

Sabbath School Lesson #2 – Covenantal Love – 4-10 January 2025

Christ and His Father loves us. “Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him” (John 14:23). Jesus and His Father abide in us by Their shared Spirit. The Bible teaches, there is only “one Spirit” (Ephesians 4:4) that is holy; that one Spirit is “the Spirit of your Father” (Matthew 10:20); God is everywhere by and in that one Spirit, “Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?” (Psalm 139:7); that one Spirit is to God just as the spirit of man is to man, “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:11); that one Spirit is which God gave to His Son, Christ, “for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him” (John 3:34); hence that one Spirit is shared by the Father and His Son as Their Spirit, that is why Paul interchanges this by saying, “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Romans 8:9). The Spirit is not another Being but God’s Spirit, which He gave to His Son, hence Their shared Spirit. Thus, “We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.”

Sunday: The Everlasting Love of God – How does the Bible show the everlasting love of God through Christ? Christ and His Father loves us with love that is not easily repulsed. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not” (1 John 3:1). “The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jeremiah 31:3). “I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people” (Isaiah 65:2). Though often rejected, He still woos sinful men, seeking to draw them to Himself. There is a void in the heart of God that can be filled only with the love of man. A lover in fancy clothes the object of his affection with all charms and graces, but the Lord does so really to His people, for whom He gave Himself. His love will transform them, and clothe them with the beauty of His own righteousness. “So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty” (Psalm 45:11). “He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing” (Zephaniah 3:17).

While we were still in sin, God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, “not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2 Corinthians 5:19). Harshness repels, love draws. That is how God draws men to Himself. “I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jeremiah 31:3). But “the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared” (Titus 3:4) in Christ; for “God commended His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:5). Therefore, Christ said: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me” (John 12:32). It is the goodness of God, that leads men to repentance (Romans 2:1). The word “goodness” as applied to God, means all that anybody means by goodness. It means more than what is ordinarily thought of as strict conformity to the law of right; it means kindness, benevolence, pity, sympathy, forbearance. These are the qualities by which God draws men to Himself. No others can attract. All these are manifested in Christ. “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2 Corinthians 5:19). “Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more” (John 8:11). “This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them” (Luke 15:2). “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 13:34). Peter denied his Lord with cursing in the hour of His sorest need; “and the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter” (Luke 22:61). That look melted Peter, and made a new man of him. Oh, what gentleness and tenderness toward frail sinners was manifested in Christ!

Monday: Covenantal Love – How did God seek to show His love to the people through a covenant? “Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations” (Deuteronomy 7:9). This verse would suffice to teach us what should be our attitude to the commandments of God. Notice it is God who keeps the covenant. It then says, He keeps that covenant with those who keep His commandments. Does that mean a reciprocal action? It is not us who do the commandments but rather allow the Lord

to do His law in us. God is to lead us in the path of His law, His righteousness. In Psalm 23, David indicates where God desires to lead us. "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake," David declares in verse 3. Because of His own moral uprightness, God will never lead us astray. He will provide safe paths for our spiritual walk through life. What are the safe "paths of righteousness"? A writer of another psalm answers this question through a prayer request: "Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight" (Psalm 119:35). "All thy commandments are righteousness" (Psalm 119:172).

Tuesday: Conditional Relationship – How do we reconcile the fact that God says, "I will love them no more" (Hosea 9:15) and "I will love them freely" (Hosea 14:4)? This is best explained in the context of the close of probation, which reveals that the mercy of God is everlasting. His mercy is always expressed in permitting us the freedom of our choices. Mercifully He draws us to Himself and permits us to consider repenting. He grants us the gift of repentance if we are willing to desire it. Mercifully He allows us the freedom to choose rebellion, in the sense that He will force no one to be saved. If a person is willing to be transformed, God facilitates that. If a person is not willing, God will not force such a person. The mercy of God does not end with the close of probation. But rather, the close of probation demonstrates that God has nurtured His creation to the point where everyone has made a free and final decision. God in His mercy has provided for a plan of salvation. Mercy lingers, pleading with all to accept it, but as all come to a free and final decision, for death or life, there is no point in continuing pleading. In the close of probation, God simply recognises the free and final decision that His created beings have made, and He discontinues pleading.

Wednesday: Mercy Forfeited – How do you explain a loving God allowing man to forfeit His mercy? The fact that people reject the mercy of the Lord is evidence of their high calling in Christ, – that they are allied to Divinity, in that they can act for themselves. The inanimate earth acts automatically and cannot choose but receive and show forth the goodness of the Lord. Even the beasts, who have some reason, do not know enough to resist the influence of God's Spirit, and are all passive to His will. Now it is not the part of wisdom for man to resist God; but the fact that he can refuse to be led by Him shows that God has in His great love endowed him with His own attributes; and so, when man is as passive to the will of God as the beasts and the inanimate creation, that is counted to man for righteousness; it shows that that man is worthy to rule with God on His throne. So, it is because of "His great love wherewith He loved us," because He is "rich in mercy," that God makes us sit together with Christ (Eph 2:4-6); and it is only this crowning mercy rejected that results in the destruction of anybody. "The earth, O Lord, is full of Thy mercy; teach me Thy statutes" (Psalm 119:64).

Thursday: You Have Freely Received; Freely Give – How shall we give? Jesus asked Philip, but in the hearing of all the disciples, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" (John 6:5). The disciples said to Jesus, "send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals" (Matthew 14:15). Jesus said, "They need not depart; give ye them to eat." Why did Jesus say that? – Because it was so. Jesus did not trifle with the disciples. He knew what *He* would do; the question was, Did they know what *they* would do? Yes; they knew that they would "send the multitude away" empty (Matthew 14:15); but they did not need to. His question to Philip was for the purpose of proving him, and the rest of the disciples as well. The words of Jesus show that if they had but only recognised their opportunity they might have fed the multitude the same as He did. And the lesson is recorded for our sakes. 'How can we give when we have nothing?' – Just the same as Jesus did when He had nothing; for He did not do anything while here on this earth, except as *man*. 'Yes; but it pleased the Father that in Him all fulness should dwell, and it was of the abundant fulness that was in Him, that He fed the multitudes.' Very true; "and of His fulness have all we received" (John 1:16). The same Christ is alive today, and dwells among us; and if we but allow Him to dwell in our hearts *by* faith, we shall also "be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:19). What a marvellous manifestation of the power of God's grace! that having nothing we should be able to give everything. "We then as workers together with Him beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain;" and we approve ourselves as the ministers of God, "as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Corinthians 6:1, 10). Let us grasp this by faith!