

## Sabbath School Lesson #1 – God Loves Freely – 28 Dec 2024-3 Jan 2025

**C**hrist would have us know that God hates sin, but He loves the sinner, for God says to us, as He said to ancient Israel, “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him” (Hosea 14:4). That is a promise that the Lord will heal our backsliding. If we start doubting the Lord’s healing, Paul says, “If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself” (2 Timothy 2:13). By the prophet Joel the Lord said, “I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten” (Joel 2:24). Restoration is the Lord’s order. “The Son of man is come to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). One saves the lost only by bringing it back again; so the Lord promises to make good all that His people have lost by the fall. He will heal all their backsliding, so that no trace of sin or the curse will remain. The Lord loves His people freely, fallen though they be; and the result of His love for the church is to “present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27).

**Sunday: Beyond Reasonable Expectations** – Read Exodus 33:15-22; What do you say to those who conclude that God makes arbitrary choices, for He says “He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth”? Paul gives an answer: “What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth” (Romans 9:14-18). Mark well verses 14-17 for evidence that there is no arbitrariness in God’s choice. It is all of mercy. “He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” So it is all of “God that sheweth mercy.” The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord (Psalm 119:64), and “His mercy endureth forever” (Psalm 136). The case of Pharaoh is cited by the apostle as an illustration of the statement that “it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.” “For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show My power in thee, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth.” Pharaoh, the haughty, defiant king of Egypt, had been chosen to make the name of God known throughout the earth (Exodus 9:15-16), but he refused to do it as the acknowledged servant of God, so the work had been accomplished through his obstinacy. The Lord said to him, “For this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee My power” (Romans 9:17). But the Lord put Pharaoh in the channel in which God’s wisdom, power, and greatness could be revealed to him in a way that it could not possibly be otherwise, in order that he might know God and be saved; he would not have it. The power of God was manifested just the same; but Pharaoh lost all the good of it. So, it is for many, the judgment will reveal wonderful opportunities men have recklessly flung away.

**Monday: Unrequited Love** – In Hosea 1 and 4, How does the imagery of unrequited lover of an unfaithful spouse help you see the Lord differently? The Lord longs for the society of men, and He loves us to the death. He has such a longing for man’s presence that He could not let him go. Man sold himself to the devil; but that grieved the heart of the Lord. He so loved the world that He gave Himself. He could not endure the separation. He died for the love He had for us. Yes, He died of a broken heart, because of unrequited love. The death upon the cross was literally of a broken heart, and not because of the physical pains. That is the love that the Lord has for men, and that love is still the power of the cross to draw men to Him. It is love that draws; not force. A man does not win a wife by the exhibition of force; but it is the love that he exhibits that gains the affections. The love of the Lord is exhibited on the cross, that culmination of love that was so great that it broke even the heart of God. “I, if I be lifted up,” said Christ, “will draw all men unto Me” (John 12:32). It cannot be that any soul who will look at Christ lifted on the cross can fail to be drawn. There He shows how much He wants men to be with Him. He represents Himself as an husband with the wife whom he has loved estranged from him, and unfaithful to him. “Yet return again to Me, saith the Lord”

(Jeremiah 3:1). If there were that love in the human marriage relationship, that would bear with reproach, and which would not fail even though fought against, it would be a hard heart that would not yield to it in the course of time. It is this love that breaks down the enmity, and wins our souls to Him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

**Tuesday: Love Freely Given** – What do you make of the statement by the Lesson writer: ‘We do not deserve God’s love, and we could never earn it. Conversely, God does not need us. The God of the Bible does not need anything (Acts 17:25)’? The first part is true, but the second part, supposedly supported by Acts 17:25, is unnecessary. Read Acts 17:24-29. Verse 25 simply means that God is the source of all things. God is the Creator of all things. It is common to say that He created all things from nothing. That is true, in so far as it means that His word formed the worlds where there was nothing; but they came from His word. His word is filled with His own life; so it is true that all creation came into existence through the very life of God. Everything sprang from Him, so that in the creation of the worlds there is the mystery of reproduction. This idea is given in the words of the Psalmist, “Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art of God” (Psalm 90:1-2). “For with Thee is the Fountain of Life” (Psalm 36:9). “All things come of Thee” (1 Chronicles 29:14). “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created” (Revelation 4:11). Not only has God, through Christ, created all things, but their continued existence depends upon Him alone. We have redemption through the blood of Christ, “For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist” (Colossians 1:16-17). Christ, who is the fulness of the Godhead (Colossians 2:9), is the life of everything.

**Wednesday: Many Are Called, but Few Are Chosen** – Read Matthew 22:1-14; What is the meaning of this parable? This parable is applicable to all peoples in every age. “But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise.” To-day, under our very eyes, we continually see this re-enacted, in that they to whom the message of the Gospel is sent go their own ways to their jobs and merchandise, regardless of the earnest invitation which the Lord of heaven Himself so graciously extends to them. Whom, then, can they blame if when the appointed hour is past, and they find that they have lost a golden opportunity? Surely none but themselves. In the hour of the realisation of his great, irremediable, and eternal loss, no human soul will be able to lay the responsibility for the position in which he finds himself upon another being, – much less upon his God. “Many are called, but few are chosen” (Matthew 22:14); those who find themselves in outer darkness will only be able to accuse themselves of failing or refusing to accept the invitation of the Father, and the accompanying wedding robes of righteousness which the Son proffers to all.

**Thursday: Crucified for Us** – What risk did Christ take at the cross to save us? “Christ has found his pearl of great price in lost, perishing souls. He sold all that he had to come into possession, even engaged to do the work, and run the risk of losing his own life in the conflict” {10LtMs, Lt 119, 1895, par. 32}; “Remember that Christ risked all; “tempted like as we are,” he staked even his own eternal existence upon the issue of the conflict” {GCB December 1, 1895, par. 23}; “Yet into the world where Satan claimed dominion God permitted His Son to come, a helpless babe, subject to the weakness of humanity. He permitted Him to meet life’s peril in common with every human soul, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, at the risk of failure and eternal loss” {DA 49.1}; “Never can the cost of our redemption be realized until the redeemed shall stand with the Redeemer before the throne of God. Then as the glories of the eternal home burst upon our enraptured senses we shall remember that Jesus left all this for us, that He not only became an exile from the heavenly courts, but for us took the risk of failure and eternal loss” {DA 131.2}; “Had there been the least taint of sin in Christ, Satan would have bruised His head. As it was, he could only touch His heel. Had the head of Christ been touched, the hope of the human race would have perished. Divine wrath would have come upon Christ as it came upon Adam. Christ and the church would have been without hope” {12LtMs, Ms 143, 1897, par. 17}.