his fathers, and resolved to put all his trust in the God Abraham, Isaac, and so may we. Joseph was comely, winsome, well-favoured; but he did not exalt himself. In all Old Testament history there is no life more universally admired for its frank, open, humble simplicity, and the fragrant beauty of its purity; and, withal, in its growth more *strong in a strength not its own*. It was his upright and holy life that gave him power with God. Every youth may, by following Joseph's example, be like him. "They go from strength to strength, *every one of them* in Zion appeareth before God" (Psalm 84:7). Man "may be enlightened by science, ennobled by virtue, and may progress in mental and moral dignity, until he reaches a perfection of intelligence and a purity of character but little lower than the perfection and purity of angels. With the light of truth shining upon the minds of men, and the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, we cannot conceive what they may become nor what great work they may do" {4T 93.2}.

Tuesday: Finding True Self-Worth – Christ associated Joseph with Himself in the world. He not only saved Joseph, but also made him a *saviour*. Christ will do the same in you, like in Joseph, if you believe. "I will bless thee and thou shall be a blessing." "As My Father sent Me, even so send I you." "As He is, so are we, in the world." Let us believe the Lord, *not for our worth*, but for *His love* to us. He takes us, and makes us representatives of Himself. The man who will be saved, forgets all about himself being saved. He loses sight of self in caring for others. Christ saved others; but He did nothing for self, so that they said, "Himself he can not save." He pleased not Himself. He gave up all, that He might be here as our Saviour. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 1:3).

Wednesday: Doing Relationships God's Way – Joseph was able to do relationships God's way, because the law of God, the life of God, which is the love of God, was in Joseph. It is because the law of God is the life of God, and that is love, that the Saviour gave the instruction for us to love our enemies (see Matthew 5:44-47). The greatest manifestation of merely human love is to do good to those who do us good. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Man loves his friends, sometimes; but God loves His enemies. That is love itself, because it does not grow out of what He has received from the object of love. The Saviour knew that love such as that was not possible to a human nature, and so He added these words, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). That is, we are to have the perfection of God. Not that we are to become gods, but that we are to allow His life to be manifested in us, and so we shall have His perfection. The goodness will all be of God, but will be counted our goodness, because we yield ourselves to it, that He may live it in us.

Thursday: The Great Controversy, Up Close and Personal – In the great controversy, what the Lord needs is young men like Joseph and Moses in Egypt, Daniel and his fellows in Babylon, John the Baptist in Judea, and Paul in the civilized and heathen portions of the world. In order to be this, they must, like Joseph, have God with them in the prison; like Moses, endure as seeing Him who is invisible; like Daniel and his fellows, swerve not from duty, though cast into the lions' den, or into the fiery furnace; like John the Baptist, stand before and reprove kings; and, like Paul, pass undaunted through that long category of trial and persecution, counting it all joy that he is considered worthy to suffer for Christ's sake.