

Sabbath School Lesson #7 – Rest, Relationships, *and* Healing – 7-13 August 2021

Christ would have us understand how God overrules evil to give us rest and healing. In the case of Joseph and his brothers, the brothers sought evil against Joseph, but God overruled their evil for good. Joseph understood this, for he said to them, “Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life” (Genesis 45:5). When the news of Joseph was relayed to father Jacob, and erring sons confessed their evil to Jacob, he too understood the overruling of God, for we are told, “Jacob had not suspected them of so base a sin, but he saw that all had been overruled for good, and he forgave and blessed his erring children” {PP 232.1}.

Sunday: Facing the Past – In Genesis 42 the brethren of Joseph faced the past when Joseph asked them to go and bring Benjamin as proof they were not spies, and when he kept Simeon in the Egyptian prison until Benjamin is brought. Jacob hesitated allowing them to take Benjamin, fearing that the youth will also be lost as supposedly Joseph was lost. But had the brothers of Joseph learnt from their past? Had Reuben learnt from his past, when he attempts to offer his two sons to compensate Jacob for the loss of Benjamin? – he said to Jacob, “Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee” (Genesis 42:37). Reuben had not learnt the lesson of love. “*And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing*” (1 Corinthians 13:3). How is it, since love is giving, that one can bestow all his goods upon the poor, and give his body to be burned, and not have love? – simply because “the flesh profiteth nothing.” The giving of goods is not the giving of one’s life. Gifts may be made with a selfish motive – to secure applause or honour. Christ loved us, and *gave himself* for us. But how about giving the body to be burned? – the body is not the sum of the man; and, moreover, nobody would be benefited by the burning of another’s body. The slaying of Reuben’s two sons could not compensate Jacob for the loss of Benjamin: but Judah showed love, in that he offered himself as a living substitute – he said to Jacob, “I will be surety for him” (Genesis 43:9).

Monday: Setting the Stage – Joseph knew that the famine had more years to continue and he was determined to help his brothers and his parents. His demand that the brother bring Benjamin and his keeping Simeon in prison was only setting the stage for good things to come. He was also testing his brethren, to see if they had changed. His brothers did not know that when they spoke in the Hebrew he could hear, for until then he spoke to them through an interpreter. They did not yet know he was Joseph whom they had sold. But God was working through Joseph to save Israel. When the demand to take Benjamin to Egypt was told to Jacob, he did not at first appreciate the stage being set for good. How different things look to us after the bitter experience has passed! When Jacob heard that Simeon had been kept a captive in Egypt, he said, “Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me” (Genesis 42:36). But things were not against him; on the contrary, they were all working for him – working out a great deliverance, and a peaceful, happy old age. We can see it clearly enough; yet when our trials come, we complain, just as though ours were exceptions to the rule that “all things work together for good to them that love God” (Romans 8:28). If we were absolutely sure that good would result, we should bear the trial and the pain uncomplainingly; but in spite of all the assurances and all the examples of God’s word, we persist in looking at things as they seem now, instead of from the standpoint of eternity. What about us; does anybody suppose that when we stand by the river of life in the paradise of God, we shall have any regrets or sorrow for what we have suffered here? – of course not. We know that we shall not. Then what is the use of indulging in such regrets here? We know that if God be for us, nothing can be against us, and that all things work – are now working – together for good to them that love God. Moreover, it is our privilege and our duty to look at things from the eternal side, instead of from the temporal side; for God is our dwelling-place, and He inhabits eternity.

Tuesday: Forgive and Forget? – In Matthew 18:21-35 our Lord gives us instructions on the subject of forgiveness. In this, after talking about true greatness, and warning against offences, the Saviour gives directions for the proper settling of any differences that might arise between brethren. The person who has been wronged is to go and tell the wrong, not

to his neighbours and friends, that it may be mooted about as public property, but to the responsible person, and to him *alone*. If this first effort at reconciliation is unsuccessful, further measures are to be tried. Were the divine instruction faithfully carried out, society would have to look elsewhere for subject matter for conversation which is largely given up to discussing the injuries, real or fancied, which someone has received. The so-called harmless gossip is really a most reprehensible thing. Injuries only fancied assume serious proportions, slight misunderstandings ripen into feuds, ending perhaps in bloodshed, all because of the pernicious habit of talking about the things which do not concern us. Christ gave the same instructions to Joseph, else Joseph would not have known how to forgive his brothers. The Spirit of Christ was in the life of Joseph. Let the same Spirit be in us. Only then can we appreciate the beauty of forging those who have hurt us. This is the lesson that Paul want us to learn in Romans 4:7-8: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Christ bore the curse, in order that the blessing might come to us. He bears the curse now, being crucified before us, and in us, and we with Him, that we may continually experience the blessing. Death to Him is life to us. If we willingly bear about in our bodies the dying of Jesus, the life also of Jesus will be manifested in our mortal flesh (2 Corinthians 4:10-11).

Wednesday: Making It Practical – How practical can we make the spirit of forgiving others our own natural character? Paul wrote: "Be kind, one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32). And Christ said: "Be ye therefore merciful even as your Father in heaven is merciful" (Luke 6:36). How full and abundant is our forgiving to be? – even as God's. But His "mercy is great unto the heavens" (Psalm 57:10)! Surely man can never attain to such a marvellous development of this grace. Very true, he cannot *attain* to it, but God be thanked it is possible for the humblest Christian to *obtain* it. Justification is a free gift, but so also is sanctification. Christ died to pay the penalty of our sins, but He has risen from the tomb, and desires to live over again, in the person of His obedient follower, the same perfect life that He once lived upon this earth. The Christian life is truly an incarnation of the Divine in the human. Hence the forgiving Spirit and all the other spiritual graces are "from above, and come down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17). Through the "exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Peter 1:4) we become partakers of the Divine nature, and it really becomes *natural* for us to forgive those who wrong us. How is the forgiving Spirit imparted? – even as faith, it "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). If you would have it in larger measure than at present you must pray for it; you must take time to read your Bibles, you must watch unceasingly. Christ is the perfect example. Wicked men plotted to take His life: His own disciple betrayed Him by an act of basest perfidy; His other disciples forsook Him in His hour of trial, and one denied Him with an oath; the soldiers crowned Him with thorns, and spat upon Him, the multitude derided Him; yet never did one impatient word escape His lips, but instead there came from His heart of infinite love that wonderful prayer: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). The same Spirit will animate the Christian today. He will do more than tolerate passively to submit to wrong treatment. There will be absence of hate, and abundance of warm, hearty love. The renewed heart, though sorely grieved by sin, has an unutterable longing for the salvation of the sinner, recognising him as the purchase of Christ's blood. Let the Christian fully awake to the joyful fact that God has completely washed his guilt away by the blood of His Son, making him "accepted in the Beloved" and he cannot help but freely and fully forgive any injury inflicted upon him.

Thursday: Finding Rest After Forgiveness – Joseph had fully forgiven his brothers, but did they find rest? After father Jacob died, the ten older brothers feared that Joseph would now get even with them for the bad things they had done. We can read about it in Genesis 50:15-21. "And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him." Why did these brothers say so? Did Jacob leave such instructions? – "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe" (Proverbs 29:25).