

Sunday School Lesson for August 29, 2021

Good morning. I hope you are well and feel blessed.

Lesson for August 29, 2021, "Hope Eternal"

Background Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10

From the lesson section, "Our body in tents?" Paul used the metaphor of the tent in the discussion of the nature of death and resurrection. Thinking of his own handmade tents, Paul says that, "we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, if indeed, when we have taken it off we will not be found naked." As is often the case, Paul switches metaphors quickly from tent, to house, to dwelling, to something one puts off like a piece of clothing. To make it more complicated, he compares our situation to having the treasure of life and resurrection "in clay jars", "so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us."

The point being made is that we live in a fragile world, our physical bodies, although made by God as potter make his jars or a tentmaker manufacture them by hand, and our lives are breakable and can be destroyed. If our nature is wasting away through age or illness, we will not disappear or appear spiritually naked before Christ after death. We have a heavenly home to look forward to and the Spirit as a guarantee that what is perishable will become imperishable.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians as a caretaker and a pastor. He is worried about the health of the church in Corinth and tries to bring healing by openly meeting his opponents head on.

Paul often asks if he should boast about his ministry and personal conduct. Paul says, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

Paul insists that he and his co-workers for Christ would never act in a way that is disgraceful or dishonest, though he knows some are blinded by Satan from believing their message about Jesus. They cannot see the light of knowing Christ as God. That knowledge is a priceless treasure stored in the fragile containers of Paul and his friends. No matter how difficult their suffering in this work, Paul refuses to quit. He is confident that he will be resurrected after his death and then all his pain on this side of eternity won't even be worth comparing with the glory there.

"Gospel" means good news, and the news that Jesus Christ will return as King of an everlasting Kingdom is the best news ever. Not only will He save humanity from self-destruction, He will bring peace and show us the way of life that will produce true happiness and fulfillment without end. Christ preached the Kingdom of God, and so did Peter and so did Paul and all those who follow Christ.

From the text section, stepping into the world, Platitudes meaning, a remark or statement, especially one with a moral content, that has been used too often to be interesting or thoughtful. Paul knew a thing or two about death. He understood the threat of death personally.

In our daily reading Wednesday, from Ecclesiastes chapter 12:9-14. The Searcher takes us back over the entire books and reminds us of the careful search he made to come to his conclusion. In Verses 11-12 he underscores the value of this Scripture. He describes the value of Scripture saying: it is like a "goad." It prods you and pokes you; you cannot get it out of your mind. It makes you go where you would not ordinarily go.

Scripture is also a "nail (an anchor) firmly fixed." You can hang on to it and hold fast by it in times of danger and temptation. More than any other book it has this ability. The reason, according to Verse 11, is because, "the collected sayings are given by one Shepherd." These are inspired, God-breathed

words. The heart of God is the heart of a shepherd; he sees us as wandering sheep in need of a shepherd's care.

"Do not go beyond that," the Searcher says. This is the word of wisdom to scholars and searchers for knowledge: "Of making many books there is no end." You can read yourself to death; you can study yourself to death. God is the secret of life, that he is the answer to the reason for existence. Until we discover him, study and books will never be of any continuing value to us.

This is clearly and finally stated in the two closing verses 13 and 14. "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone. For God will bring every deed into judgement, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.

To "Fear God, and keep his commandments" is to learn to be and to discover the secret of being a whole person. This is what we are to learn when we are young: "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth," before all the pressures come upon you. This is the secret of wholeness: "Fear God, and keep his commandments." We can't hide from God. He knows everything that goes on; he knows every thought of the heart, every word of the mouth. He knows the motives that we seek to hide from others.

Closing: For the love that casts out fear, the faith that sustains and the hope that never perishes, be with us now and forever more. Amen.

Next week's lesson September 5, 2021, "Moses and Miriam Praise God"

Background Scripture: Exodus 14:1-15:1-21

Sources for this lesson: The Bible, International Sunday School Commentary, Before It is Too Late, by Dr. Ray Stedman, and The Present Word Lesson.

