

## Sabbath School Lesson #4 – How God Rescues Us – 15-21 July 2023

**C**hrist would have us know how God rescues us. Paul writes, “But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)” (Ephesians 2:4-5). Christ was crucified for sin. There was no cross except for sin. He bore our sins. There is wonderful joy that comes to us in this, that while we are yet in sin we are permitted to claim Christ as ours, and to say, “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). If we could not assert this with all assurance while yet sinners, we never could assert it. But while in sin we may claim Christ as ours, and that He is in us. To the man who believes the Lord and dares assert it, it is everlasting strength! “God who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.” We could not be quickened or made alive together, unless dead together. So Christ identifies Himself with us in death, even the death in trespasses and sins, and it is He who bears the burden in His body on the cross; while we are crucified with Him we also live with Him, delivered from sin.

**Sunday: Once Dead and Deceived by Satan** – How does Paul describe that we were once dead and deceived by Satan, and how did God rescue us? In times past, before we believed the word of salvation, we walked “according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2). But now it is said to us, “And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (verse 1). Christ “was numbered with the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:12). God “made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). He died to save us. Satan had the power of death (Hebrews 2:14). When Christ died, Satan hoped to keep Him in his power. But his hopes were vain. God, by His glory, raised up Christ from the dead, and He came forth from the tomb a Conqueror, taking with Him the keys of death and hell (Revelation 1:18). That demonstrated the triumphant success of the plan of salvation, which is based on the power of God to give new life to the one who is dead in sins.

**Monday: Once Deluded by Our Own Desires** – What does Paul mean by stating that his hearers were once “by nature the children of wrath, even as others” (Ephesians 2:3)? The same Paul wrote elsewhere as follows: “So we also, when we were children, were held in bondage under the rudiments of the world” (Galatians 4:3). If we look ahead to the fifth verse, we shall see that the state here known as “children” is that before we receive “the adoption of sons.” It represents the condition before we were redeemed from the curse of the law, that is, before we were converted. It does not therefore mean children of God, as distinguished from worldlings, but the “children” of whom the apostle speaks in Ephesians 4:14, “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” In short, it refers to us in our unconverted state, when we “were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

**Tuesday: Now Resurrected, Ascended, and Exalted With Christ** – In what sense do believers participate in Christ’s resurrection, ascension, and exaltation? When does this participation occur? The Christian (he who has the Spirit of Christ, Romans 8:9), though on earth, sits in heavenly places; for we read that “God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:4-6). Sitting in heavenly places, we have a view of heavenly things. We have not been raised to heavenly places to continue still looking at earth, but in order that our themes of contemplation may be the exalted themes of the life immortal. This is our privilege, now, even while still here in the flesh. We have been as it were taken out of this world, and lifted above into the glorious realm of eternal joy and light and peace; and the Lord now wants us to realise the fact, and open our eyes and ears to take in the glories which this realm affords. Though still on earth, we have been translated, as it were, to heaven itself, that our thoughts may be the thoughts of heaven and our language the language of heaven. The Lord does not compel us to wait till the last work is

done before knowing and seeing something of the celestial Canaan. He is willing that we should know something of it here. He is anxious that we should see and experience now the joys of the life to come. God shut man out of the literal paradise, lest he should as a sinner put forth his hand and eat of the fruit of the tree of life, and live a sinner forever; but He has never shut man out of spiritual heaven. He has never withheld from man anything that was for his good. He has never shut away from him the light and joy and peace which heaven knows. On the contrary, He has at infinite cost kept these still within man's reach, and invited and pleaded with him to take them. Though confined bodily to this world of sin, God never designed that man should give himself up to the influence of its darkness and see nothing but its misery and sin. Enoch the seventh from Adam, walked with God (Genesis 5:21-24; Jude 1:14). He had the society of God, thoughts of God, and all the joys that companionship with God affords. He experienced heaven below; it is just this that we may do and must do before we know it above. We have been made to "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," and all we have to do is to open our eyes and behold what is around us. But we may keep our eyes shut, and still not know where we are; and how pitiable is the condition of the one who has been exalted to heaven, but refuses to open his eyes, and so imagines himself still on earth! No person will know anything of heaven until he is willing to open his eyes. Until he does that, he will never see anything more than he has seen, and his thoughts will never rise above the same low level. The mission of Jesus Christ is "to open the blind eyes" (Isaiah 42:7). He opens the eyes that are blind to spiritual things. He is the light of the world; and in Him we see. We cannot see when we are not in the light. So likewise we cannot see heavenly things outside of Him. We "sit together in heavenly places" not without Him, but in Him. To be in Him and abide in Him, we must believe. So in order to see, we must have faith. People commonly reverse this and think they must first see in order to have faith; but such is not the scriptural way. By faith we abide in Him, and then, being in the light, we see. If we try to see first, we shall not be able to do it; for we are in the blackness of darkness before we have faith. What we have to do is to believe, and then He will take care of the seeing. Believe His word, believe all His promises, believe that He has given you all that He says He has, that He has blessed you with "all spiritual blessings in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3) – believe them strongly enough to claim them, and you will know that you are raised up to sit in heavenly places in Him, and that henceforth heavenly views and heavenly joys are yours.

**Wednesday: Now Blessed Forever by Grace** – How does Paul show that grace will be our theme forever? Paul tells us that God "hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6-7). This "exceeding riches of His grace" will be our theme forever. Redemption – the "mystery of godliness," will be the theme of study throughout eternity, and it will never be exhausted; for it is the manifestation of power and love and wisdom which are infinite.

**Thursday: Now Saved by God** – Why is it so important for us to understand that our salvation is from God and is not rooted in our own worth or efforts? No man could do anything to induce God to bestow salvation upon him; nor could he do anything to earn it (see Ephesians 2:8-9). Salvation is God's free gift (see Romans 5:15-18; 6:23). There is no intrinsic value in any man's works. There is nothing pleasing to God in mere sacrifices. David said, after he had committed a great sin, "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering" (Psalm 51:16). The sacrifices God accepts are not of human wealth in the form of works; but "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17). The ancient Hebrews had so perverted the worship of God that they imagined there was virtue in the sacrifices which they offered upon their altars, losing sight of the great truth that only as the works of men are connected with what God has Himself provided for man's salvation have his works any value whatever; that the intrinsic value is in the thing which God has provided, and that the value of works is but derived from connection with this. In Christ's words in Psalms, "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; Mine ears hast Thou opened; burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart" (Psalm 40:6-8).