

Sabbath School Lesson #12 – Dying Like a Seed – 10-16 September 2022

Christ is crucified in the sinner, for wherever there is sin and the curse, there is Christ bearing it. All that is needed now is for the sinner to be crucified with Christ, to let Christ's death be his own death, in order that the life of Jesus may be manifested in his mortal flesh. Faith in the eternal power and Divinity of God, that are seen in all the things that He has made (Romans 4:1), will enable any one to grasp this mystery. Thus, said our Lord: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). Thus, says the apostle, the seed "is not quickened, except it die" (1 Corinthians 15:36). So the one who is crucified with Christ, begins at once to live, but it is as another man. For "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Sunday: Submission for Service – At the Lord's supper, who was it that did what even a common servant was not expected to do? It was Jesus, the Son of God (John 13). Was it because He lost sight of the dignity of His position, that He did it? Not at all; He did it in full consciousness that He came from God and was going to God. He knew that He was their Lord and Master, and nothing that He did was inconsistent with that fact. He did not lower Himself. Not one of His disciples had any the less respect for Him because of what He did. His was the true dignity that does not have to be hedged about in order to be preserved, but which preserves itself, and dignifies whatever it undertakes. This was a lesson of service. Jesus said: "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:25-28). On this very occasion He said: "Whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? but I am among you as He that serveth" (Luke 22:27). Jesus was greatest of all, because He did the humblest service. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:5-7). Notice that it was the form, not the character, of a servant, that Jesus took on Himself. Why did He not, in coming to earth, take the character of a servant? – Because He already had that. Although He is Lord of heaven and earth, He lives for the service of His creatures. So when He was here He "went about doing good; and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38). Mark the expression, "for God was with Him." That is given as the reason why Christ went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed. This shows the character of God. God with Him did those works (John 14:10). He associated with the poor, and sinners, for "the common people heard Him gladly." Thus He was illustrating the words of God, "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:15); in "him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word" (Isaiah 66:1-2). He came to earth to let the world see and know just what He was, but He had to come in a form that they could appreciate. Men's ideas were so perverted that if the Son of God had come to earth in royal state and heavenly glory, they could never have associated Him with service, and so could not have learned the lessons of service that they ought. So He changed His form, and let His life show who He was. Those who recognise Him as Lord, and acknowledge Him as such, even while He bears the form of a servant, will one day have the privilege of seeing Him serve, and of being served by Him, when He is arrayed as King of kings, and Lord of lords; for He says to us: "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (Luke 12:37).

Monday: Dying Comes Before Knowing God's Will – What shall we think of the Lord's complaint against Israel, in Isaiah 43:23, that they have not brought burnt-offerings to Him, and have not honoured Him with their sacrifices? Does it mean that they had been remiss in

their daily and yearly services? Not by any means. Remember what He said to them in the very beginning of the prophecy of Isaiah. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the Lord; I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats" (Isaiah 1:11). What does He mean then, by what He says later in Isaiah 43:23? He means just what He meant in the beginning, when He said, "Bring no more vain oblations" (Isaiah 1:13). Their sacrifices were vain, because there was no heart in them. They did not give themselves, and that is all the sacrifice that is acceptable to God. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17). When these are present, God is "pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness" (verse 19). God says, "I have not caused thee to serve with a burnt offering, nor wearied thee with incense." In like manner He said by the prophet Jeremiah: "I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be My people; and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you" (Jeremiah 7:22-23). Sacrifice was never anything in itself; for God has given to us His only begotten Son for us (John 3:16) and hence made the only sacrifice that can be of any value. Sacrifices were never anything more than an expression of trust and thanksgiving. How do dying come before knowing the will of God? It comes by Christ's death if you let it manifest in your flesh. "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;" "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:8, 10).

Tuesday: Willingness to Listen – What does it really mean to be willing to listen to the Lord? It is to trust your steps with the Lord. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord" (Psalm 37:23). The good man's steps are not ordered by the Lord because the man is good, but that the man is good because the Lord directs his steps. "What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose" (Psalm 25:12). "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know the doctrine" (John 7:17). "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (John 6:29). "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). The good man is the man who is constantly willing that the Lord should use him in His own way. But there is a still further promise to the good man whose steps are ordered by the Lord: "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand" (Psalm 37:24). He can say, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemies; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me" (Micah 7:8). No depth to which a man may fall, where the Lord does not hold out hope to him. "These things I write unto you, that ye sin not, but if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

Wednesday: Self-Reliance – Which is easier, self-reliance or faith in God? It is easier and simpler to depend upon God than upon self, because it is easier to let someone care for us than to take care of ourselves. We have neither the strength nor wisdom to take care of ourselves, and when we attempt to do so the result is much worry and useless expenditure of effort, with failure at the end. But God has invited us to let Him take care of us. His word says, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee" (Psalm 55:22); "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7). And your care includes yourself.

Thursday: Substitutes – Are those with riches and status better off Christians? God does not count Himself honoured when the wealthy and the powerful espouse His cause, trusting in their riches and power, for it is "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6). The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. The humblest, feeblest, basest man may receive that Word, and manifest in his life "that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" (1 John 4:2). "The vilest offender who truly believes" (SDA Hymnal 341) receives power to be a son of God, and "whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected" (1 John 2:5). The "base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, that no flesh should glory in His presence" (1 Corinthians 1:28-29).