

Sabbath School Lesson #2 – The Crucibles that come – 2-8 July 2022

Christ in you the hope of glory is able to bear the crucibles that come. Understanding this fact, we may appreciate the words by the apostle Peter: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4:12-13).

Sunday: Surprises – “I AM with you” (Matthew 28:20). These are the words left by Jesus Christ with His disciples for their comfort amidst the trials and temptations which beset their pathway on earth. And how well adapted they are to cheer and sustain His followers through the vicissitudes of their earthly pilgrimage. “I am with you always,” – I, who have all power in heaven and in earth – I, who “am the way, the truth, and the life,” the embodiment of perfect wisdom and grace and righteousness. How full of comfort are such words if we will but believe them and keep them with us. Is your place in life a very humble one, so that you seem altogether beneath the notice of men? The word of Christ to you is, “I am with you.” Is your lot a hard and painful one? Still the assurance comes, “I am with you.” The Saviour condescends to occupy any place, no matter what, that can be filled by one of His disciples. No station is too humble for Him; no lot too trying. Do you suffer for the necessities of life? Christ knows what it is to feel the pangs of hunger. Are you without friends? He knows what it is to be friendless; in the very hour of His trial, “all the disciples forsook Him and fled” (Matthew 26:56). Are you homeless? Christ had not where to lay His head. Wherever you have been as His followers, there He has been; wherever you are, there He is. Christ has passed through lower depths and darker trials than any that ever have been or can be experienced by His followers. He did this that He might “save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.” He descended to the lowest depths of human woe, that He might reach and save those who were sunken therein, as well as those who had fallen less low. Not only has the Son of God *been* through all these dark places, but He is in each one of them with you. When you feel, He feels. He identifies Himself with you in all your trials and sufferings. Thus, it is that He will say to those who have clothed the naked, and visited the sick, fed the hungry, and in other ways ministered to the necessities of the needy, “Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me” (Matthew 25:40). Paul says, “unto you is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake” (Philippians 1:29). But, we are further told, “as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ” (2 Corinthians 1:5). “In all our tribulation,” Paul says, “we are exceeding joyful” (7:4). In suffering, we have fellowship with Him (Philippians 3:10). We may think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that comes upon us, but rejoice, inasmuch as we are made partakers of Christ’s sufferings; and when the hour of darkness comes, commit the keeping of our souls to Him, our faithful Creator (1 Peter 4:12-13, 19).

Monday: Crucibles of Satan – We are not to fear, but the exhortation is, “Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist steadfast in the faith” (1 Peter 5:8-9), and the sure promise is, “resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). It is by its roar that the lion frighten its prey and makes it incapable of resisting or flight. Now it is only our confidence in God that prevents our foot from being taken. The devil must first frighten us, causing us to lose our confidence in God’s Word, before he can have any power over us. Be assured that the devil never makes a prey of any soul who he does not first frighten away from the sure retreat of God’s Word. “Fear hath torment; but perfect love casteth out fear” (1 John 4:18). “The Lord Jehovah is our strength” (Psalm 28:7), and let us be “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might” (Ephesians 6:10). We are not to have any confidence in the flesh, – but are to know that Christ has power over all flesh, that His Divine power which has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness, can accomplish as much through our mortal flesh as He can through His own. “He that believeth shall not make haste” (Isaiah 28:16), – shall not run at the sound of the devil’s roaring, – but he will stand still, and will see the salvation of God.

Tuesday: Crucibles of Sin – In Romans 1:18 we learn that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” Therefore all who sin are

treasuring up for themselves wrath. It should be noted that in the judgment God is clear. Men receive only what they have worked for. God is not arbitrary. He has not fixed arbitrary decrees, and declared that whoever violates them shall be visited with vengeance. The punishment that will come upon the wicked is the necessary result of their own choice. God is the only source of life. His life is peace. Now when men reject Him, the only alternative for them is wrath and death. "For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord; they would none of My counsel; they despised all My reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them" (Proverbs 1:29-32). Trouble and death are bound up in sin; they are what men choose in refusing the Lord.

Wednesday: Crucibles of Purification – That adversity is adapted to try men's hearts none can doubt who have either studied the Scriptures or observed human experience. When the dross of corruption and the rust of hypocrisy had nearly eaten out the heart of religion among the Jews, God said, "I will melt them and try them" (Jeremiah 9:7); thus, the Jews were cast into the furnace of affliction and tried. Prosperity multiplies professors, but adversity brings them to such a test that the precious are separated from the vile. Job was tried by adversity, and although some dross was discovered, he came forth as gold. By adversity is brought out to view not only the hypocrisy and corruption of the wicked, but also the sincerity and holiness of the righteous; it manifests the faith and patience of the saints.

Thursday: Crucibles of Maturity – How should Christians live in crucibles of maturity? "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Romans 5:1-5). The reason for glorying in tribulation is given more in detail by the apostle in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10: "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." "Every man at his best state is altogether vanity" (Psalm 39:5); but "power belongeth unto God" (Psalm 62:11). Tribulation discovers to us our weakness. If we learn the full lesson, the trouble that reveals our helplessness, at the same time reveals the infinite power of God, who is "a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). Christ does not fail, nor become discouraged (Isaiah 42:4). He bears the burden of the world, with its sin and misery; yet He declares that His "burden is light" (Matthew 11:30). In all His conflict with Satan, He had perfect peace; in all the weight of affliction that was laid on Him, the joy of God was His strength. The victory was His continually, and if we believe it we can say, "Thanks be unto God, which causeth us to triumph in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:14). Is it unclear that tribulation, which simply reveals more perfectly the presence of the mighty Comforter, who Himself is afflicted in all our afflictions, and who bears all our burdens, is itself a joy? But there is another cause for glorying in tribulation. It is given by Paul, who was certainly well qualified to speak, in 2 Corinthians 1:3-5: "Blessed [be] God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." Notice that God comforts in all our tribulation. This He does by His presence, which gives rest (Exodus 33:14), and He has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). No trouble frightens Him from us. If we are only willing for His presence to abide in us, there is no trouble in which we may not "rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). But "none of us liveth to himself" (Romans 14:7), hence He comforts us so that "we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."