



2023 4Q God's Mission My Mission Lesson 4 Sharing God's Mission

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read Memory Verse:

- A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another (John 13:34-35 NIV84).

When Jesus told His disciples that He was giving them a new command to love one another, He did not mean it was a new teaching, principle, directive, instruction, or idea that God had not previously given, but that it was **new to them**. For God had previously already instructed them to:

- “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” and to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18 NIV84).

This means that despite God having previously given them the instruction to love God and each other, they somehow didn't know it, didn't understand it, and therefore Jesus said His command to love was something new to them.

What about for us today? Surely, we have all heard that God is love and that we are to love God with all our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves. And even more, we know Jesus told us to love not just our neighbors but our enemies. Yet, could we also need Jesus' “new” command? Could we struggle with a similar need to the disciples?

- Where does this love that Jesus said we are to have for each other originate?
- Are we able to produce it because Jesus has told us to?
- Is this love something we have within ourselves and we only need to have better psychological attitude and choose to love, or is it something that only comes from outside of us and we must choose to receive it, be transformed by it and then act in harmony with it?

Jesus gives us additional insight in John 15:

- As the **Father has loved** me, so have **I loved** you. Now **remain** in my love. If you **obey my commands**, you will **remain in my love**, just as **I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love**. I have told you this so that my **joy** may be in you and that **your joy may be complete**. My **command** is this: **Love each other as I have loved you**. **Greater love** has no one than this, that he **lay down his life for his friends**. You are my **friends** if you do what I **command**. **I no longer call you servants**, because a servant does not know his master's

business. Instead, **I have called you friends**, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. **This is my command: Love each other** (vss. 9-17 NIV84, emphasis mine).

The first truth Jesus tells us is that love originates in God, love's source is God, for God is love (1 John 4:8). This love flows from God among the Godhead and thus God loves Jesus the Son and it is through Jesus that God's love reaches us.

We do not possess this love in and of ourselves, but we receive it as we receive the sunshine—it constantly shines down upon us from heaven above. Yet, just like sunshine, which never stops streaming from the sun, can sometimes be hidden behind storm clouds, so too God's love, despite never ceasing, can sometimes feel hidden behind our emotional storms. That is when, we must turn to reality as revealed in Scripture and know that God's love never fails and never ceases, just as surely as we know on the stormiest day that the sun continues to shine!

We receive love just as we receive sunshine—by placing ourselves in its rays. But we can choose to stay in the dark, to cover the windows with blinds, to never go outside during the day and cut ourselves off from the sun. Likewise, despite God's love constantly flowing from heaven, we can choose to cut ourselves off from it, to stay in the darkness of bitterness, resentment, hatred, bigotry, selfishness, fear, doubt, idolatry, legalistic religious enslavement, entertainment, or various forms of substance induced stupors.

And when we cut ourselves off from sunlight, we necessarily suffer various forms of physical and mental breakdown. Likewise, when we cut ourselves off from God's love and fill our hearts with fear, selfishness, and the false numbing comforts of this world we invariably suffering various physical and mental breakdowns.

The love of God shines everywhere and when God's love is combined with the truth that Jesus revealed, we realize how empty we are without Him, how sick of heart and mind our natural selfish state is, how exhausting it is to constantly work to prove ourselves and get ahead, how much we need God's love. Thus, when by the truth and love of God we are won back to trust, we open our hearts to Him and are set right with God (justified) and He pours His love into our hearts (Romans 5:5) which transforms and heals us (sanctified). Paul puts it this way:

- Since we have been made **right with God by our faith**, we have peace with God. This happened through our Lord Jesus Christ, who through our faith has brought us into that blessing of God's grace that we now enjoy. And we are happy because of the hope we have of sharing God's glory. We also have joy with our troubles, because we know that these troubles produce patience. And patience produces character, and character produces hope. And this hope will never disappoint us, because **God has poured out his love to fill our hearts**. He gave us his love through the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to us (Romans 5:1-5 NCV, emphasis mine).

Love and truth originate in God and it is this reality, the goodness of God that wins us back to trust (Romans 2:4). When we trust God we give God our consent, our permission to work in us and it is then that we are transformed and healed through the application of truth and love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

We are then to “remain” in God’s love. We don’t earn God’s love; we don’t fight for it; we don’t have to prove ourselves, to work, to compete, or in any other fashion struggle to receive God’s love. God’s love is not conditional, we are to abide in His love, to rest in His presence, love, goodness, grace. We are to remain and live in God’s love every single day, but we are to especially “rest” in His love on the Sabbath.

The Sabbath is a special gift from God built into time especially for human beings designed for us to **exercise our rest**—for us to choose to stop all our working—whether working for our own advancement here on earth (business, school etc.), working to earn love or prove ourselves to others (working to get six-pack abs to win a romantic interest, housework or yardwork to win affection), or working to save ourselves through various religious rituals and law-keeping.

The Sabbath is God’s gift to us, made for humans (humans were not made for the Sabbath) to give us the time to **exercise our rest** in Jesus, to rest in God’s love and be renewed, refreshed, and strengthened. **But the Sabbath is only a blessing if it is a delight—if it is a rule we must keep in fear of doing something wrong then we are not resting, we are working on the Sabbath.** (Isaiah 58:13)

But remaining in God’s love means we are to obey His commands, but can we command people to love us and get love? Can you get more love from your spouse or children by commanding love with authority and threats of punishment? No, for ordering others against their will only destroys love and incites rebellion—so what does this mean that Jesus commands us to love but love cannot be commanded?

Our understanding and experience with God are directly connected to how we understand God’s character and law. If we believe Satan’s lie that God’s law functions like human law, imposed rules that require legal oversight and infliction of “just” punishments from the ruling authority, then we hear the words “command” or “commandment” as something legal, imposed, a rule to be enforced. But to worship a being like this is to worship a creature—for creatures, not the Creator, makes up rules that require legal enforcement.

When we return to worshipping the Creator, we understand that He built the cosmos and His laws are design laws—the protocols reality exists and functions upon—like the laws of health, physics, and the moral laws. We realize that life and health are only possible in harmony with God and His design protocols built into reality itself. Then we understand what Jesus is saying. He is saying that if you want to be healthy and thrive, then live in harmony with the laws of health—obey the laws of health. If you want to remain in my love then don’t break the law of love—if you want to remain healthy, don’t break the laws of health. It is that simple.

Sin breaks God's design (law) for life. It is driven by fear and fear turns the mind toward self and the me-first survival drives dominate. But God's perfect love casts out all fear (1 John 4:18). When we experience and remain in God's love His love frees us from being controlled by fear. And instead of seeking to protect self at the expense of others, we sacrifice ourselves to uplift and benefit others—just as Jesus has done for us!

This selfless love is not of this sinful world; it is not found in Satan or the kingdoms of this world. This eternal, healing, life-giving love comes only from God and flows to us through Jesus Christ via the work of His representative on Earth, the Holy Spirit. Whenever and wherever we see such love we are seeing the outworking of the Holy Spirit applying the victory of Jesus to individual lives, whether the people who love like this realize it or not, whether they acknowledge Jesus or not.

Understand this very clearly—no human since Adam sinned possesses self-sacrificial love for others as a natural expression of their heart. Therefore, anytime you see selfless love in action, it is evidence of God's working in their heart to save them from fear and selfishness.

Then Jesus does the most incredible, unbelievable, truly preposterous thing from and worldly standpoint—He refuses to accept us in the role of servants to Him the King of kings and Lord of lords, the Creator and Sustainer of all reality, and instead tells us His desire, intent, wishes, and will for us—that we are to be His friends! This is astonishing—can you really imagine it? God, our Creator, our Savior, the infinite one Himself invites you and me to be His friends!

What does it mean to be a friend of God? Have you considered yourself God's friend? What is the difference between a servant and a friend?

As Graham Maxwell used to ask: Is there a difference between friendly service and a serving friend? What is that difference?

So, does being a friend of God mean that we don't serve or that we give the only type of service that matters—the service that comes from understanding love, which friends have, and not the service that comes from fear, which servants have?

So, the first step in being a friend of God is that we must first and foremost be won back to love and trust in God and Jesus. As long as fear and selfishness dominate us, as long as we love ourselves more than God, we will eventually betray God to protect ourselves. So in order to be a true friend of God we must be won back to trust in Him, complete, abiding, and settled trust. This requires that we know God (John 17:3) not know about God. Sadly, far too many Christians know about God, like studying the biography of Abraham Lincoln they get doctoral degrees to be experts in knowing all about God—but that doesn't mean they actually know Him. And if we don't actually know Him for ourselves, if we only know about Him, then we don't truly trust Him, and therefore are not His friends.

This is what Jesus meant when He foretold of the day when Christians will say to Him,

- “‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in **your** name, and in **your** name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘**I never knew you.** Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Matthew 7:22-23 NIV84, emphasis mine).

These people worked, served, in the name of Jesus, but they never knew Jesus, they were not His friends.

We become Jesus’ friend when we are reborn to love and trust and know Him personally, our hearts are settled into the truth and love of God: This is the sealing. And then, like Job, we might not understand what is happening, we might experience frustration, we might have many questions—but we trust God so that our hearts stay focused on seeking God, on talking with God, on searching out the answers from God—just like Job did.

Despite all the world can throw at us, if we are God’s friend, we will never believe God is against us, that God is our enemy, that God is the source of pain, suffering, and death. We will be true friends of God, and like Job say of God what is right!

But this requires that we not only love God, but as Jesus explicitly said, that we understand God’s business! Servants don’t understand the master or his business—they simply do what they are told. Servants are focused on the rules, the commands, the instructions—if the master said, they believe, and that is all there is to it.

But friends go beyond rule-keeping, beyond simply doing what they are told—they enter into understanding relationship, empathy, and appreciation with and for the master. A friend of God’s shares in His desires, values, methods, principles and they align themselves with Him in heart. They are jealous for His reputation, His goals, His kingdom. They love what He loves and hate what He hates.

And then, as God’s friends, who are won to love and trust, who understand His methods, principles, and design laws—His business of saving souls, we choose to work in God’s field, God’s garden, seeking to tend to hurting souls to bring them back into friendship with God.

- Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come. All this is done by God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into his friends and gave us the task of making others his friends also. Our message is that God was making the whole human race his friends through Christ. God did not keep an account of their sins, and he has given us the message which tells how he makes them his friends. Here we are, then, speaking for Christ, as though God himself were making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ’s behalf: let God change you from enemies into his friends! (2 Corinthians 5:17-20 GNT).

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on the gift of hospitality—what do you understand this gift to be?

The dictionary definition is: “the friendly reception and treatment of guests or strangers.”

What does this mean today? Does this mean we have no boundaries, that every person is welcomed? Or do we need to have discernment and not open our hearts, homes, and resources to individuals intent on doing harm?

Jesus said,

- “Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.” (Matthew 7:6, NIV84).

Paul wrote:

- But mark this: There will be terrible times in the **last days**. People will be **lovers of themselves**, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—**having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.** (2 Timothy 3:1-5 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Should we show hospitality to everyone, or should we have discernment and set some boundaries and limit our contact with some people?

How do we love our enemies as Jesus did, show godly hospitality, yet also set healthy boundaries to limit and restrict the ability of those intent on doing evil from harming us and those we love, those put in our care to protect, and the mission God has called us to carry out?

MONDAY

Love for everyone—what does this mean in action?

Does it mean giving every person what they want, what they say they want? What about what they need? What about if they need it? What if they need it but they could procure it on their own, but their choices prevent them from doing so?

What about what Paul writes here in Romans 5:

- We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. (Romans 5:3-5 NIV84).

What does this mean? We want God to pour His love into our hearts, and Paul connects suffering, persevering, and character building with God's love being poured into our hearts—what is the connection?

Is suffering required for character building? Do we help people if in all circumstances we seek to relieve their suffering? Or is suffering sometimes necessary for spiritual victory and character building?

- Did Jacob experience any trials and sufferings? Were those trials and sufferings important for Jacob's ultimate victory and being renamed Israel? Would we have helped Jacob if we would have done something to relieve the night of his trouble, the night he wrestled with the angel?
 - Couldn't God have inspired Esau to send a messenger ahead before that night to let Jacob know he was forgiven and all was well? If Jacob had received that assurance prior to the night he wrestled with the angel would that information have been a benefit to him or not? Why not?
- Did Peter suffer for a period of time after he denied Jesus? Would we have helped Peter during that suffering, that emotional anguish, if we could have offered him a Xanax or valium to relieve his anxiety and emotional distress? Why or why not? Would it be an act of love to seek to relieve his suffering, or in that circumstance was the most loving action anyone could take to allow Peter to wrestle out his own turmoil with God?

Love seeks to do what is in the best eternal interest of others, not what they want, or what will make them feel better in the moment, but which will help them achieve victory, spiritual victory and get better. And that often requires some period of suffering.

Do you understand how corrupt and evil the current demonic philosophy that is overtaking our society and culture is—which suggests that if it feels bad it is bad and that feelings are what matters, emotions are what defines reality?

Love is only love when, as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13, it rejoices with the truth! If it is not truthful, it is not love.

The lesson points out that Abraham demonstrated love for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah when he asked God to spare the city for 50, 40, 30, 20, and 10 righteous people.

Abraham had concern for the sin-sick, the wicked, the perishing and he asked God not to destroy the city if ten righteous remained.

We see the heart of compassion and love from Abraham, but we also see God acting to destroy the city. Does that mean God has less love and compassion than Abraham?

If God has more love and compassion than Abraham, then why did He destroy Sodom and Gomorrah?

Genesis 3:15—it is all about the promised Messiah—even without these five cities that were destroyed—how many tribes of Israel made it through to the day Jesus was born? Only two—the other ten tribes had been dispersed.

In other words, God looking down the corridor of time, saw the ongoing war against Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's children, the branch of the family tree through whom Messiah would come, and understood that if He didn't act that the corruption and perversity of the nations around them would destroy that branch of the human family. So, God like a good surgeon, excised the necrotic tissue, the corrupt and hardened people that were beyond salvation and who lived in that area as a means to limit their ability to work against the plan of salvation—for without Jesus no human could be saved from sin.

God first discussed it with Abraham, **foreknowing Abraham would ask these questions so that God could answer them and let Abraham and EVERYONE OF US know these people were beyond saving**, they had so hardened their hearts there was nothing more God could do for them—just like the people who died in the Flood. So God's actions here are not actions to punish sin, they are therapeutic actions to keep open avenue for Messiah.

We must also remember that these “deaths” are what the Bible calls sleep deaths, they are the first death, the same type of death that Daniel experienced. And all of these people will arise in a resurrection to complete their own life by their exercise of their own free will choices—at the end of the 1000 years.

And remember, that even in the false legal model, punishment for sin doesn't happen until after the judgment and the judgment is future from these events, so God's actions here, even in the false legal model do not fit with the punishment for sin.

Abraham also had concern for God and God's reputation, but Abraham's prayer not to destroy the city was based upon limited knowledge. Abraham didn't know the future and Abraham assumed that there were more than ten righteous people in Sodom, more than ten people who had not permanently destroyed the faculties that respond to love and truth, people who could still come to repentance and be saved. But, there were not, so God listens to Abraham, but then does what love requires in order to save and heal.

As we read about Abraham talking with God, could we consider that Abraham was praying? And he was praying for the saving of others, but what do you make of John's instructions in 1 John 5:16-17?

- If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that. All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death. (1 John 5:16-17 NIV84).

What does this mean? How do we understand it? If we view it through a legal model it becomes quite confusing—it sets up all kinds of ideas that don’t make sense—like some sins are mortal sins but other are not. But if we understand design law it is easy to understand, and thus I paraphrased it this way:

- If you see a fellow Christian who desires to be Christlike commit an act of sin, you should talk with God about them, knowing that God will completely heal them and give them life if they open their heart in trust to God. Such sin does not result in eternal death, as it is merely a residual symptom of a heart in the process of being healed. However, there is no use in asking God to heal and give eternal life to the sinners who close their hearts to God and stubbornly refuse to allow God to heal them. Love cannot be forced, and God cannot force people to love and trust him, so there is no use in praying for God to force people to accept him. All violations of love are sin, but violations of love which occur in someone who opens their heart to God do not lead to eternal death. (1 John 5:16-17 REM)

TUESDAY

Read the first paragraph,

- The dialogue between Abraham and God is a type, a representation, of intercessory prayer. Abraham is presented in this chapter as an intercessor before God for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. He was pleading for them, in behalf of them; that is, he was in a way acting as a type, a symbol, of Jesus as our Intercessor before the Father. Our mission today will be successful only if we proceed with these kinds of prayer. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God’s Mission My Mission p. 33).

What does this mean?

- Does this mean God must be plead with in order to show us mercy?
- Does this mean that Jesus is pleading with His Father in heaven right now in our behalf?
- Have you ever heard it presented that we can have assurance because Jesus is our intercessor with the Father? But is that true?
 - Jesus Himself said, “In that day you will ask in my name. I am **not** saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you” (John 16:26 NIV84).
 - Romans 8—if God is for you who can be against you...

Jesus said that if we have seen Him we have seen the Father—they are one. To suggest that one member of the Godhead is for us, but another member requires something done to Him to get Him to support us is diabolical, it is evil, it is a lie, and it comes from the father of lies—Satan himself.

It is rooted in the lie about God's law, the idea that God's law functions like human law and therefore God is required to use His power to inflict punishment for sin, which is death, and therefore Jesus took our punishment and offers His blood as a payment to God to pay for our sins and propitiate the righteous wrath of the Father which burns against us.

Understand, those who believe God's law functions like human law cannot understand the truth of Jesus' ministry as our intercessor. They will always distort it into teaching a lie, to teaching things that undermine our trust in God.

It is only when we return to worshiping God as Creator and realize that His law is design law that things make sense.

I am going to read you a passage from one of the founders of the SDA church, this paragraph is often used by those who hold to the lie that God's law is like human law and believe falsely that Jesus as our intercessor is pleading to God in our behalf. Consider this quotation and think, what would you say if it was used in conversation with someone who was arguing for the penal legal view and that Jesus is in fact pleading in our behalf to the Father.

Man cannot meet these charges himself. In his sin-stained garments, confessing his guilt, he stands before God. But Jesus our Advocate presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and faith have committed the keeping of their souls to Him. He pleads their cause and vanquishes their accuser by the mighty arguments of Calvary. His perfect obedience to God's law, even unto the death of the cross, has given Him all power in heaven and in earth, and He claims of His Father mercy and reconciliation for guilty man... But while we should realize our sinful condition, we are to rely upon Christ as our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but on His own. (5 Testimonies 470).

What do you hear? Are you hearing a legal proceeding in heaven in which Satan accuses us and Jesus acts as our defense attorney before God the ultimate judge and Jesus wins the case with His Father by arguing His perfect righteousness as our defense?

It doesn't say or mean anything close to that. Such conclusions are not in the text, but read into the text by those whose minds are biased by the lie about God's law.

We know that the quote doesn't mean something penal/legal because first Jesus said He would not pray the Father in our behalf—there is no need. And anything true will always harmonize with Scripture.

But such a legal conclusion contradicts the setting from where that paragraph was drawn. So when dealing with quotes like this we must first know the Bible and know the truth of God's character and design law, and then we will resist false interpretations, but second, we must go to the source being quoted for ourselves and read it in its larger setting, and also read from the same author other places that speak to the same issue. But for now, we will just examine this quote in a three-paragraph setting and as we do you will note how it becomes very clear nothing penal legal is going on, but something healing and restorative.

- **As Satan accused Joshua and his people, so in all ages he accuses** those who are seeking the mercy and favor of God. In the Revelation he is declared to be the “accuser of our brethren,” “which accused them before our God day and night.” **The controversy is repeated over every soul that is rescued from the power of evil** and whose name is registered in the Lamb's book of life. Never is one received from the family of Satan into the family of God without exciting the determined resistance of the wicked one. **Satan's accusations against those who seek the Lord are not prompted by displeasure at their sins.** He exults in their defective characters. Only through their transgression of God's law can he obtain power over them. **His accusations arise solely from his enmity to Christ. Through the plan of salvation, Jesus is breaking Satan's hold upon the human family and rescuing souls from his power.** All the hatred and malignity of the archrebel is stirred as he beholds the evidence of Christ's supremacy, and with fiendish power and cunning **he works to wrest from Him the remnant of the children of men who have accepted His salvation.** (5 Testimonies 470.1) [where is such a battle taking place? Where is the work of Jesus occurring that will rescue a sinner from Satan's power? Where does Satan's powers of lies and selfishness occur? Who listens to Satan's lies, who believes Satan's accusations? Who would Christ need to plead with to persuade them that His sacrifice is sufficient to free the sinner from sin? Would God need to be persuaded that the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient? Would the sinner?]

He [Satan] leads men into skepticism, causing them to lose confidence in God and to separate from His love; [who is listening to Satan's accusations? With whom will Christ need to plead in order to overcome the accusations and restore their confidence?] he tempts them to break His law, and then he claims them as his captives and contests the right of Christ to take them from him. **He knows that those who seek God earnestly for pardon and grace will obtain it; therefore he presents their sins before them to discourage them.** [Notice the dynamic here. The author doesn't say that Satan knows if he can find a sin the person committed that they forgot to confess and ask forgiveness for that it remains on the legal registry in heaven and God will be forced to pronounce them guilty and Satan wins his legal case. NO! Satan knows that all who trust God will, as Isaiah 55 says, receive FREE pardon from God and grace that heals and restores them and gives them a new heart and empowers them to overcome the accusations and temptations of Satan. So Satan accuses the sinner to the sinner to discourage the repentant sinner tempting them to give up and let go of their faith in Jesus. So, again, where is Christ plea directed?] He [Satan] is constantly seeking occasion against those who are trying to obey God. **Even their best and most acceptable services he seeks to make appear corrupt.** [To whom is Satan seeking to make our best seem corrupt? To the repentant sinner in order to discourage and dishearten them so THEY GIVE UP. So, to

whom would Christ be pleading for them not to listen to the accusations of Satan?)] **By countless devices, the most subtle and the most cruel, he [Satan] endeavors to secure their condemnation.** [By whom? From whom is Satan seeking to get the sinner condemned? Christ Jesus He is at the Father's right hand and is also interceding for us—also, in addition to who, the Father and who is the Father interceding with? With the accusations of the devil that try and discourage us!)] **Man cannot meet these charges himself.** In his sin-stained garments, confessing his guilt, he stands before God. [Exactly, we don't stand before God and say, "I don't need Jesus. I can cure my own sin condition. In fact, I really haven't sinned, I am righteous in my own strength." NO! We stand before God and say, "Father I acknowledge I was born in sin and conceived in iniquity. I was born with a terminal sin condition I didn't choose this condition and I have had many symptoms along the way many sins and shortcomings from your glorious ideal. I have been fearful and selfish and acted out against your law. I have no ability to change my heart, to heal my condition. I confess I am dead in trespass and sin. I am only here before you because Jesus overcame where I cannot and Jesus has gifted me His victory, His mind, His heart, His love, His motives, His character and it is no longer I that live but Jesus lives in me through the indwelling Spirit." Note what happens next.] **But Jesus our Advocate presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and faith have committed the keeping of their souls to Him. He pleads their cause and vanquishes their accuser by the mighty arguments of Calvary.** [For all who acknowledge their condition Jesus pleads effectively TO THEM, "My grace is sufficient for you." I have engraved YOU on the palm of my hand. My victory is your victory. Trust me and I will make you whole! The accusations of Satan that we are too sinful to be saved are vanquished by the effectual plea of Jesus to you and to me!)] His perfect obedience to God's law, even unto the death of the cross, has given Him all power in heaven and in earth, and **He claims of His Father mercy and reconciliation for guilty man.** [Whose mercy? God's mercy, God so loved the world that He sent Jesus to procure the Remedy and then empowers Jesus with all the power of heaven to distribute it to us to heal and save us. God doesn't win God's mercy, or beg God to be merciful, He claims the mercy that is God's, because of God's mercy Jesus was sent and became our Remedy to sin.] **To the accuser of His people He declares: "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan."** These are the purchase of My blood, brands plucked from the burning." [Jesus doesn't plead His blood to the Father, Jesus rebukes Satan and refutes his accusations. And listen to what Jesus says to us.] **Those who rely upon Him** in faith receive the comforting assurance: "**Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.**" [He removes the fear, the guilt, the shame, the selfishness, the sin-condition and gives us a new heart and right spirit, writes His law of love into our inmost beings so that it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me.] All that have put on the robe of Christ's righteousness will stand before Him as chosen and faithful and true. Satan has no power to pluck them out of the hand of Christ. Not one soul that in penitence and faith has claimed His protection will Christ permit to pass under the enemy's power... Angels of God will walk on either side of them, even in this world, and they will stand at last among the angels that surround the throne of God. (5 Testimonies 470.2)

The fact that the acknowledged people of God are represented as standing before the Lord in filthy garments **should lead to humility and deep searching of heart on the part of all who**

profess His name. Those who are indeed purifying their souls by obeying the truth will have a most humble opinion of themselves. [This is the investigative judgment. The investigation of our own hearts/minds/characters and the investigating the truth about God to experience the healing power of Christ purging and cleansing us from sin to prepare us to meet Him face to face.] The more closely they view the spotless character of Christ, the stronger will be their desire to be conformed to His image, and the less will they see of purity or holiness in themselves. But while we should realize our sinful condition, we are to rely upon Christ as our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. **We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but on His own.** (5 Testimonies 471.1)

Jesus pleads **before** the Father not **to** the Father; Jesus is carrying out the Father's purpose to save sinners, the Holy Spirit listens to Christ and works in you and me to communicate the love, grace and pleas of Christ to you and me to win us back to trust, so we will open the door to our hearts and let Him save us from fear and selfishness!

WEDNESDAY

What is Abraham's mission? In the context of the lesson, Abraham had a mission to save people—that is what the lesson wants us to notice.

Then, why didn't Abraham open a children's center, rehab center, center for porn addiction in Sodom? Why didn't Abraham open a church, a Sabbath school class, a Bible study—oh, because no Bible's existed yet. Okay, then why didn't he put an altar to God in Sodom and regularly offer sacrifices to Yahweh and preach on the streets of Sodom?

The point I am making is that I believe Abraham did have love for people, but that doesn't mean all actions are beneficial in all circumstances and settings.

Likewise today, do you think it will be beneficial to stand on a street corner in New York City with a sign "Repent" and shout "Repent, Jesus is coming soon and if you don't repent you will burn!"

THURSDAY

Read the last paragraph,

- Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah: When God revealed to Abraham the destiny of these two cities, Abraham, full of love, tried to save the cities. Because there were not even ten righteous persons in the cities, the cities were destroyed. Abraham submitted to the will of God and

accepted God's judgment of these cities. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 35).

It is true that there were less than ten righteous people in Sodom, but is that the reason the city was destroyed? Or was there another reason that must be included to understand why the city was destroyed—it was the two elements together. In other words, if more than ten righteous were in the city it wouldn't have been destroyed despite this other element, but because there were not ten righteous along with this other element the combined points required the city to be destroyed?

Let me put it another way—do we think that through all of human history Sodom was the only city in which there were less than ten righteous people? Or, do we consider that throughout all human history if any city has less than ten righteous people God will show up and destroy them, that having less than ten righteous people is some cosmic threshold that triggers God to act?

I am suggesting that it was the combination of the city being completely corrupt in unrighteousness, and its location in the geographic area where the Israelites would live for the fulfillment of the promise of Genesis 3:15 and their ability to seduce and corrupt the Israelites, thus obstructing the plan of salvation, had they remained.