

## Sabbath School Lesson #4 – Sharing God’s Mission – 21-27 October 2023

**C**hrist said to His disciples, and says to us, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34-35). “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:10). The Saviour said to the young man, “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor” (Matthew 19:20). In Colossians 3:14 we are told that love is the bond of perfectness. So the Saviour simply pointed out to the man that although he had outwardly kept all the commandments, he lacked the essential element of commandment keeping, which is love. Without love there is no keeping of the law. True charity is not simply almsgiving, but it is love. Now, remembering that love is the fulfilling of law, and that without love there is nothing of any value, read the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, and we shall find out what constitutes the keeping of the commandments. When we understand that love, and that alone, is the fulfilling of the law, we can see in this chapter the statement that the keeping of the commandments means kindness, patience, unselfishness, thoughtfulness for others, forgetfulness of self, and labour to build up others, meekness, and gentleness, and true courtesy. In short, it means perfection. Without love in the heart, there is no keeping of the law of God. The law was given in love (Deuteronomy 33:2-3), and it is love. “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 John 4:8). “We love, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19), because love is of God. That is, there can be no real love that does not come from God. God is love, and all love springs from Him. Keeping of the commandments of God is a likeness to God Himself. It is more than mere likeness to God; it is assimilation to God; for love, which is the fulfilling of the law, comes from God. Therefore the keeping of the commandments by man is nothing less than the manifestation of the life of God in that man. God has put His Life in His Son (John 5:26), which life He has offered us in His Son (1 John 5:11). Without the Son of God, we do not have true love, and can do nothing (John 15:5) and we cannot keep His commandments. If you have a metaphorical Son in your heart, your love is metaphorical. Let the literal Son of God “dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, .... might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Ephes 3:14-19). God has given us all things in Christ. “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end” (Ephesians 3:20, 21).

**Sunday: The Gift of Hospitality** – What principles of Abraham’s example of hospitality can you emulate in your own life? We learn the lesson from reading Genesis 18:1-15. The first thing noticeable in this lesson is Abraham’s hospitality. As soon as he saw the men he ran to them and begged as a personal favour that they would stop with him. “If now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant.” This is the true spirit of hospitality; it is the very essence of hospitality. The truly hospitable man loves to care for others, and instead of making them feel that he is conferring a favour on them, he makes them feel they are doing him a favour by accepting his hospitality. We cannot always judge people by their appearance. In fact, judging from the appearance is about the most unsafe thing a person can do. Those three men who came to Abraham were no doubt very ordinary looking. Very likely they looked heated and dusty. Nevertheless two of them were angels, and one was the Lord Himself. What a lesson for us, and how forcible are the words of the apostle: “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Hebrews 13:2). How many people are there who would invite the Saviour into their houses if He passed by just as He used to walk along the dusty roads of Judea and Galilee? Isaiah said that there was no beauty in him that he should be desired (Isaiah 53:2).

**Monday: Abraham’s Love for Everyone** – In Genesis 18:16–33, how did Abraham exercise his great quality of love for all people without distinguishing tribe, race, or people? He showed his love to the wicked city and pleaded with the Lord to spare the city if there be certain number of righteous souls found in that city. The question is this: Is it possible for the lives of the wicked to be spared for the sake of those who are righteous? The Lord’s answer to Abraham showed that for the sake of the righteous, the wicked could be given more time

to live in this present world. In seeking to spare or save Sodom, Abraham asked, "And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake" (verse 32). The prayer of Abraham testifies to the scripture: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). We have on record some notable instances where wicked men's lives were spared on account of a righteous man (Acts 27:21-25; Job 42:7-9). The relation that the righteous men sustain to people in the world is stated by our Lord, "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13). But the presence of righteous men will not always be sufficient to save the wicked from merited punishment: "Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it: Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD." "Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast; though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness" (Ezekiel 14:13-14, 19-20). The only safe place for people to occupy is stated: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust; his truth shall be thy shield and buckler" (Psalms 91:1-4).

**Tuesday: Abraham's Spirit of Prayer** – In Genesis 18:16–19:29, what do we learn of Abraham's prayer for the people in Sodom? Notice Abraham's prayer for Sodom. First, he asked for just what he wanted, and second, he was importunate. He gained confidence as he proceeded. Prayer should be uttered just as one cannot help uttering it if he realises the greatness of the One whom he is addressing; but still the petitions should be such as would be made to a father. A great deal of the formality in prayer is due to the fact that people do not expect to have their prayers answered. In fact, all the formality in prayers comes from that source. The people who have the most faith will be the most careful in their petitions.

**Wednesday: Abraham's Mission** – Read Genesis 19:1–29; what was the result of Abraham's spirit of hospitality, love, and prayer? Few saved. Lot saved, but not his entire family. Abraham's mission could not overturn bad choices made. Lot made a bad choice to live in the city. "When iniquity abounds in a nation, there is always to be heard some voice giving warning and instruction, as the voice of Lot was heard in Sodom. Yet Lot could have preserved his family from many evils, had he not made his home in this wicked, polluted city. All that Lot and his family did in Sodom could have been done by them, even if they had lived in a place some distance away from the city. Enoch walked with God, and yet he did not live in the midst of any city, polluted with every kind of violence and wickedness, as did Lot in Sodom" {CL 30.4; CL 30.5}. "We are to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves in our efforts to secure country properties at a low figure, and from these outpost centers we are to work the cities" {CL 31.3}. "Had Lot hastened as the Lord desired him to, his wife would not have become a pillar of salt. Lot had too much of a lingering spirit. Let us not be like him" {RH Dec 11, 1900, Art. B, par. 10}. For many Adventists still lingering in cities, it will be too late at Sunday Law: "But ere long there will be such strife and confusion in the cities that those who wish to leave them will not be able. We must be preparing for these issues. This is the light that is given me" {GCB April 6, 1903, page 88.1; RH April 14, 1903, par. 33}.

**Thursday: Submission to God's Will** – In Genesis 12:1–9, what do these verses teach about submitting to God's will, even when the path ahead does not seem clear? God would have us be like Abraham, the "father of the faithful," who was sent out, "not knowing whither he went" (Hebrews 11:8), who went simply because God called him away. He did not care where he went, so long as God was with him. God said of him that he and his children "were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (verse 13). He might have returned into the country out of which he came, we are told, if he had desired to do it; but he and those who had his faith testified that they were seeking, "a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:16).