

Sabbath School Lesson #13 – Christ in the Crucible – 17-23 September 2022

Christ was sinless; the law was in His heart. As the Son of God His life was worth more than those of all created beings, whether in Heaven or on earth. He saw the hopeless condition of the world, and came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). To do this He took upon Himself our nature (Hebrews 2:16-17); and on Him was laid “the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6). In order to save us, He had to come where we were, or, in other words, He had to take the position of a lost sinner. Thus the apostle says: “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21). It was this fact that caused Him such anguish in the garden. He felt that the sins upon Him were shutting Him away from God. It was this that caused Him, when hanging on the cross, to utter that cry of bitter agony, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). It was not physical pain that crushed the life out of the Saviour of the world, but the load of sin which He bore. “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Sin will cause the death of every one who is not freed from it, for “sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:15). And because Christ was “numbered with the transgressors” (Mark 15:28), He suffered penalty of transgression. The suffering of Christ was not on His own account. “He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth” (1 Peter 2:22). Because our sin was put upon Him, He was cut off from the favour of God; when upon the cross He cried out, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” it was no fanciful utterance. God had forsaken Him. He had hidden His face from Him. In that last dreadful hour spent in Gethsemane, Christ passed without the pale of the mercy and favour of God; and it was this that caused His sufferings. He felt what the wicked will feel at the last day when they, because of sin, experience the wrath of God. Christ went where men will never be compelled to go. We shall never have to experience the dreadful certainty that God has forsaken us. Christ stood in that place in order that we might never have to go there. If any human will ever be there, it will be entirely their own choice.

Sunday: The Early Days – Reading John 1:46, what element does this add to help us understand what sufferings the young Jesus had faced? “Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see” (John 1:45-46). A whole volume could not describe the standing of Nazareth any better than Nathanael’s question of astonishment. It had a bad reputation. It was so bad that nobody expected any good thing from it. Yet Jesus was all His earthly life associated with Nazareth, and He is still known as “Jesus of Nazareth.” It would have been according to human nature to associate His name with some more renowned place. Any ordinary man would have taken care that he should be announced as from Jerusalem, or from Capernaum: but Jesus was content to be heralded as “Jesus of Nazareth.” He “made Himself of no reputation,” for our sakes. From this simple fact we may derive both comfort and instruction. We may be comforted by the knowledge that Jesus identifies Himself with the humblest and the most despised. No matter how poor and despised people are, nor how degraded they are, if they but come to Him in faith, “He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” This is most comforting. And we should learn also from “Jesus of Nazareth,” not to despise or reject any person because of his birth or station. Nathanael was told, “come and see”, and he did. But “if Nathanael had trusted to the rabbis for guidance, he would never have found Jesus. It was by seeing and judging for himself that he became a disciple. So in the case of many today whom prejudice withholds from good. How different would be the result if they would ‘come and see’.” – {DA 140.5}.

Monday: Despised and Rejected of Men – What can you learn from Christ that can help you better cope with the pain of rejection? When Christ was on earth, “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not” (John 1:11). He was rejected by the church. The question was, “Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him?” (John 7:48). “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not” (Isaiah 53:3). Mark this, He not only was despised, but “He is despised and rejected of men.” It is a thing still going on even in Church. Multitudes of those who delight to be called by His name,

are rejecting Him. How? – In rejecting His cross. They are willing that He should suffer, but they are not willing to suffer with Him; and in rejecting the cross, they are rejecting Him.

Tuesday: Jesus in Gethsemane – How is our striving against sin help us to appreciate the struggle of Jesus in Gethsemane? This striving against sin, which is the struggle of giving up our sinful life, that it may be crucified and destroyed, is not so great a struggle as that which our Lord experienced in Gethsemane. “Ye,” says Paul, “have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (Hebrews 12:4). We do not in the struggle yield up our physical lives, as He yielded His life. Jesus had no sinful life; the life that He gave was sinless. We have by nature only a life that is identified with sin; but the power of God takes away that life and puts in its place the life of Jesus. The physical life continues as before, but now God is manifested in us, as He was in Jesus of Nazareth, living the life of righteousness. “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Galatians 2:20).

Wednesday: The Crucified God – As you go through whatever struggles you are facing, what hope and comfort can you draw from the reality of Christ suffering for you on the cross? We will never have to suffer total separation from God. Jesus has endured without a word all that Satanic malice could suggest in bodily suffering and taunts and derision, but now when He takes upon Himself the experience of the lost sinner in His separation from God, that terrible cry is wrung from His human lips, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46); “Christ died for our sins” (1 Corinthians 15:3); “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath made the iniquity of us all to meet on Him” (Isaiah 53:6). And “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), under separation from God. And it was this experience, the sense of being separated from His own Father whom He loved, whose thought had always been His thought, whose will had always been His will, that crushed His soul in that awful hour. It is only in view of the cross that we can measure the cost of our salvation and understand that value which God Himself has set upon the human soul. “I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir” (Isaiah 13:12). “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” (Hebrews 2:3). The fact that Jesus “cried again with a loud voice” just before He “yielded up the ghost” shows that it was not physical suffering which caused His death. He was crushed by the weight of our sins and died of a broken heart. But in His agony of death, borne down by the weight of our sins upon Himself, He became conqueror and King of the universe. He had already said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me” (John 12:32), and so it was. When other kings have died the cry has been, ‘the king is dead,’ and they have turned to the new king with the cry, ‘long live the king,’ but this King gained both His kingdom and His subjects by His death. “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jeremiah 31:3).

Thursday: The Suffering God – If we know the suffering of the Son of God by which He suffered, how can we make Him glad? Nothing can make Jesus glad than that “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied” (Isaiah 53:11). When He came into this world, as the plan of God was gradually unfolded, at each step of the way He delighted to do the will of the Father, until He “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” And at the cross, it was the hiding of His Father’s face through “the iniquity of us all,” which was laid upon Him, that broke the heart of Jesus, that the healing stream of His life blood might flow forth to wash away all the sin that separates us from God. To make Jesus glad, I ought to say, “I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Galatians 2:21). This is the summing up of the relationship of the law to Christ. If righteousness came by the law, then there would have been no use for the death of Christ. The law itself can do nothing except point out men’s duty; to see righteousness as coming by the law, means to attain it by our works, by our effort. We cannot save ourselves; and Christ is not dead in vain; therefore there is salvation in Him. He is able to save all that come unto God by Him. Some must be saved, else He has died in vain; but He has not died in vain; therefore, the promise is sure: “He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand, He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied” (Isaiah 53:10-11). “Whosoever will,” may be of the number. Since He died not in vain, see to it “that ye receive not the grace of God in vain” (1 Corinthians 6:1).