

Sabbath School Lesson #6 – Motivation and Preparation for Mission – 4-10 Nov 2023

Christ spoke to His disciples, “And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me” (Luke 24:44). All Scriptures testify of Christ. When we understand that truth, our motivation and preparation for mission will only be “Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). Paul understood this truth and lived for Christ and died for Christ. Paul said, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). These words are often quoted, but scarcely ever with a sense of the unselfishness that prompted them. Paul wrote the epistle from his prison cell in Rome, yet we find in the whole epistle not one syllable of complaint. Instead, he says, “I have learned; in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content;” “I have all, and abound” (Philippians 4:11, 18). He speaks of the work of the Lord. “But I would ye should understand that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel” (verse 12). The result had been that the Gospel of Christ had been made known not only in the court of Cæsar, but in all other places. The courage of the brethren in Rome had been quickened, and they had begun to preach Christ. It is true that all did not preach from love, but the fact remained that Christ was preached, and he said, “Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice” (verses 18). There is not the slightest trace of self cropping out there. Now read carefully the next two verses. “For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.” And then follows the words, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” It is clear in saying “to die is gain” Paul was not thinking of any gain to himself, but only of the gain to Christ. His only desire was that Christ should be magnified, whether it was by his life or by his death. For he knew that whenever he should die, it would be the death of a martyr, and that therefore the cause of Christ would be glorified thereby. What is your motivation?

Sunday: To Share the Good News – What lesson on preparation for mission do we learn from the encounter between Jesus and the two women we read about in Luke 24:1-12? The experience of the two women in meeting Jesus, and the instruction which He gave to them are full of Gospel teaching. “Jesus met them” (Matthew 28:9). They had come “to see the sepulchre” (verse 1), expecting to find their Lord in a tomb. Still it was their love for Jesus which brought them there, and the angel had said to them, “I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified” (verse 5). But instead of finding a dead Saviour in Joseph’s tomb, the living Saviour met them. Although their faith had not taken in the fact of His resurrection, yet in response to their thought of Him, such as it was, “Jesus met them.” And so it is with us. To the feebleness of our thought of Him, He responds with a mightiness of His grace. Though we may sometimes speak and act as though the Saviour was dead, yet even then He reveals Himself to us as the living Saviour, “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or a think” (Ephesians 3:20). And the living Jesus, who met them, said, “Go tell” (Matthew 28:10). Having seen for themselves that He was not in the tomb, and having heard from the angel “He is risen” (verse 6), and having themselves seen Him alive, they were to make known these things to others. Thus does the Lord use him and instrumentalities to make known to others the glad news concerning Himself. Are you willing to “go tell” others?

Monday: A Prophetic Foundation – How well grounded are you in the prophecies that point to Christ, both His first and second comings? Especially in the last days, why must we be grounded in the Word of God, including the prophecies, and why is understanding them so crucial, especially for mission? We need to know that all the prophecies were inspired by Christ. In all the prophets, the Spirit of Christ was witnessing and testifying of “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” – “Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1 Peter 1:10-11). And when Christ, after His resurrection, talked with the two disciples on the way to

Emmaus, he said, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:26-27). We know that the first part of those prophecies was fulfilled, and therefore must know that the rest are as sure. As surely as Christ suffered, so surely will the glory follow. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus talked together of Christ. As they went, Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. It is just as true today that wherever two commune together of Jesus He is there between them. He expounded to those two disciples all the Scriptures concerning Himself, beginning even with Moses and the prophets. He is just as ready to do this to-day as He was then. Jesus tarried with them, He opened their eyes to His presence and they knew Him. All this is not impossible now – for He said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Tuesday: Waiting and Mission – What does Scripture tell us of the former and latter rain in the context of waiting and mission? In Acts 3:19-21 is brought to view a time of refreshing spoken of in close connection with Christ's second coming. This undoubtedly refers to the same time as that mentioned by the apostle James, when he says: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (James 5:7-8). The early and latter rain is also mentioned by the prophet Joel in connection with his description of the last days. Notice the coming of the "former rain" is called "a teacher of righteousness, according to righteousness" (Joel 2:23). The outpouring of the Spirit of God on the day of Pentecost – the coming of the Comforter as a teacher – was comparable to the "former rain," which caused the newly sown seed of the husbandman to take root and grow. So in the ripening of the harvest of the earth, just before the end, the Husbandman – our heavenly Father (John 15:1) – is waiting for the "latter rain," the "refreshing," to aid in ripening off the harvest of the earth. The Lord has said by His prophet, "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field" (Zechariah 10:1). And thus will be fulfilled His promise: "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth" (Hosea 6:3).

Wednesday: "Whom You Crucified" – What made the disciples' preaching so effective that those who they accused of having crucified Christ when they heard were pricked? It is the fact that "they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13) and learnt the simplicity of the gospel from Him. Of Jesus, "the common people heard Him gladly" (Mark 12:37). Jesus said to the disciples of John, "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard" (Luke 7:22). That is all that any Gospel worker has to do. He has not to strain himself to make a learned discourse; he has not to theorise and speculate; he has only to tell what he has seen and heard. Not what he has heard men say, but what he has heard from the Lord. The command is, "This is My beloved Son: Hear Him" (Luke 9:35). Tell only what you know from personal acquaintance with Jesus. This was the source of the apostles' power. They had been with Jesus, and they said, when forbidden to teach, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). The words of Scriptures are plain and need no interpreter. The problem is that theologians tend to obscure what Scriptures mean. When Peter spoke on Pentecost the people "were pricked in their heart," and cried out, "What shall we do?" And "they that gladly received his word were baptized." When Paul "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come" (Acts 24:25), Felix needed no interpreter to make the words plain. So well did he understand the words that he trembled under them.

Thursday: A Picture of the Early Church – What can we learn from the early church? Paul said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). But in following Paul, they would really have followed Christ, and they were to follow Paul only as he followed Christ, and thus the life of Christ, not that of Paul, was the pattern. It is not enough that we should be as good as others. "Every man," says the apostle John, "that hath this hope [the Christian hope] in him, purifieth himself," not as his fellow in church is pure, not as his minister is pure, but "even as He [Christ] is pure" (1 John 3:3). "By beholding we become changed" (2 Corinthians 3:18), and if we behold Christ, we shall bear His image.