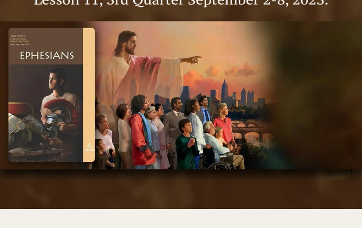
Practicing Supreme Loyalty to Christ

Lesson 11, 3rd Quarter September 2-8, 2023.



Sabbath Afternoon, September 2

Memory Text:

"And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him." KJV — Ephesians 6:9

When "the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom;...they could find none occasion nor fault." Dan. 6:4. Finding him thus faultless, his enemies "consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, "save of" the king, should "be cast into the den of lions." Verse 7.

By securing the king's signature on the decree, they sought to create a situation that must necessarily involve Daniel in an act of rebellion against the king. They knew that though he purposed to render unfaltering allegiance to the king, he would not do so at the price of showing disloyalty to his God. And so as he continued to petition his God as he was wont to do, he was cast into the "den of lions." But the One to whom he prayed saved his life from the ravenous beasts.

And amid the slaves of ancient Egypt looms the majestic stature of Joseph, the greatest provisioner the world has ever seen. Behold him in steadfast loyalty to his government, rising in honor till he is given to share the very throne of Pharaoh himself!

From these and other Bible examples, it is clear that one's loyalty to his government is his pledge of allegiance to it – a salute to its flag. Altogether, therefore, we see that while on the one hand a man's disloyalty to the divine government is a sin against God, on the other hand his disloyalty to his nation's government is a sin against it, also indirectly against God, for disloyalty to one's government is disobedience to God's express command: "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work." Tit. 3:1. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well." 1 Pet. 2:13, 14.

Sunday, September 3

Advice to Children

What advice does Paul give to children, and how does he support that counsel from the Old Testament? Eph. 6:1-3

You remember that there was a child by the name Samuel who early in life came to walk in "the Way," and therein he was trained. Now think on what happened: One night Samuel, you recall, was suddenly awakened by a Voice. Supposing it to be the voice of Eli, he quickly jumped up from bed and went to inquire of Eli. Of course Eli was surprised, but he calmly said, "I did not call you. Go back to bed." Since there was no other person but Eli around. Samuel was certain that the elderly man had called him. Nevertheless he obeyed and straightway went back to bed.

Before long, though, perhaps as soon as Samuel had fallen asleep again, the Voice called the second time. You know that Samuel could easily have then said to himself, "That old man must be dreaming. Here he is calling me again. But I won't be bothered with him any more; I'll just let him holler all he can." Samuel, nevertheless, as quickly as before hurried to his master's bed, only again to hear the words, "Go back to bed, I did not call you!" Still a third time he heard someone calling, and just as willingly and as respectfully as before, he went to his master's bedside the third time! Eli finally perceiving that the Lord must have been calling the child, therefore instructed Samuel what to do. And what did Samuel do? – Exactly as he was told.

Had Samuel not been as willing, as respectful, and patient as he was, do you think he would ever have come to hold the highest office in the land? – Of course not. There was nothing else but the saintly qualifications of character which Samuel demonstrated that night that promoted him to the office of prophet, priest, and judge.

Do we still wonder why Samuel was called out of bed three times in succession and why he and Eli were disturbed in the night? – For two reasons: (1) To prove that regardless of the inconvenience, Samuel would not hesitate to arise when called, and that he would not become angry, that he would not "sass" Eli. (2) The Lord wanted to help Eli; He wanted to prevent the possibility of Eli's concluding that Samuel was getting out of place and questioning his ability to discipline his own sons. Had Eli not been given the opportunity to know for certain that the Lord talked to the child, he then could have easily concluded that Samuel was conniving against the sons of Eli. But providential circumstances being as they were, Eli certainly knew without doubt that God had a message for him. There was no room for doubt.

Boys today, as in times past, are anxious to get somewhere in life, yet millions of them fail to reach their goal and many ruin their lives. They want to become great men, but they fail to even make middle men. And the reason? – It is simply because they overestimate their own powers, and underestimate God's power. They know not that with God there is no failure, and that with Him "they can get places."

You boys and girls lend yourselves unreservedly to God. He needs great men, and He can make you such. When you learn God's way and become a responsible boy or girl as did Samuel, God will not overlook your zeal, integrity, and sincerity. He will give you something great for your reward. Yes, you will then indeed be great.

Ancient David also was a young boy and nothing more than a common shepherd. But he was a good shepherd, the best in the land. God saw that he was mindful of and faithful to his duties, and so He determined to make the boy a king over His people. Indeed, when a person does one thing well, it is likely that he will do another thing just as well. David was as good in his duties as was Samuel in his. That is why he was lifted from the sheepfold and placed in the palace.

The Lord saw something in him [Joseph] that He could not find in Joseph's brothers. Not only was he his father's favorite son, but he was God's favorite, too. God had in mind something great for Joseph – greater than the world could ever think of. To prove himself trust-worthy Joseph had to first become a slave. He had to be trained for the big job.

So the way Providence worked, it was that his brothers sold him to be a slave. Just then he recalled what the Lord had promised him in a dream – that besides his brothers, even his father and mother were to bow down to him. Can you imagine what a splendid opportunity was his to curse God when he saw himself on the way to slavery? He might have said, "Why should I serve a God that promises glory but instead gives humiliation, hardship and isolation?" But Joseph did as wisely as Job: By sanctifying God in his heart, he in effect said, "Though He slay me, yet in Him will I trust."

Joseph quickly reconciled himself to his situation, confident that his father's God knew all about his troubles. Thus his slave masters, the Ishmaelites, immediately recognized that they were in possession of a fine slave, a slave that they could sell for a good piece of money. How do I know this? – I know it because the Ishmaelites took him straightway to a man who would buy nothing but the best, to the richest man in Egypt, to one that could pay the price. Rich men, you know, do not buy cheap things, neither do salesmen take cheap things to them.

Even while in grief, Joseph must have demonstrated his ability to serve, and must have shown great respect to his slavemasters while on the way to Egypt, because then it was that the peddlers found out the worth of their captive, and then realized that they could sell him to someone who wanted something good and that could pay the price. Potiphar, too, soon found out that Joseph was in all respects trustworthy.

Thus it was that he became Potiphar's number 1 man. Even Mrs. Potiphar fell for him. It was at this juncture, you recall, that he came to the climax of his graduation test. Passing the greatest test of his life, he graduated from the house of Potiphar, then from the prison house, whereupon he was promoted to Egypt's throne, the world's greatest. In promotion or in demotion Joseph gave God the glory and did his honest best. At every thing he was put to, he was second to none, and thus he became the greatest among all earthly living.

As to the real secret of his success you will find in one simple principle – firmness against temptation to sin, and faithfulness to duty: "Ah! I cannot do this wicked thing. I shall sin neither against men nor against God," was his answer to temptation.

This is why Joseph was great in his father's house, in the hands of the Ishmaelites, in the house of Potiphar, in the prison cell, on the throne of Pharaoh, and in all the world. This is why all the ancient world bowed down to him.

Monday, September 4

Advice to Parents

Compare Ephesians 5:4 and Colossians 3:21. What motivation does Colossians 3:21 provide for avoiding irritating one's children?

Deut. 21:18-21 – "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear."

You see, long ago,' way back in ancient times, the Lord made known His commandments and His laws. He promised that if His people were obedient, He would make of them a great nation; that they would possess nations greater and mightier than themselves; and that all nations, would fear them. He plainly told them, though, that if they would not obey, then curses would inevitably be their lot.

He charged them to raise obedient children. The parents were commanded to bring them to the elders if they themselves could not make their children obey, and the elders were to stone them. The reason given was "That all Israel may hear and fear," –and depart from evil. Having this punishment in view they of course were very careful how they brought up their little ones.

If we were living in the time the Lord thus commanded His people, in the days of Moses, we would not know whether the Lord actually meant business or whether he was just talking. But since centuries have passed, by the results of ancient Israel's disobedience we can see that God meant nothing but business...

It is we, not the Jews, who have now a choice to make. We may choose to be like the world, and be driven into hell with it. Or we may choose to do what God commands, and thus be with Him in His kingdom. One of these choices we must now immediately make.

Up to five or six years of age, depending upon the individual temperament, children may be subjected to corporal punishment when other measures of discipline and correction have been exhausted without success. If on such occasions, the rod is properly used, the child may so respond that he will never need it again. If, however, the necessity should again arise, then be exceedingly careful what you do. For such children as require more drastic punishment than the average child, may become incorrigible and develop a fear complex and corresponding hatred of their chasteners. So, while such chastisement is calculated to prevent a recurrence of a major evil in them, it is likely to bring in an even worse evil, unless carefully studied steps are taken to insure against its brutalizing effect. It must be administered with a commensurate and convincing demonstration of such deep-felt love and yearning over the erring one that he will not lose filial affection and respect for his chasteners, and his home life becomes such a hunting nightmare to him as to drive him to run away at the opportune moment.

Parents "should first reason with their children, clearly point out their wrongs, show them their sin, and impress upon them that they have not only sinned against their parents but against God. With your own heart subdued and full of pity and sorrow for your erring children, pray with them before correcting them. Then your correction will not cause your children to hate you. They will love you. They will see that you do not punish them because they have put you to inconvenience, or because you wish to vent your displeasure upon them; but from a sense of duty, for their good, that they may not be left to grow up in sin."--Testimonies, Vol. 1, p. 398.

At all costs, they must always be influenced to feel that their chasteners are their best friends, not bullies and enemies.

"The mother may ask, 'Shall I never punish my child?' Whipping may be necessary when other resorts fail, yet she should not use the rod if it is possible to avoid doing so. But if milder measures prove insufficient, punishment that will bring the child to its senses should in love be administered. Frequently one such correction will be enough for a lifetime, to show the child that he does not hold the lines of control."--Counsels to Teachers, p. 116.

But habitually to grab children on any and every provocation, and angrily shake, cuff, slap, spank, or whip them, and between times hold over their heads the threat to strike them, is the most damaging folly, abhorred alike by every consideration of intelligence, decency, and humanity. Its continuance will harden and brutalize, ruin instead of save. It will make its victims vicious little animals instead of noble God-like children.

"Some parents correct their children severely in a spirit of impatience, and often in passion. Such corrections produce no good result. In seeking to correct one evil, they create two. Continual censuring and whipping harden children and weans them from the parents."--Testimonies, Vol. 1, p. 398.

When, however, you do have to discipline, be serious, mean business, and do a good, sensible job of it. See that you do it so well that you will not have to do it over.

Tuesday, September 5

Slavery in Paul's Day

Read through the counsel to slaves and slaves and slave masters in the following passages: Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-4:1; 1 Cor. 7:20-24; 1 Tim. 6:1, 2; 1 Pet. 2:18-25. How would summarize this advice?

"Paul's letter to Philemon shows the influence of the gospel upon the relation between master and servant. Slave-holding was an established institution throughout the Roman Empire, and both masters and slaves were found in most of the churches for which Paul labored. In the cities, where slaves often greatly outnumbered the free population, laws of terrible severity were regarded as necessary to keep them in subjection. A wealthy Roman often owned hundreds of slaves, of every rank, of every nation, and of every accomplishment. With full control over the souls and bodies of these helpless beings, he could inflict upon them any suffering he chose. If one of them in retaliation or self-defense ventured to raise a hand against his owner, the whole family of the offender might be inhumanly sacrificed. The slightest mistake, accident, or carelessness was often punished without mercy. AA 459.1

"Some masters, more humane than others, were more indulgent toward their servants; but the vast majority of the wealthy and noble, given up without restraint to the indulgence of lust, passion, and appetite, made their slaves the wretched victims of caprice and tyranny. The tendency of the whole system was hopelessly degrading. AA 459.2

"It was not the apostle's work to overturn arbitrarily or suddenly the established order of society. To attempt this would be to prevent the success of the gospel. But he taught principles which struck at the very foundation of slavery and which, if carried into effect, would surely undermine the whole system. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," he declared. 2 Corinthians 3:17. When converted, the slave became a member of the body of Christ, and as such was to be loved and treated as a brother, a fellow heir with his master to the blessings of God and the privileges of the gospel. On the other hand, servants were to perform their duties, "not with eyeservice, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." Ephesians 6:6. AA 459.3

"Christianity makes a strong bond of union between master and slave, king and subject, the gospel minister and the degraded sinner who has found in Christ cleansing from sin. They have been washed in the same blood, quickened by the same Spirit; and they are made one in Christ Jesus." AA 460.1

Wednesday, September 6

Slaves of Christ

What does Paul require of Christian slaves in his detailed instructions to them? Eph. 6:5-8

"The law of Jehovah is exceedingly broad. Jesus ... plainly declared to His disciples that this holy law of God may be violated in even the thoughts and feelings and desires, as well as in the word and deed. The heart that loves God supremely will not in any way be inclined to narrow down His precepts to the very smallest possible claims, but the obedient, loyal soul will cheerfully render full spiritual obedience when the law is seen in its spiritual power. Then will the commandments come home to the soul in their real force. Sin will appear exceedingly sinful.... There is no longer self-righteousness, self-esteem, self-honor. Self-security is gone. Deep conviction of sin and self-loathing is the result, and the soul in its desperate sense of peril lays hold on the blood of the Lamb of God as his only remedy.... OHC 140.2

"Many are deceiving their own souls today. They restrict the injunctions of God to condemn outward acts alone, and do not consider it sin to dishonor God in thoughts and affections. They flatter themselves that they are keeping the law of Jehovah while their life and character as daguerreotyped [photographed] in the books of heaven reveal them as venturing to see how far they can go in the direction of wrongdoing without being branded as transgressors of God's law.... OHC 140.3

"Every soul who desires to depart from all iniquity ... will be ever laboring to be on the Lord's side in thought, in word, and in character, obedient to all His requirements. In the place of seeking opportunities to evade the law of God, he will give the largest interpretation to His far-reaching commandments and will strive most earnestly to bring the will, the affections, and all the heart to exemplify the great principles of His holy commandments.... The work must begin at the heart.... If the heart is right with God, then the whole life will be purified, refined, ennobled, sanctified. If the eye is single the whole body is

filled with light. Religion is not a matter of externalities.... Religion is a thing of the heart." OHC 140.4

Thursday, September 7

Masters Who are Slaves

Assuming that you are a Christian slave master who is listening to Ephesians being read out in your house church, how might you react to this counsel, offered in the presence of your slave? Eph. 6:9

"I have written out the substance of what I was impressed to speak. I beseech of you, Brother ____ that you seek the Lord earnestly, and do not relax your effort to become a kind man in your service of God in the Office. If you lack the tenderness of Christ, Satan will use your words to create a disaffection which need not exist. You need a personal abiding Christ in your heart. 11LtMs, Lt 9, 1896, par. 10

"All need to experience the converting power of truth. Then men who are in the service of God in their several positions of trust will learn of Christ as superior. Having men who are their equals under their direction, they must begin at the beginning and have the heart right with God through the deep, new, creating power of His grace. Then every man will study the interests of the man with whom he is associated, and the spirit of kindness and Christian love exercised by the men in authority will be reflected back upon others. "All the building, fitly framed together" will grow "unto a holy temple in the Lord." [Ephesians 2:21.] The church would become a living representation of Christ. The world would not so often be encouraged in its ungodly deeds by the example of men who claim to believe the truth and to be followers of Jesus Christ, but who hold the truth in unrighteousness because they are not daily converted, heart and soul, to the truth. 11LtMs, Lt 9, 1896, par. 11

"With many spiritual life is not a living, active principle, because they are not in communion with the living God. I entreat of you to read (Ephesians 2), for this chapter was pointed out to me as applicable to you. Also read chapter 4:1-3 and chapter 6. Supposing all who are associated together in the Office study this chapter. Here is presented the duty of servants: "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye service, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him." [Verses 5-9.]" 11LtMs, Lt 9, 1896, par. 12

Friday, September 8

Further Thought

I saw that the slave master [See Appendix.] will have to answer for the soul of his slave whom he has kept in ignorance; and the sins of the slave will be visited upon the master. God cannot take to heaven the slave who has been kept in ignorance and degradation, knowing nothing of God or the Bible, fearing nothing but his master's lash, and holding a lower position than the brutes. But He does the best thing for him that a compassionate God can do. He permits him to be as if he had not been, while the master must endure the seven last plagues and then come up in the second resurrection and suffer the second, most awful death. Then the justice of God will be satisfied. EW 276.1

Page 276: Slaves and Master.—According to Revelation 6:15, 16 there will be slavery at the second advent of Christ. Here we find the words "every bondman, and every free man." The statement by Ellen White under discussion indicates that she was shown in vision the slave and the slave master at the second advent of Christ. In this she is in perfect accord with the Bible. Both John and Mrs. White were shown conditions that would exist at the second coming of our Lord. While it is true that Negro slaves in the United States were freed by the Emancipation Proclamation, which went into effect six years after the statement under discussion was penned, the message is not made invalid, for even today there are millions of men and women in actual or virtual slavery in different parts of the world. It is not possible to pass judgment on a prophecy of the future until we have reached the time for the fulfillment of that prophecy. EW 304.3

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