

Sabbath School Lesson #10A – Giving Back – 4-10 March 2023 [supplement]

Christ would have us fully understand the meaning of our Memory Verse: “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Revelation 14:13) – see commentary for Lesson number 10.

Sunday: The Rich Fool – Reading Luke 12:16-21, must we to steer away from getting rich? We are not taught that to have riches is sin, for the Lord gives some men power to get wealth, but that the sin comes in setting one’s heart upon them. But the possession of riches is a great danger, for Christ says: “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God” (Luke 18:24). This is because it is next to impossible for one who has riches to keep from setting his heart upon them, and so neglecting to trust in the living God, and forgetting that it is God who gives us all things richly to enjoy. In the parable, we are told that, “The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully.” Here we see that it was not the man’s superior skill that brought him his wealth, but the providence of God in giving “rain and fruitful seasons.” And the man thought: “What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, ‘This will I do. I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits, and my goods, and I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry.’ If he had listened to the Lord, he might have known what to do with his goods. Says the inspired word: “Charge them that are rich.... that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (1 Timothy 6:17-19). Instead of this, the man trusted in his riches, and had nothing. “But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?” The man is a fool because the fool is one who says in his heart, “There is no God.” This man acted as though there were no God, because he assumed that he must take care of himself, and left God out of the account altogether. He may have been a professor of religion, but he was practically an atheist. There are thousands of such men in the world to-day. But no matter how much they exalt themselves (for the man who by his actions assumes that his prosperity depends upon himself alone, virtually puts himself in the place of God), they will in the end be put in fear, and be made to know that they are but men.

Monday: You Can’t Take It With You – Knowing that we cannot take our property with us into the grave should we die, and having no control of whether we live tomorrow, how must our prayer for our needs be? “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). Man in his human greed would ask for enough today to supply all possible wants for the future; but if that were granted, the person could use no more of it today than he would use if he had only enough for today’s needs. Not only so, but human greed would overreach itself. Thus, if the man should today receive enough for all time, he would have no occasion to ask for anything tomorrow. He would trust in his possession instead of God and would soon forget God. Riches make to themselves wings and fly away. But the man who every day asks for provision sufficient for that day, with assurance that he will receive it, his future supply is in the hands of God, who thus becomes his banker. Surely the man who has all he needs, just when he needs it, while someone else takes care of that which he does not actually need, is far better off than the man who has only what he needs today, but who is burdened with the care of a lot of stuff that he may never need. This petition teaches contentment. Thus, Paul says: “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:6-10). Here the apostle brings out an additional danger from not trusting God for our daily bread. It is that the man having more than he needs for to-day, is tempted to use more than he needs. Thus, his thoughts become

cantered entirely on self and the gratification of his own desires and lusts, which increase and multiply with the gratification, until he is finally drowned in perdition and gets lost.

Tuesday: Begin With Personal Needs – A question is asked, how would we rephrase Proverbs 27:27 (“And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance for thy maidens”) for today? Well, begin with personal needs, and be diligent in providing for your family. “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Timothy 5:8). But let not those who possess from three to ten times the amount of property necessary to meet the needs of their households, seek to hide themselves behind personal needs, neglecting their duty to the work of spreading the gospel, lest the language in James 5:1-3 be applicable to them. Fearful words! “Go to, now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.”

Wednesday: Deathbed Charity – What do you understand by “deathbed charity” and what is its implications for us? The phrase was used by Ellen White and suffice to quote her writings: “I saw that many withhold from the cause while they live, quieting their consciences that they will be charitable at death; they hardly dare exercise faith and trust in God to give anything while living. But this deathbed charity is not what Christ requires of His followers; it cannot excuse the selfishness of the living. Those who hold fast their property till the last moment, surrender it to death rather than to the cause. Losses are occurring continually. Banks fail, and property is consumed in very many ways. Many purpose to do something, but they delay the matter, and Satan works to prevent the means from coming into the treasury at all. It is lost before it is returned to God, and Satan exults that it is so” {5T 154.2}.

Thursday: Spiritual Legacy – What do you tell one who, pursuing a spiritual legacy, says, ‘God needs our help in evangelising the world’? This is a common mistake, and it is natural for us to think that what we do is of great assistance to the Lord. No man can ever put God under any obligation to him. Neither can any man do anything to recompense God for what He has done for us. He does not stand in need of man’s work or gifts. He says, “If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is Mine, and the fulness thereof” (Psalm 50:12). How can it be said or thought that God needs our help, when He Himself supplies all the wisdom and strength with which we work, and Himself does whatever is done that amounts to anything? Paul said of his work, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new covenant” (2 Corinthians 3:5-6). And again: “But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10). Even Christ did not claim to be doing work by Himself. He said: “I can of Mine own self do nothing” (John 5:30). “The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works” (John 14:10). How much less, then, can we do anything that will help the Lord? “The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him” (John 13:16). Who has not seen a little child trying to help its mother to sweep? It does not sweep clean, yet the mother is pleased, rewarded the child with a kiss, and she afterwards goes and sweeps the room clean. And the child rejoiced in the great help it had rendered. Or the child tried to help its mother’s sewing, it tangled threads, yet the mother accepted the work for the love that prompted it, and although the child’s work was done so bunglingly, the job was perfect when finished. How so? Because the mother untangled the thread and made the work perfect by her superior skill. So, it is with us; but, oh, how infinitely greater is the contrast between us and our Father in heaven, and that between our children and us! We take hold of the work of God, and fancy that we are actually doing something, when we are really only tangling the threads, and hindering. Yet God does not call it hindering; but smiles in tender love as He sees our awkward yet earnest attempts, even as the mother catches her child to her bosom and kisses it when its loving efforts make the work worse instead of better. And when work is done, the Lord will say, “Well done, good and faithful servant;” the work will be found to be perfect, because we are “complete in Him,” and His perfection has made up our deficiency.